



“We Can Beat You to Death With Impunity”

**Secret Detention & Abuse of Women in China’s
“Black Jails”**

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The Network of Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD) is a coalition of Chinese and international human rights non-governmental organizations. The network is dedicated to the promotion of human rights through peaceful efforts to push for democratic and rule of law reforms and to strengthen grassroots activism in China.

CHRD engages in capacity building and provides advocacy tools as well as technical support to grassroots Chinese human rights defenders through organizing trainings on international human rights instruments and protections for human rights defenders.

CHRD administers a program of small grants for activists to implement human rights projects, and provides legal aid and emergency assistance to victims of human rights abuses.

CHRD investigates and monitors the human rights situation in China, disseminating human rights news updates, alerts to urgent situations, statements about important developments, and research reports and analyses to inform the media, policy makers, human rights agencies, and the general public.

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“In the black jail, the door was locked 24 hours a day...Thugs could do anything they wanted [to detainees]—bully, torture, humiliate, and abuse them. Some petitioners suffered back injuries while others were pulled into bathrooms,stripped naked, and doused with cold water. Thugs brazenly kicked female petitioners in the stomach.”

*Zhang Wanzhen, a petitioner once detained
in a black jail in Zhejiang Province¹*

“If you don’t sign [the guarantee to stop petitioning], we’ll never let you go. And we’ll send people to kill your two children and your husband. You’ll never be able to tell anybody and will spend the rest of your life looking for justice.”

*Village party secretary who ran a black jail in
Henan Province, to detained petitioner Ruan Chengye²*

“There is no such thing as the so-called ‘black jails.’”

*Chinese official, at the UN Committee on the Rights
of the Child review of China in September 2013³*

I. Executive Summary

Despite the Chinese government's staunch denials regarding the existence of black jails—and ineffective actions to shutter some of them—these unlawful detention facilities have proliferated and remain breeding grounds for horrific abuses. Women, who make up the great majority of black jail detainees, are particularly vulnerable to these abuses, which include physical assaults and sexual violence. The spread of black jails in the past few years corresponds with the gradual phasing out and abolishment of Re-education through Labor (RTL) camps in 2013.

To date, only a small number of government-hired interceptors and guards have faced punishments, albeit light ones, for abuses committed against women in black jails. Perhaps most galling, no government officials are known to have been investigated or criminally prosecuted for their involvement in operating the facilities, and many of them have also been perpetrators of violent abuses and threats. If victimized in a black jail, Chinese citizens are blocked from receptive avenues of justice, and courts rarely accept lawsuits that victims try to file or hear a case of black jail detention and abuse. Many victims persist in bringing cases against authorities through the petitioning process, even though they face more abuse, including further detention in black jails, as a consequence for seeking redress.

In this report, CHRD provides an overview of individual cases involving detention and violence against women in black jails, identifies several types of abuse against women, explains the factors that contribute to the proliferation and continued use of black jails, and exposes both the barriers for victims to seek justice and the impunity enjoyed by their abusers.

The report closes with recommendations for both the Chinese government and international stakeholders, including:

To the Chinese government:

- Release all detainees in black jails, and take effective legal measures to shut down all forms of secret and extrajudicial detention facilities.
- Adopt a comprehensive law on violence against women, including a provision about state-sponsored violence.
- Hold all those involved in the detention and abuse of men and women in black jails criminally responsible, with special attention paid to the sexual violence and abuse many women have suffered in these facilities.

- Provide legal remedies and make reparations, guarantee access to justice, and hold legally accountable those who retaliate against former detainees for pursuing justice.

To concerned governments and international bodies, such as the United Nations, the United States, the European Union and Member States:

- Express strong concern to Chinese authorities about the persistence and proliferation of black jails and abuses of detainees, especially women, during bilateral dialogues, UN Human Rights Council sessions, and high-level visits.
- The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, during its review of China in October 2014, and the Committee against Torture, during its expected review of China in 2015, should call on the Chinese government to fully comply with the relevant international conventions, and set free all detainees in black jails, hold the perpetrators legally accountable, and provide reparations to victims.

