

Prisoners of faith

release
PRISONERS

EMAIL ALERT

October 2014

Huang Yizi China

A Chinese church leader is facing up to ten years in prison on what friends and family say are fabricated charges intended to silence his opposition to the Government's current campaign of intimidation and persecution levelled at the wider Christian community and to discourage others from similar protests.

On August 28, police in Pingyang County in the coastal city of Wenzhou, formally charged Pastor Huang Yizi for 'gathering a crowd to disrupt public order'. He had initially been arrested on August 3.

The pastor's detention followed clashes between officials, including, reportedly, some armed with cattle prods, and Christians who were attempting to stop the removal of their church's cross. The confrontation took place at Salvation Church in Wenzhou – a city with a large Christian population – and represented a major escalation in tensions over a campaign that has so far affected more than 100 churches. Other local church leaders and members have also been detained, threatened and placed under surveillance since the campaign began earlier in the year. However, of this group none has been held for as long as Pastor Huang nor faced such serious charges.

Church members and other local believers, including Huang, formed a human wall at Salvation Church's gate in an attempt to keep the authorities out. In the altercation that followed a large number of Christians were seriously injured. Pastor Huang used an online blog to describe the removal of the crosses, and the demolition of some churches, as 'severe persecution' and an 'insult' to China's Christians. In one post he accused police of brutally beating members of the church. The blog has not been updated since the day Pastor Huang was taken into custody.



Those who know and love pastor Huang describe him as someone who has 'demonstrated outstanding loyalty to God... a very good church leader, a man of vision and someone with a strong sense of justice'. The authorities view him simply as a problem because of his public opposition to the anti-church campaign and have accused him of leading and organising others to protest.

Lin Qilei, a lawyer who has defended Christians and human rights activists in China, says the charges are regularly used against those who try to reason with or appeal to the Government through legal means. Another lawyer remarked that the pastor was simply leading the local Christians in prayer and peaceful protest, something that in his view did not constitute a crime. Wang Hongjie, another lawyer involved in the case, said that the pastor's detention was designed to send a message to Christians considering resisting the demolitions; that message being, 'If you people keep doing this, you will end up in the same situation.'

In an interview before his detention, Pastor Huang said: 'My heart was broken when I saw the authorities tearing down churches and hundreds of crosses, which are the symbols of our faith. I have been prepared for the worst since I posted many messages opposing the authorities' campaign to remove churches and crosses. I know I will be put in jail one day.'

Pastor Huang is married and has two children, aged 13 and 4.

HELPING CHRISTIANS IMPRISONED FOR THEIR FAITH

'I am in chains for Christ' Philippians 1:13

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PLEASE PRAY

- ▶ That the authorities will release Pastor Huang.
- ▶ That the Holy Spirit will equip and encourage him especially during his detention.
- ▶ That church members will care for and support Pastor Huang's wife and two children.

PLEASE WRITE

Pastor Huang's arrest notice is translated below.

Arrest Notice of Pingyang County Public Security Bureau

Seal: Pingyang County Public Security Bureau

Ping Gong Bu Tong Zi (2014) No. 7.

To family members of Huang Yizi:

Upon approval from Pingyang County People's Procuratorate, this bureau placed Huang Yizi under arrest on August 28, 2014 on suspicion of 'gathering a crowd to disrupt public order.' Huang Yizi is currently being detained at Pingyang County Detention Center.

Pingyang County Public Security Bureau

August 28, 2014



At present we believe it would be helpful to write to Pastor Huang to assure him that brothers and sisters in Christ are standing together with him in prayer and that he is not forgotten.

When writing please do not mention Release International, advance your political opinions or include anything which could be insulting to the authorities.

Letters and cards may be addressed to ;

Pastor Huang Yizi
c/o Release International
PO Box 54
Orpington
BR5 9RT

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