

# URGENT ACTION



UANetwork Office AIUSA 600 Pennsylvania Ave SE, Washington DC 20003 T. 202.544.0200 F. 202.675.8566 E. [uan@aiusa.org](mailto:uan@aiusa.org) [amnestyusa.org/urgent/](http://amnestyusa.org/urgent/)

*Note: Please write on behalf of these persons even though you may not have received the original UA when issued on June 19, 2009. Thanks!*

9 October 2009

Further information on UA 163/09 (19 June 2009) - Fear of torture/Religious discrimination

**CHINA**                      **Yan Dongfei (f), aged 60**  
   **Qiao Yongfang (m), aged 60, her husband**

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An elderly couple are about to be put on trial because they practice Falun Gong. They may receive lengthy prison terms on account of their religious beliefs. They are in custody in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, in northern China, and are at risk of torture or other ill-treatment.



Falun Gong practitioners Yan Dongfei and her husband Qiao Yongfang, each of them aged 60, have been held at the No. 1 Detention Center in the city of Hohhot (Mongolian spelling; in Chinese, “Huhehaote”) since 8 June. They were not formally arrested until 5 July on suspicion of “using a heretical organization to undermine implementation of the law”. Other Falun Gong members convicted on similar charges have been sentenced to eight years or more in prison. The procuratorate has twice sent their case back to the police, for lack of evidence: this means it is likely to go to trial very soon. Family members were previously told that the couple’s case was “serious” and “complicated,” and that Yan Dongfei and Qiao Yongfang were not “cooperating” with the authorities. Defendants who do not admit their “guilt” tend to receive harsher sentences.

Yan Dongfei and Qiao Yongfang have been allowed no visits or phone calls from their family since they have been in custody. They have been allowed only one visit from their lawyers, on 21 August, despite the lawyers' repeated efforts. A security official was present during the meeting, according to the lawyers, and this prevented the couple from speaking freely. During that meeting the lawyers learned that Qiao Yongfang had been tortured, resulting in injuries to his head, for which he is not known to have received adequate medical treatment. According to the lawyer, he appeared disoriented and depressed. It is not known whether Yan Dongfei has also been ill-treated.

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The spiritual movement Falun Gong was outlawed in China after its practitioners held a peaceful sit-in on Tiananmen Square in July 1999. The government launched a campaign of intimidation and persecution, directed by a special organization called the 610 Office. Tens of thousands of Falun Gong practitioners have been arbitrarily detained since the spiritual movement was banned as a “threat to social and political stability” in July 1999. Those accused of being Falun Gong leaders or organizers have been jailed. Others have been held in psychiatric hospitals, but the vast majority have been held in Re-education Through Labor facilities. Re-education Through Labor is a form of administrative detention imposed without charge, trial or judicial review

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***Amnesty International's mission is to undertake research and action focused on preventing and ending grave abuses of the rights to physical and mental integrity, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom from discrimination, within the context of its work to promote all human rights.***

Torture and other ill-treatment are endemic in all forms of detention, despite China's ratification of the UN Convention against Torture in 1988. Amnesty International also receives regular reports of deaths in custody; many of them caused by torture, in a variety of state institutions, including prisons, RTL facilities and police detention centers.

**RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible:**

- Urging the authorities to release Yan Dongfei and Qiao Yongfang immediately and unconditionally, unless they are charged with an internationally recognized crime and tried promptly in proceedings which meet fair trial standards;
- Expressing concern that they have been detained solely because of their religious beliefs, and are therefore prisoners of conscience;
- Calling on the authorities to guarantee that Yan Dongfei and Qiao Yongfang will not be tortured or ill-treated;
- Demanding that the authorities give them immediate access to their family, medical care and a lawyer of their choosing,

**APPEALS TO:**

**Huimin District People's Court**

Huiminqu Renmin Fayuan  
Hai Xi Lu  
Huhehaote Shi 010000  
Nei Menggu Zizhiqu  
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA  
**Salutation: Dear Head of the Court**

**Huimin District Procuratorate**

Huiminqu Renmin Jiancha Yuan  
He Fang  
Xin Hua Da Jie Xi Jie  
Huhehaote Shi 010000  
Nei Menggu Zizhiqu  
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA  
**Salutation: Dear Head of the Procuratorate**

**COPIES TO:**

**Huhehaote Procuratorate**

Huhehaote Shi Renmin Jiancha Yuan  
Huhehaote Shi 010000  
Nei Menggu Zizhiqu  
PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA  
**Salutation: Dear Head of the Procuratorate**

Ambassador Wen Zhong Zhou  
Embassy of the People's Republic of China  
2300 Connecticut Ave. NW  
Washington DC 20008  
**Fax: 1 202 328-2582**  
**Email: chinaembassy\_us@fmprc.gov.cn**

**PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY.**

**Check with the AIUSA Urgent Action office if sending appeals after 20 November 2009.**