

Hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs to be held by the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations in Room 2255 of the Rayburn House Office Building

DATE: Tuesday, October 29, 2013

TIME: 2:30 p.m.

SUBJECT: Guo Feixiong and Freedom of Expression in China

WITNESSES: Ms. Zhang Qing Wife of Guo Feixiong

Ms. Yang Tianjiao Daughter of Guo Feixiong

Pastor Bob Fu Founder and President ChinaAid Association

Mr. Chen Guangcheng

CHAIRMEN: Christopher H. Smith (R-NJ)

Zhang Qing

Honorable Chairman, Vice Chairman, Congressmen, and guests,

I'm thankful to have this opportunity to give you an introduction on my husband Guo Feixiong –his legal case, his activities in defending human rights, his ideals, his personality, and his character.

In China today, human rights conditions continue to deteriorate. In a new round of government crackdowns on civil movements this summer, my husband, Guo Feixiong, was detained again. This is his fourth time in prison within two years since he was released on September 13, 2011, after serving five years in prison on a false conviction.

Guo Feixiong was detained for the fourth time on August, 8, 2013. It wasn't until August 17, when his sister, Yang Maoping, received a notice of detention, that we learned that he was charged with "gathering a mob to disrupt the order of a public site." It was speculated that his detention was caused by his support of *The Southern Weekly* incident and the speech he delivered in public. He said in his speech, "China's system of censorship on books and newspapers is a censorship on people's thinking that free-thinkers and freedom fighters have strongly opposed since ancient times. This system should have been abolished long ago. We support *The Southern Weekly* today not just because it is being suppressed and persecuted. We need to rethink everything and fight for a universal right – freedom of speech. Freedom of speech releases the voice of hundreds of millions of people. It is an amplifier of citizens' power."

His attorney went to Tianhe detention center in Guangdong Province, requesting to meet with him, but was denied. So far his attorney has made seven requests to visit him, but all have been denied.

According to the law in China, detention should not exceed 37 days. After this period of time, the police must either release the litigant or issue an official arrest warrant to the litigant's family and lawyer. But the reality is that Guo Feixiong is still in detention, and neither his family nor lawyer has received an arrest warrant.

It wasn't until October 15, when his attorney submitted legal papers to the Tianhe Procuratorate to file a lawsuit, that the staff of the Procuratorate said that Guo Feixiong had been officially arrested on September 12. On October 16, an official arrest warrant was delivered to Guo Feixiong's sister. These details show that someone behind the scenes orchestrated the whole process, including the timing of delivering legal papers to Guo Feixiong's family. Guo Feixiong's attorney commented that the Chinese authorities had "blatantly violated the law" in handling Guo Feixiong's case, which is manifested in Guo Feixiong's secret detention and secret arrest.

Guo Feixiong has been in detention for 78 days. The seven requests his attorney made to meet with him have all been denied. To this day, we still don't know his situation. This is a unique case of the authority's blatant violation of the law. We can't help but ask what the authorities are trying to cover up by unlawfully denying Guo Feixiong visits from his attorney? Is he suffering torture again or on a hunger strike protesting the government's illegal detention?

Guo Feixiong is a sincere believer of freedom and democracy – an idealist. He promotes the values and ideals of democracy and constitutionalism and practices his beliefs with actions. Since he started to participate in China's human rights defense activities in 2003, he has been at the front line of the citizens' rights defense movement for 10 years, serving the needs of the massive, marginalized people in society. Because of this kind of work, he was subjected to all kinds of brutal suppression, including four detentions, multiple beatings, and unlawful summons by the police. In 2006, because he was beat up, he, together with Gao Zhisheng, Fan Yafeng, and Zhao Xin, started a global hunger strike for defending rights. He wrote an article afterwards, *The Radicalness and Moderation of Relay Hunger Strike –the 3rd Commentary on the Global Relay Hunger Strike for Human Rights and against Violence*, highly regarding the significance of hunger strikes.