II. Introduction

In the middle of a winter's night in November 2012, Wang Gongying (王功英), a woman in her 60s, was awoken by men who broke into her house, dragged her out of bed, and took her and two of her family members to a guesthouse. En route, one of her abductors slapped Wang so hard that her face became swollen. Officials from the family planning commission of her hometown of Linyi City, in China's northeastern Shandong Province, used a room in the guesthouse as an illegal holding cell—or a “black jail”—to detain them. Officials wanted to stop Wang from traveling to higher-level government offices to lodge complaints—a process called “petitioning”—about her daughter being forced to undergo sterilization. Essentially, they were holding Wang hostage in order to force her daughter to come out of hiding. Ms. Wang, already struggling with heart problems and high blood pressure, was beaten and horribly mistreated. She shook from the freezing cold, fell sick, and had severe back pains. Only after three days was Wang allowed to call her family, who contacted the police. But the police refused to get involved because the matter implicated the family planning bureau.⁴

Ms. Wang's experience illustrates the fundamental illegality, brutality, and political function of “black jails” (*hei jianyu*), temporary detention facilities used to deprive the liberty of petitioners, activists, Falun Gong and other spiritual practitioners, for the purpose of enforcing government policies or punishing dissent, without any due process review. Moreover, her mistreatment underscores the appalling abuses

going on inside these holding cells, where most detainees are women. In preparing this report, CHRD has documented and examined more than a thousand individual cases over the past five years of illegal detention and abuses in hundreds of black jails across China. We have found ample evidence of violence against women in black jails, including physical assaults, sexual violence, deprivation of food, water, or natural light, and lack of adequate medical treatment for the injured and sick. In many cases, the same women have been subjected to several types of abuse.

Chinese officials vehemently deny that black jails exist when confronted about the issue. To navigate bad publicity and dodge criticism, however, authorities have moved to shutter some black jails. For instance, Beijing authorities announced a highly propagated drive to squash a sprawling black jail enterprise in the capital in late 2011, which ended with negligible results (see page 25). Meanwhile, authorities all over the country have continued to detain citizens in facilities run outside the criminal justice system in response to the top leadership's emphasis on "maintaining stability," and for the purpose of avoiding poor "performance" evaluation by higher officials, which is linked to the numbers of petitioners from their jurisdictions. Around major political events or important anniversaries, individuals have often been locked up to prevent them from taking grievances to the central government. Through research conducted for this report, CHRD has found that almost all the perpetrators of abuses and officials operating black jails have enjoyed virtual impunity, with very rare exceptions.

"I'm already disabled, so why are you treating me so harshly? The head of the security team answered, 'You're a terrorist, a female Bin Laden, so you have to be strictly handled.'"

*Chen Meijia, a petitioner held in a black jail in Shandong Province*⁵

Black jails have sprouted up around the country over the past few years. For instance, the number of "legal education classes," a particular form of black jail detention where individuals are locked up for weeks and forced to study government regulations, has reportedly risen; in the second half of 2013, incomplete data revealed that 1,044 Chinese citizens were seized and put into these "classes"—six times the number recorded over the first half of the year.⁶ Partial data compiled by CHRD shows that black jails were tied to about 240 of more than 1,800 documented cases of detention or mistreatment of Chinese citizens from January 2012 to September 2014—or about one in seven cases.⁷ The increased use of black jails, as this report finds, goes some way in filling the "gap" left by the abolished RTL camps, extralegal detention centers that gradually stopped receiving new detainees (or were converted to other types of detention facilities) by the end of 2013.

