



June 11, 2012

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Clinton:

Thanks to his bravery—and your leadership—Chen Guangcheng has settled safely in New York. For the first time in many years, he is living free from the threat of persecution. But the same cannot be said of human rights activists still in China, who face systematic harassment, detention, politically motivated prosecutions, and violence. The U.S. State Department's recent human rights report documents that the Chinese government is stepping up its attacks on dissidents, public interest lawyers, and their family members.

Mr. Chen's family members are among the persecuted. In a recent op-ed in the *New York Times*, Mr. Chen described what happened after he escaped from house arrest in April:

...[A] furious pack of thugs — not one in uniform, bearing no search or arrest warrants and refusing to identify themselves — scaled the wall of my brother Guangfu's farmhouse in the dead of night, smashed through the doors and brutally assaulted my brother.

After detaining him, the gang returned twice more, severely beating my sister-in-law and nephew [Chen Kegui] with pickax handles. At that point, Kegui tried to fend them off by seizing a kitchen knife and stabbing, but not killing, three of the attackers.

The authorities detained Chen Kegui, 32, and charged him with attempted murder. No family member has been able to contact him, and Mr. Chen fears that his nephew has been tortured. As Mr. Chen noted, although China has signed the U.N. Convention Against Torture and has laws on the books to implement it, the government frequently tortures activists and others to extract confessions. China suffers less from a lack of laws than from the government's refusal to equitably enforce them.

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The family has sought to retain lawyers for Chen Kegui, but the government is preventing them from working on the case. This is a violation of the core human rights principle of due process. Under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which China has signed but not ratified, people charged with a crime have the right to a lawyer of their own choosing.

It is a credit to the United States that Mr. Chen sought protection at the American Embassy, and the United States acted admirably in assisting him. I hope that the handling of his case marks the beginning of a shift in U.S. policy toward China.

In the wake of the Chen crisis, you stated that human rights are “at the heart of our diplomacy” with China. The State Department can demonstrate the seriousness of this commitment by highlighting Chen Kegui’s case in dealings with Chinese officials. In particular, we recommend that you urge the Chinese government to allow him to speak to family members and to be represented by the lawyers of his choosing.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Elisa Massimino
President and CEO