Later, July 2005, Guo Feixiong was hired as a legal advisor by villagers of the Taishi village, giving them legal assistance in their efforts to remove the corrupt village chief from office. The authorities responded to the villagers' legal request with a violent crackdown and many people were put in jail. Guo Feixiong was also seized and detained. He went on a hunger strike of 59 days to protest the government's illegal detention. Tao Jun, a democracy advocator, wrote in *A Look at the Chinese People's Rights Defense and Courage through Guo Feixiong*, "His multiple detentions are a result of his unyieldingness and a demonstration of his remarkable courage and decisiveness. His is one of the few true men who display the courage of the Chinese people, and they are a rare species in China today. His rights defense activities at Taishi village and his initiation of efforts to rescue Gao Zhisheng manifest his great courage and character. In spite of repeated persecutions, secret scheming by the government against him, and backstabbing from his peers, he remained unruffled and maintained his capacity to fight. His spirit of tenacity and persistence invites us to ponder. Courage has been eliminated to the edge of extinction in our nation, so his courage and braveness are as noble and precious as diamonds."

In an article about Guo Feixiong, Boxun News wrote, "The courage and the spirit of fighting have been wrung out of the blood of the Chinese people. Over several thousands of years, the Chinese people have

nearly become boneless creatures through domestication: cowardly, withdrawn from the world, self-effacing, putting up with abuse, and without principles. Guo Feixiong's courage seems to have lit up this world of cowards." (<http://www.boxun.com/news/gb/pubvp/2007/04/200704122336.shtml>)

On August 5, 2006, Gao Zhisheng was arrested. Guo Feixiong organized rescue efforts with enthusiasm. As a result, he was subjected to the government's retaliation and was detained on September 14, 2006, on the charge of "illegal business activity" in connection with the publication of a book exposing political corruption, *Shenyang Political Earthquake*.

The authorities detained him without citing any material evidence and refused to release him based on the lack of facts against him. They brutally tortured him and transferred him from Guangzhou in southern China to Shenyang in northeastern China so as to use more brutal torture to crush his spirit and belief in the cause of freedom and democracy. They also used torture to create a false conviction and rip away his freedom.

Here is a list of abuses and tortures my husband went through:

1. He was interrogated for 13 days and nights nonstop and deprived of sleep at Guangzhou No.1 Detention Center.
2. Chains were put on his feet for more than 100 days at Guangzhou No. 1 Detention Center.
3. He was shackled to a wooden bed with his hands and feet crossed, unable to bend any part of his body, for 42 days at Guangzhou No. 1 Detention Center.
4. At Guangzhou No. 1 Detention Center, the police pulled his hair, tickled him, and insulted him for more than 20 days.
5. A black cover was put on his head, which is typically given to inmates on death row, after he was transferred to Shenyang. He was taken to a secret location for detention and suffered brutal beatings.
6. He was taken to a secret location for detention by Shenyang police and chained to a "tiger bench" for four hours.
7. At the secret location for detention in Shenyang, police hung him from the ceiling by his hands with only the strength of his shoulders to sustain his entire body weight.
8. At the secret location, police used an electric baton to electrocute his genitals.
9. Unable to bear the abuse of electrocuting his genitals, he attempted suicide by rushing towards glass windows.
10. Shenyang police locked him up with inmates on death row, who, in despair, threatened to gauge out Guo Feixiong's eyes. He was forced to fight back using glass from a window he smashed.

All the above are facts my husband presented in his final statement at the court.

Guo Feixiong's case was sent back to the Procuratorate for reinvestigation four times due to insufficient evidence, but eventually he was still sentenced to five years' imprisonment based on verbal confessions

obtained by using the shameless torture of electrocuting his genitals. As his wife, I refuse to accept a false conviction fabricated through the use of shameless torture methods. For this reason, I wrote open letters to the Chinese President, U.S. President Bush, and the United Nations' Committee Against Torture to expose the torture my husband was subjected to. I also declared that I would go on a hunger strike every Wednesday until his release in protest against the Chinese government's use to torture on Guo Feixiong and the false conviction of five years' imprisonment.

The persecution of Guo Feixiong is not limited to him also, but also extended to his family and children. On the first day of Chinese New Year in 1996, we were tailed by a group of plainclothes and they took photos of our children, who were nine and four years old then. In prison, Guo Feixiong received this threat, "We'll not let your son enroll in elementary school, and we'll not let your daughter get into high school." They meant what they said. When I took my son to the headmaster of an elementary school to enroll him in the first grade, the headmaster said firmly, with my 6-year-old son present, "If I kick your child out of school, that'll be a violation of the law on education. If I refuse to accept your son as a student of our school, I'm not breaking any law."

My son was barred from school for a year. The next year, it was time for my daughter to enter high school. But no school would accept her. In fear, my daughter said to me in tears, "I don't want to stay at home with no school like my brother." My children's education was interfered with and controlled. These illegal practices made us feel completely insecure.