While black jails may be abundant, the nature of the most temporary facilities—set up “as-needed” and out of public view—makes accurate accounting of them very difficult.⁸ But some data is available. Following an investigation, several Chinese lawyers and activists in early 2013 confirmed that 96 places in just one city—Wuxi in Jiangsu Province—were being used as black jails, with many supposedly providing “legal education.” Among the facilities were a CCP school, middle schools, army bases, athletic facilities, guesthouses, hotels, storage facilities, and abandoned residences.⁹ In comparison, it is easier to try to quantify “legal education centers” that are established in fixed locations and sometimes labeled at their entrances. For example, a China-based NGO reported in April 2014 that 329 districts in 173 Chinese cities had a total of 449 facilities openly designated for “legal education.”¹⁰

In conducting research for this report, CHRD has collaborated with human rights groups based inside China that over several years have collected data and interviewed black jail victims and their families and lawyers. (For fear of government reprisal, the groups’ names are withheld from the report.) CHRD also consulted with Chinese human rights lawyers and other members of China’s civil society. Cases covered in this report took place in many locations in China, including the municipalities of Beijing and Tianjin, and the provinces of Hebei, Heilongjiang, Henan, Hubei, Hunan, Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Shaanxi, and Shandong. The bulk of the cases examined have taken place since 2012, with a few going back to 2009. (See the appendices for a map of locations for cases in this report as well as partial data of cases of women held in black jails.)

III. Women Account for Majority of Victims

This report responds to the need for a study concentrating on women’s detention and mistreatment in black jails. A lack of attention on the issue leaves women held in this form of illegal detention only more vulnerable to abuses. Though men are also locked up in black jails, CHRD estimates women make up approximately 80% of detainees in the facilities, based on data and anecdotal information gathered from lawyers, petitioners, and human rights groups working inside China.¹¹ Black jail detainees, such as many whose cases are examined in this report, include some of the most vulnerable women in Chinese society: elderly women, women in fragile health, impoverished rural migrant women, women who have lost land or were victimized by forced eviction, disabled women with disabilities, and mothers with young children.¹²

There are more reasons to highlight abuses of women in particular in black jails. Typically guarded by males, women are more likely than men to encounter physical,

sexual, and verbal abuses and threats. Women are also more likely to be detained and abused for the purposes of intimidating or punishing members of their family, as in Wang Gongying's case above. Women are also believed to comprise the vast majority of petitioners, who make up by far the largest population of black jails detainees; for the most part, women have taken it upon themselves to travel far beyond their hometowns to present their own and their families' grievances and seek justice.¹³ In a typical chain of events, petitioners are intercepted in provincial capitals or Beijing by officials or hired guards, who escort them back to their hometowns, often by force, where they can be locked up to both punish them and to restrict their mobility to petition again. Detention in black jails is just one form of retribution for those who seek redress over grievances that involve rights violations by local officials, ranging from forced abortions to illegal land grabs or home demolitions.¹⁴

This report's focus is partly spurred by the shocking exposé that came out more than a year prior about the torture and mistreatment of female detainees at an RTL camp. In April 2013, a report appeared in a state publication about the brutal conditions at the Masanjia Women's RTL camp in Liaoning Province.¹⁵ An independent Chinese photographer also made a documentary film that featured interviews with several of the victims.¹⁶ The revelations may well have accelerated the momentum to put an end to RTL, an extralegal detention system in which police committees detained citizens for up to four years without a trial; the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) announced in November 2013 the abolishment of RTL.¹⁷ Compared to alarming cases from Masanjia and other labor camps, similar abuses of women in China's black jails have attracted arguably less notice. Still, there have been some limited Chinese media coverage and international media reporting, as well as reports by human rights groups on the illegality of the facilities and general abuses happening inside them.¹⁸

Meanwhile, the UN's primary women's rights bodies have put a spotlight on the conditions of Chinese women in detention. In December 2013, the UN Working Group on Discrimination against Women in Law and in Practice concluded a mission to China, noting that the country has the fastest growing female prison population in the world. Though it did not discuss black jails in its report, the Working Group did address two other types of extralegal detention: RTL, which the government had already announced was being eradicated; and the system of "custody and education," ostensibly designed to "reform" sex workers and their clients, in which females make up the majority of more than 15,000 detainees in 116 centers nationwide.¹⁹

In addition, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) has since early 2014 proceeded with its review of China's implementation

of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which China ratified in 1980. The formal review, which takes place on October 23, 2014, presents another opportunity for public attention and advocacy on the issue of women's rights in China, including black jail detention and abuse. The Convention "applies to violence perpetrated by public authorities" and states "violence against women puts their health and lives at risk."²⁰ In its Concluding Observations from CEDAW's previous review of China in 2005, the Committee expressed concerns over reported incidents of violence against women in government detention centers, and recommended that China "prevent any detention of women without due legal process."²¹ Unfortunately, it is clear that this recommendation has not been implemented by China, as seen with the persistent detention and abuse of women in black jails.

