

20 December 2004

Mr. Hu Jintao
President of the People's Republic of China
c/o Ministry of Justice
1 Huajiadija, Chaoyangqu
Beijingshi
People's Republic of China

Via Fax: + 86 10 647 298 63

Dear President Hu Jintao,

As leaders of organizations committed to promoting family planning programs that uphold informed choice and quality of care and are voluntary and free from coercion, we write to express our deep concern about the case of Mao Hengfeng.

It has come to our attention from Amnesty International and Human Rights in China that Mao Hengfeng was forced to have an abortion and dismissed from her job in 1988 because she had become pregnant after having given birth to twins. We are further disturbed to learn that because Mao Hengfeng has engaged in efforts to change China's family planning policies, she has been repeatedly detained by the police and is now sentenced to Re-education Through Labor (RTL) camp in Shanghai, where it is reliably reported that her treatment does not meet international human rights standards which forbid torture and cruel and unusual punishment.

Imprisonment for reproductive choices—pregnancy or abortion, and cruel and unusual punishment must not be tolerated in a world where human rights are respected. We are well aware of the many positive efforts made by China to ensure compliance with international norms in both human rights and in fulfillment of the ICPD and other UN commitments to the reproductive rights of couples. We know that even when changes are made at an official level that favor these rights, abuses can occur in the implementation of policies. It is critical to all of our efforts to achieve reproductive health worldwide, that China take all the steps necessary when such abuses occur to correct the problem.

We respectfully urge you to implement whatever governmental review is necessary to solve this problem and to inform the reproductive health community and media of the resolution of this matter. We hope this resolution will include either the release of Mao Hengfeng from RTL and the provision of reparations for her unjust treatment or to insure that her treatment in such a center is the result of proper due process and conforms with international human rights standards. We further urge you and your colleagues to continue to work with UNFPA and end any remaining remnants of coercion in China's family planning programs.

As a signatory to the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action, which specifically calls for governments to "secure conformity to human rights and to ethical and professional standards in the delivery of family planning and related reproductive health services aimed at ensuring responsible, voluntary and informed consent and also regarding service provision," the Chinese government has taken steps toward eliminating coercion in its national population and family planning programs. But more must be done.

As leaders of organizations working for sexual and reproductive health and rights for all, we support efforts that have been made to end such coercion, and we offer assistance to strengthen and advance those efforts. We have maintained a positive approach to your government's efforts to improve voluntarism in the Chinese family planning program, and call this situation to your attention out of a desire to work collaboratively and respectfully with China to achieve goals we have mutually committed to in the ICPD framework.

Respectfully yours,

Lilian Abracinskas
MYSU - Mujer y Salud en Uruguay (Women and Health in Uruguay)
Uruguay

Justice Asimeng
Program Manager
Christian Organization for Youth & Environmental Development
Ghana

Frans A. Baneke
Executive Director, World Population Foundation (WPF)
The Netherlands

Carmen Barroso
Regional Director, IPPF Western Hemisphere Region
USA

Sharon Camp
President and CEO, Alan Guttmacher Institute
USA

Amy Coen
President and CEO, Population Action International
USA

Sonia Corrêa
Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)
Brazil

Brian Dixon
Director of Government Relations, Population Connection
USA

Gloria Feldt
President, Planned Parenthood Federation of America
USA

Susana T. Fried
Program Director, International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission
USA

Adrienne Germain
President, International Women's Health Coalition
USA

Rev. Larry Greenfield
Advisory Board, Religious Institute on Sexual Morality, Justice, and Healing
USA

Silvia Henriquez
Executive Director, National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
USA

The Honourable Senator Mary Henry, MD
Vice-President IEPFPD
Chair of the Irish All Party Parliamentary Group on Population and Development
Ireland

Patricia Hindmarsh
Director, External Relations, Marie Stopes International
United Kingdom

Rea Howarth
Coordinator, Catholics Speak Out/Quixote Center
USA

Mary E. Hunt, Ph.D.
Co-director, WATER (Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics and Ritual)
USA

Pinar Ilkkaracan
Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) – New Ways
Turkey

Iolanda Iriarte
Spanish Federation of Family Planning – FPFE
Spain

Rabbi Steven B. Jacobs
Temple Kol Tikvah
USA

Jodi Jacobson
Executive Director, Center for Health and Gender Equity
USA

Sandhya Jain
Journalist
India

Frances Kissling
President, Catholics for a Free Choice
USA

Esmeralda Kuliesyte
Executive Director, Family Planning and Sexual Health Association
Lithuania

Katarina Lindahl
Secretary-General, Swedish Association for Sexuality Education (RFSU)
Sweden

Elizabeth Maguire
President, Ipas
USA

Rev. Dr. James Martin-Schramm
Associate Professor of Religion, Luther College
USA

Christine McCafferty, MP
All Party Parliamentary Group on
Population, Development and Reproductive Health
United Kingdom

Katherine McDonald
Executive Director, Action Canada for Population and Development
Canada

Nancy Northup
President, Center for Reproductive Rights
USA

Wanda Nowicka
President, Federation for Women and Family Planning
Poland

Sr. Dianna Ortiz
Torture Abolition and Survivor's Support Coalition International
USA

The Rev. Dr. George F. Regas
Rector Emeritus, All Saints Church, Pasadena, CA
Executive Director, The Regas Institute
Founder, Progressive Religious Partnership
USA

Christina Richards
Executive Director, Australian Reproductive Health Alliance
Australia

Ulla Sandbaek
Lutheran Minister
Former Member of the European Parliament
Denmark

Patricia M. Sears
NEKTI Consulting, Vermont
USA

Maureen Shea
Director of Government Relations, Episcopal Church USA
USA

Jill Sheffield
President, Family Care International
USA

Nicola Simmonds
Family Planning Association New Zealand
New Zealand

Rev. William G. Sinkford
President, Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations
USA

William A. Smith
Vice President for Public Policy
The Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS)
USA

Robert Toubon
Directeur de la stratégie, Equilibres & Populations
France

Emilie M. Townes
Carolyn Williams Beaird Professor of Christian Ethics
Union Theological Seminary
USA

Karma Lekshe Tsomo
President, Sakyadhita International Association of Buddhist Women
USA

Rev. Carlton Veazey
Executive Director, Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice
USA

James Wagoner
President, Advocates for Youth
USA

James E. Winkler
General Secretary, General Board of Church and Society
The United Methodist Church
USA

Leslie R. Wolfe
President, Center for Women Policy Studies
USA