On September 13, 2011, Guo Feixiong was released from prison and he resumed his services for the disadvantaged people.

The rights defense activities he participated in include:

- Made public speeches and published articles in support of *The Southern Weekly*
- Organized and participated in the "Investigation into Li Wangyang's Death"
- Called on the National People's Congress to approve the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
- Demanded Chinese government officials to disclose their income to the public

Guo Feixiong participated in the 1986 student's movement of Shanghai and the 1989 nationwide students' movement. He is a sincere believer of freedom and democracy. Despite the brutal suppression he was subjected to, he refused to give up his convictions on freedom and democracy.

During the Chinese government's crackdown on rights defense movement in 2006, he suffered the severest torture and received the longest prison term. Gao Zhisheng was sentenced to three years, with a five-year probation. Hu Jia got three years and six months. Chen Guangcheng got four years and three months. Guo Feixiong got five years.

In a new round of government crackdown on civil movements this year, Guo Feixiong was dealt with illegally. He was secretly detained and secretly arrested, and has been denied attorney's visits to this day. People on the outside have no idea how he was detained and how he is doing at the detention center. We are concerned that he may be tortured. It is also possible that he is on a hunger strike in protest against the government's illegal detention of him, or there may be something else going on.

It wasn't until August 17 that people on the outside found out about Guo Feixiong's detention. *Global Times*, a government-sanctioned Chinese newspaper, issued an editorial on August 18, saying that this campaign launched by the government against human rights movement was named "Decapitation."

The family members and lawyers of those detained in this campaign were all notified about their detention in a timely manner according to normal procedures. The detained all met with their lawyers except Guo Feixiong, who was denied visits of his lawyer seven times.

Guo Feixiong sets a great example of someone who fights for freedom and human rights, does not fear mighty power, and does not submit to it. We often pray "lead us not into temptation" because we know the Devil's temptations are vicious and cruel and many people can't overcome them.

Guo Feixiong overcame temptations with his courage and his firm belief in freedom and democracy. The number of days he was on hunger strike totals 100 days. He has kept the baseline for this generation of people. He has always been considered a hero by pro-democracy activists.

I call on the international community and human rights organizations to supply moral support to Guo Feixiong, a warrior who is still fighting for human rights in darkness, affirm his sacrifice and his fighting spirit, and award him, so as to motivate more people to overcome fear and weakness and pursue human rights courageously.

Pro-democracy activists and scholars of China made this comment about Guo Feixiong: He is not only a theoretician, but also practices his theory. He has great influence on the development of civil and social movement. He values the development of civil society. He is good at drawing lessons from practices and applying them to other rights defense cases.

He has been at the frontline of civil movement for a decade and has been involved in many human rights defense activities both in theory and practice.

The Chinese government's response to Guo Feixiong's active involvement in the civil rights movement and his great influence is to give him the harshest suppression and persecution that they are able. The international community has not given attention and moral support in proportion to the persecution Guo Feixiong has suffered. We notice that the U.S. government voiced its support to other activists arrested in the same period of time as Guo Feixiong's arrest. Up to this point, Guo Feixiong has not been mentioned officially by the U.S. Department of State even though three weeks ago, I met with the acting Assistant Secretary of State and asked the U.S. government to make a public statement in support of Guo Feixiong's release. It is a pity we haven't seen that public statement being made. Today, I would like to make the following appeals to the U.S. government and Congress:

1. I call on President Obama and the U.S. Department of State to publicly mention Guo Feixiong's name and make a public statement in support of Guo Feixiong's innocence and release.
2. I ask the U.S. Congress to communicate with the Chinese authorities through the passing of a resolution or other effective means, expressing its strong concern for Guo Feixiong's case and promoting and supporting his release. He is innocent. All he did is to promote the rule of law and human rights in China. Nothing he did has violated the law.

3. The U.S. Ambassador to China and the U.S. Consulate General in Guangzhou should ask the Chinese government for permission to meet with Guo Feixiong since he was denied visits from his attorney seven times.

The United States is a primary champion of human rights in the world and serves as a beacon for the global human rights movement. Therefore, the U.S. President, the U.S. State Department, and the U.S. Congress have the responsibility to speak up for and render moral support to Chinese human rights activist Guo Feixiong who has been persecuted for his work. I also call on the U.S. government and Congress to put pressure on the Chinese government, urging it to release all the prisoners detained for political reasons, conscience, and religious reasons.