IV. The Various Guises of Black Jails

In this report, the term "black jails" broadly refers to extralegal facilities used to detain persons without any due process, and which are operated by government officials or hired guards, often in properties owned or leased by the government. These facilities do not provide documentation of detention—the bare minimum "evidence" that individuals were deprived of their freedom, and a potentially important record for seeking redress over abuses later. In many instances, holding cells are crowded, small, and unventilated. Guards often confiscate detainees' personal possessions, including cell phones, effectively cutting them off from the outside world.

The black jails examined in this report are mainly of two kinds: temporary holding cells set up in various buildings and out of public view, and more permanent facilities that the government has "formalized" so as to project a measure of legitimacy and legality. In the former case, temporary black jails have been set up inside hotels, guesthouses, residential buildings, psychiatric hospitals, armories, storage facilities, farms, and factories, among many other places.

"I became dependent on my tormentors, who kept me and watched me in the hotel, across the hallway from my room, for 18 months. I had no choice. I was homeless and disabled after they demolished my house and injured me. I tried to self-immolate three times before they locked me up."

Petitioner-activist Ge Zhihui, as told to CHRD in March 2014

More "formalized" black jails have signage at their entrances referring to them as

“legal education (or study) centers,” “reprimand and education centers,” or “relief services centers.” Public knowledge of these more established facilities remains elusive, as authorities consistently refuse to divulge information about their finances, management, or actual purpose.

So-called “legal education centers” have been set up in provincial and city government liaison offices in Beijing as well as CCP schools around the country.²² According to the CCP, “legal education” is administered mandatorily to detainees in these repurposed party schools, but the programs appear based on political directives and without set regulations.²³ Authorities have ordered petitioners sent to “legal education” for two to eight weeks, with the “classes” often serving as a pretext to legitimize unlawful detention.²⁴ On the city and provincial levels, the facilities have a primary mission to curtail citizens’ petitioning activities by restricting their freedom, especially to prevent them from taking grievances to central authorities in Beijing, while forcing them to undergo “education” on local rules and regulations. In environments that can be marked by violence and intimidation, an important component of the “classes” is to pressure individuals to sign guarantees to stop petitioning or to accept financial deals, which essentially forces them to drop their grievances.²⁵ The government can send a person to “legal education” multiple times. Just as one example, petitioner Cao Xingfen (曹杏芬) of Jiangsu Province was locked up in “legal education” classes on three occasions in Wuxi City in 2012 and 2013; she was detained for between two and seven weeks each time, for a total of 91 days.²⁶

“Don’t sign [the compensation agreement] then. You won’t be let go today, and you won’t be allowed to eat this afternoon. We’ll beat you to death tonight, cut you into pieces, and feed you to the fish.”

Police officer to petitioner Liu Yinzhi, who was detained in a “legal education class” in Hubei Province²⁷

The openly operating “relief services centers” in Beijing are run by the government, with the two best known located at Jiujingzhuang and Majialou in Fengtai District. These “centers” serve the specific function of holding petitioners and other “undesirable” migrants who are rounded up by police or hired thugs. In the centers, detainees are “sorted” by province of origin and held until they are taken back to their hometowns by local authorities, a process that can take hours or even days. These “centers” are rife with abuses, with crowded and unsanitary conditions where beatings and deprivation of food and water are commonplace. Once back in their hometowns, individuals are often directly put into local black jails.²⁸



Detainees inside the “relief services centers” at Majialou (left) and Jiujingzhuang (right) in Beijing. Individuals are sorted by province and held for hours or days, and often face abject conditions and even violence, before being taken back to their hometowns. (Images: RDN)

