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China: Seriously Ill Women's Rights Activist in Detention Denied Medical Treatment by Police

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Seriously Ill Women's Rights Activist Denied Medical Treatment by Police; Families and Friends Worry About a Second "Cao Shunli Incident"

The detention of five feminist activists ahead of International Women's Day has captured the attention of both domestic and international feminist communities. Recently surfaced news suggests a deterioration of their situation: Wu Rongrong, one of the detained activists who has been seriously ill, is denied medical treatment by the police. Her friends who went to the detention center for negotiation have been forcibly taken away by the police. Families and friends worry about whether the current situation would turn into a second "Cao Shunli Incident" (Cao died of illness after Chinese state security agents denied her medical attention).

On March 6th and 7th, Wu Rongrong, founder and executive director of the Weizhiming Center, and other four young women's rights activists were arrested by the police in Hangzhou, Beijing and Guangzhou, respectively. When meeting with Wu Rongrong at the Haidian Detention Center on March 16th, Wang Fei, the lawyer representing Wu, found out about Wu's poor health status and that Wu had not been given any medical treatment. The medicines that Wu carried along with her were all seized by the police and therefore unavailable to Wu. After multiple negotiations with lawyer Wang Fei, the police claimed that they would provide Wu with active treatment. However, Wang's second meeting with Wu on March 18th revealed that the situation had not been improved. Upon attorney Wang's persistent charge and negotiation, the detention center replied that Wu had been "sent to the military hospital for health check," which is yet to be verified.

Cancer Indicators Worrisome, Stopping Medication May Lead to Hepatic Failure

According to lawyer Wang Fei, "in my two meetings with Wu Rongrong, her face is pale. Since she is in an onset period, she often experiences fatigue and suffers from pains near liver during sleep. She usually wakes up spitting up blood in the morning. As her legal representative, I am extremely concerned about her health."

According to Wu Rongrong's husband, Wu was hospitalized for 12 days in February 2015. Her AST indicator was 4 times above normal and her AFP indicator 5 times above normal. On February 16, upon her leaving the hospital, Wu was given the instruction to "stay well rested" and "return in a month to review indicators, and return for re-checks whenever needed". After Chinese New Year, Wu had been following the doctor's order and were taking the prescribed antibiotics.

Dr. Cao Haodong, the chief physician of the Hepatology division at Beijing Ditan Hospital, has analyzed the lab report of Wu's medical examination as well as her doctor's note upon exit from hospital. He states that Wu must keep on taking her medication over a long period of time, and she

should not stop her medication, since patients who stop in the middle may experience worsened conditions or even hepatic failures.

Family & Friends Worry about a Second “Cao Shunli Incident”

The police’s decision to stop Wu Rongrong’s medication has severely unsettled her family and friends, causing them concerns. Wu’s husband hopes that the police would not cut off her medication out of humane concerns. “Our son is turning four soon. Rongrong had specifically put aside her work trips so as to spend the day with our son. We both eagerly look forward to a return of our beloved Rongrong, and pray that she returns in good health condition.”

Wu Rongrong’s friend, Ms. Ye Jinghuan states that stopping medication for Wu Rongrong may implicate the Haidian Detention Center in inhuman treatment, even torture. “We are worried that the police might be creating a second ‘Cao Shunli’ incident.”

It is reported that on Sep 14, 2013, Ms. Cao Shunli, a graduate of Peking University Law School, was taken away by the police at Beijing International Airport while she was heading to a human rights event in Geneva. She was charged with suspected “illegal assembly” and was detained at Beijing Chaoyang Detention Center. In Oct 2013, Cao was arrested under “creating disturbance and picking quarrel.” (Note: same charge as the five feminists.) Cao suffered from tuberculosis, ascites, uterine fibroids and other conditions during her detention and was repeatedly denied treatment until she was too ill not to be sent to the emergency room. She died in the hospital at age 53 on March 14, 2014.

Friends Go Forth to Negotiate with the Detention Center and Were Taken Away

At 11 am on March 20, 2015, a group of 16 headed by Ye Jinghuan (Wu’s close friend) set out to demand that the Haidian detention center change the inhumane treatment of Wu Rongrong. (Wu is a hepatitis B carrier and she has been denied medication and was ordered to sleep on the floor.) To answer their request, the police agreed to deliver their petition letters into custody. While they were waiting for a response at the door, three police cars pulled over and all 16 activists were forced into the cars and taken away. They were not released until more than 10 hours afterwards.

Wu’s friend asks, “if Rongrong’s medication were indeed resumed, they could have just told us so directly. Why did they take us away?”

Fatigued by Interrogations, Fellow Detainee Suffers from Heart Attack

According to lawyer Zhao Xia, attorney of Wu’s fellow detained feminist activist Wang Man, “On March 20th, I met with Wang Man in the Public Safety Hospital. She was criminally detained for planning to distribute stickers against sexual harassment on public transportation on March 7. She is suffering from a heart attack due to long hours of repeated daily interrogations (that go until midnight.) she had been sent to the Public Safety Hospital for treatment. Though her situation is in control and she is out of danger, it is no longer appropriate to detain Wang Man.”

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