Authorities have invested millions of dollars to expand and “improve” these “centers,” essentially upgrading a centralized system of illegal detention set up to facilitate the forced return of petitioners. With its enlargement, Majialou can now reportedly hold as many as 5,000 individuals at a time—nearly a 10-fold increase from its original capacity. Faced with large numbers of petitioners flocking to Beijing from the provinces,²⁹ local officials keep up a high demand for the “centers,” often having limited resources to send petitioners quickly back to their hometowns.³⁰

The longest reported black jail detentions have gone on for several years. In some cases, such lengthy detentions in unknown locations constitute “enforced disappearance.”³¹ Hebei Province petitioner Li Zhiyan (李志艳) and her older daughter, Zhang Zijuan (张紫娟), have been illegally held for nearly six years in Baoding City. (It is believed they are still detained as of the release of this report.) Seized in November 2008 after Li’s husband was killed in a dispute with local cadres, the two have been held in government offices, a firefighting unit, a courtyard in a rural area, and a nursing home. Li’s younger daughter, who has appealed for their release, was threatened by the head of the public security bureau in Qingyuan County in Baoding, who told her to stop advocating for her family members or he would kill her or lock her up for 50 years.³²

“This is our turf, and you can’t record or videotape anything. If you die, no one can prove it, and we’ll say it was from natural causes.”

*Guard to Fu Wenxia, a petitioner who was detained in a black jail in Hebei Province*³³

In addition, Hebei authorities held petitioner Xie Yuhua (谢玉花) in black jails for over a year in Baoding, from January 2, 2013, to January 9, 2014. Police seized the then-70-year-old Xie while she was trying to lodge grievances in Beijing. They demanded she make a criminal charge against activist Ge Zhihui (葛志慧), who authorities claimed had organized petitioners to gather in the capital. Refusing to implicate Ge, Xie was sent back to Hebei and illegally detained. Xie was in poor health during her lengthy detention, having been physically weakened by years of abuse in RTL camps, where she had been sent four times.³⁴

V. Types of Abuse Against Women in Black Jails

In detention facilities operated outside of the law, women are especially susceptible to violence and have suffered various forms of physical abuses and mistreatment, including sexual assaults, violent beatings, abject conditions, and denied medical attention. The characteristically inhumane and degrading conditions inside black jails have led to illnesses and degenerating health, and urgent medical treatment has often been delayed or denied entirely. In the majority of cases below, the perpetrators of abuse are hired guards or government officials.

Sexual violence

Human rights groups have reported on rapes and other sexual assaults committed by male guards in black jails, crimes that have on rare occasions been reported in some state-run media. In a highly publicized case, a guard raped Anhui petitioner Li Ruirui (李蕊蕊) in a black jail in Beijing in August 2009.³⁵ In another, petitioner Chen Chunhong (陈春红) was sexually harassed and tortured in a black jail in Zhenjiang City, Jiangsu Province in August 2013. Trying to force Chen to accept a compensation offer for her demolished home, guards stripped her half-naked and subjected her to the “airplane,” a form of torture in which a person’s hands are tied behind their back and lifted high into the air. At one point, the secretary of a local political-legal committee came in her cell and slapped Chen in the face, causing her to bleed from her mouth.³⁶

It is not uncommon for black jail guards to rip female detainees' clothing, or even to strip them naked to intimidate and sexually harass them. In February 2013, more than 10 interceptors from Henan Province barged into a women's restroom at the Majialou "relief services center" in Beijing and attacked Song Qiaozhi (宋巧枝), tearing all her clothes off after she refused to go back with them to Kaifeng City. A female petitioner recorded a video of Song after the incident, with her draped only in a blanket. Several detainees there attempted to grab the men who had assaulted Song, but security forces at Majialou helped them escape. Once released, other detainees said that the Kaifeng government had hired the men who had assaulted Song.³⁷ In another case, petitioner Fu Wenxia (付文侠) reported that her undergarments were torn off after four thugs dragged her to a hotel in Hebei in November 2012. The men also ripped off Fu's shoes, twisted her arms behind her back, and slapped and threatened her.³⁸



Chen Chunhong (left) was sexually assaulted and tortured in a black jail in Jiangsu. Song Qiaozhi (right), distraught after being attacked, had to cover herself with a blanket after guards tore off her clothes at the Majialou "relief services center." (Images: HRCC)

Physical assaults

Violent physical assaults in black jails have caused many injuries and even the deaths of several women. For example, petitioner Li Shulian (李淑莲) died under suspicious circumstances in an illegal holding cell in Shandong Province in August 2009. Police claimed that she hanged herself, while her family insisted she had died after being beaten by guards. In another case, Wang Yujie (王玉洁), a 24-year-old

woman, eventually died after being injected with an unknown substance at the “Hubei Provincial Legal Education Institute” in Wuhan City on March 11, 2011. Wang, who guards were forcing to write a statement denouncing her spiritual practice, could not walk after the injection and endured great pain. She was detained until May 2011 and then returned home, where she died four months later.³⁹

In March 2013, an unidentified elderly woman was reportedly beaten to death by guards in a Beijing black jail (the holding cell, which was set up in a hotel, was only discovered in November of that year).⁴⁰ Months after this tragedy, petitioner Wang Delan (王德兰) is believed to have been tortured to death in a black jail in Hubei Province on August 7, 2013, about a week after she was escorted back from Beijing by local officials to an illegal detention facility in her hometown of Yicheng City. Yicheng police claim that the 59-year-old Wang committed suicide, and authorities rushed to cremate the body over the family’s objection.⁴¹

It is common for interceptors of petitioners and guards at black jails to resort to violence to punish and intimidate detainees. A serious beating caused Zhang Yueling (张月玲) to vomit blood and briefly lose consciousness when she was detained between January 9-29, 2014, in an “irregular petitioning education and reprimand center” in Henan. Officials from the Xuchang City Public Security Bureau and Xuchang City Letters and Visits Bureau had established the center.⁴³ Petitioner Sheng Qiaozhen (盛巧真) of Shandong Province was beaten by her abductors en route to a black jail in February 2014 and again by the guards upon her arrival. She was then frequently subjected to beatings throughout a one-month detention. Sheng was locked up with her arm kept against a radiator, scalding her and leaving a large scar. Guards could hear her cries for help as they closely monitored her in round-the-clock shifts.⁴⁴

“We can beat you to death with impunity.”

Guard to petitioner Zhou Dazhen, who was detained in a black jail in Hubei Province⁴²

The perpetrators of violence against women at black jails include not only hired guards, but also local officials who want to teach detainees a lesson and make them submit to government orders. Jiang Nianfang (姜念芳), a petitioner from Shandong Province, was seized by police officers from the Zibo City Public Security Bureau and taken to a black jail in January 2014. The local party secretary and other officials violently beat her, leaving her head, back, and chest swollen and bruised. The party secretary reportedly told the guards, “It doesn’t matter if you kill her.”⁴⁵



Wang Delan (left) was reportedly tortured to death in a black jail in Hubei. Zhang Yueling (right) vomited blood and lost consciousness after a beating in an “irregular petitioning education and reprimand center” in Henan. (Images: 64tianwang, HRCC)

Violent assaults have also been widely reported in the “relief services centers” in Beijing. In the “center” at Majialou, Shen Zhihua (沈志华), a petitioner from Zhejiang Province, was violently assaulted by approximately 20 men on November 11, 2013. They knocked Shen down to the ground and beat her, and one used Shen’s own scarf to strangle her until she lost consciousness. When Shen woke up, she found that she had bruises all over her body.⁴⁶ Also at Majialou, Jilin petitioner Dong Kuihong (董奎红) was so badly beaten by guards on December 16, 2013, that her assailants, fearing that she might die, sent her to a nearby hospital, where she was diagnosed with a skull fracture and two head wounds.⁴⁷ Guards at the “center” at Jiuqingzhuang beat Hubei petitioner Wang Junfang (汪俊芳) on the head, causing her to spit up blood, after she was seized while begging in the streets on October 1, 2012. (Many petitioners, often impoverished on the long and exhausting road to seek justice for personal grievances, sometimes resort to begging just to survive.) Three other women who were seized along with Wang called the police during Wang’s attack, but police refused to come to their assistance.⁴⁸

Abject conditions

Besides violent assaults, women detained in black jails have been subjected to various kinds of cruel and degrading conditions. As a means to punish and assert control over detainees, guards have in many cases confined them for prolonged periods in dark

cells without natural light and deprived them of food, water, sleep, or other basic necessities, such as blankets and warm clothing in cold weather.

Chen Chunhong was not allowed to have any natural light for about 100 days in a holding cell after she was brought back from Beijing and thrown into a black jail in Jiangsu, where she was kept for nine months from January to September 2013. She was also only given one meal a day (see above for more on Chen's case).⁴⁹ Detainee Jiang Nianfang of Shandong was not given adequate food or warm clothing for days (see above for more on Jiang's case).⁵⁰ After being intercepted in Beijing, petitioner Feng Lanmei (冯兰美) was forcibly returned to Jiangsu on March 18, 2013. She was then detained in a black jail, reportedly on orders of the Rugao City Public Security Bureau, until she managed to escape on April 15. During her detention, Feng was given very little to eat or drink, and she was not allowed to bathe or given a change of clothing. Although she was being held in a cold room, her guards took her shoes away. For one stretch of five days and nights, she only had very thin clothes to wear and slept on a bed frame without a mattress or blanket.⁵¹

After Hubei officials forcibly returned her from Beijing, petitioner Zhou Dazhen (周大珍) was held in a hotel from August 18 to 30, 2013. Zhou became ill but guards refused to allow her any medical treatment, instead beating her and moving her to two more black jails. Guards threatened to kill her and gave her little food and water. On October 17, Zhou fell ill again while again detained, but guards blocked her from seeing a doctor.⁵³ Zhang Dinghua (张定花), a petitioner from Lianyungang City in Jiangsu, was held in black jails three times between March 2012 and January 2013, for a total of one month. Zhang reportedly was not given food or a blanket despite cold temperatures during the wintertime. Guards also deprived her of sleep, and when they noticed that she had dozed off, they would pour hot sauce on Zhang's eyes to wake her up.⁵⁴

“Dozens of people guarded us in 24-hour shifts, illegally restricting our freedom. One afternoon, when guards were not paying attention, I couldn't stand it any longer and ran into the hallway, grabbed a fire extinguisher to defend myself, and went to a window on the fourth floor and prepared to jump out. But I was caught and then put into another windowless room, where about a dozen vicious thugs beat me and wrestled me onto a bed. Their beatings left me dazed and badly bruised.”

Xu Liyan, a petitioner held in a “legal education class” in Jiangsu Province⁵²

Petitioners locked up to receive “legal education” can face similar abuses. Liu Yinzhi (刘银芝), a petitioner from Hubei Province, was held in a guesthouse in Wuhan City for 20 days after being seized by unidentified individuals on September 9, 2012. Guards took away Liu’s hairpins and shoes, presumably to render her defenseless and immobile. Kept in a filthy room, Liu was not given sufficient food or water or a change of clothing, and she was refused medication for diarrhea and other illnesses.⁵⁵ Petitioner Tao Guofen (陶国芬) of Jiangsu was locked up in a black jail in Wuxi for a month, during which time she was subjected to ill treatment. Police from Zhangjing Town summoned her for questioning on November 11, 2013, and two days later took her to a guesthouse set up for “legal education.” She was held in a room with no bed or blanket and just four chairs to sleep on. She fainted at one point but was not taken to a hospital or given any medical treatment. For food, guards only gave her two pieces of steamed bread a day. She reported that the room’s tile floor was extremely cold, forcing her to sit on a chair for 13 days until she was released in early December 2013.⁵⁶



Feng Lanmei (left) and Liu Yinzhi (right) were deprived of necessities—including food, water, adequate clothing, and medication—while detained in black jails. (Images: RDN, Boxun)

Deprivation of medical treatment

Depriving medical treatment is a frequent form of punishment for detainees who have medical conditions or fall sick in black jails. Even when detainees are treated at hospitals, those running the black jails are known to have refused to pay their medical bills. In the above case of Dong Kuihong, who was held at the Majialou

“relief services center” in Beijing, local officials whose hired personnel assaulted her refused to pay for her treatment at Nanyuan Hospital, where she was sent after her skull was fractured and she suffered other injuries from a beating.⁵⁷ At the “center” at Jiujingzhuang, Hunan petitioner Hu Chunliang (胡春良), who suffers from several serious illnesses, was held without access to medicine in May 2014. In desperate need of medication, Hu called the emergency police phone number more than 10 times to report her detention. However, officers refused to help her, saying that her detention was a government matter.⁵⁸

Zhao Chunqin (赵春琴), a petitioner from Zhenjiang City in Jiangsu, was held in a black jail without access to proper medical treatment for 11 days after suffering injuries from being violently abducted from a friend’s home in Beijing on March 3, 2014. On that day, the head of the Zhenjiang City Bureau for Letters and Calls, along with two other local officials, came to the residence with dozens of police officers and thugs, broke down the door to a bedroom, and attacked Zhao. A savage beating left her face covered in blood, damaged one of her ears, and caused extreme pain in her chest. She was then put into a car and taken to a farm that was being used as a black jail. There, three female guards told her they were not allowed to take her to a hospital or help her unless she signed an agreement to cease petitioning. Over several days, her conditions—a head wound, abdominal pain, and bloody urine—worsened to such an extent that the owner of the farm finally bought her some medicine. Zhao was driven home on March 14, but she refused to get out of the car and demanded instead to be taken to a hospital for treatment of her injuries. However, her captors left her at the side of a river, where she stayed until police arrived. She was then taken to a police station, but officers said they could not assist her since government officials had detained her.⁵⁹

The experience of Zhang Guizhi (张桂枝) is another example of denied medical attention. Zhang became very ill after she was detained and handcuffed in a black jail in Zhengzhou City in Henan in November 2012. In an interview, she said that she had gone on a hunger strike to protest her mistreatment, causing her mouth to bleed and a lack of blood flow in her chest and head. She was eventually taken to a hospital for a physical examination, but authorities did not tell her the results nor allow her to speak to doctors. Zhang’s captors later took her to the Zhengzhou City RTL camp, which refused to accept her due to her poor physical condition, so the guards simply took her home.⁶⁰

The stress of being locked up, often incommunicado and under harsh conditions, has triggered heart attacks and even pushed some women to attempt suicide. Jiangsu

petitioner Gu Yinying (顾银英) tried to kill herself in a black jail set up in a Wuxi guesthouse in November 2013. After being abducted and locked up, Gu was in such a state of despair that she cut her wrist and severed a vein. She survived, but for hours was not given medical treatment for the self-inflicted wounds; the head of the guards only gave her a napkin to dress her wrist. She ultimately persuaded the guards to call a doctor, and they took her to a hospital. The doctor stitched up her wrist and gave her medicine to prevent a fever, but then the guards just returned her to the black jail.⁶¹

Many black jail detainees are elderly women in fragile health. The physical and emotional stress of being locked up has occasionally led them to face life-threatening medical emergencies. Tan Fengrong (谭风荣), a petitioner in her mid-70s, was detained on two occasions—for a total of nearly one month—after having had two heart bypass operations, putting her life in peril. Tan said that the stress she experienced, both physically and psychologically, was so extreme that she thought she would die while being held. She was detained in a CCP school in Hedong District in Tianjin that had been partly converted into a black jail, first during the 18th CCP Congress in November 2013 and then in March 2014, around the time of the “Two Meetings” in Beijing—the National People’s Congress and Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference.⁶²



Zhao Chunqin (left) was held in a black jail without access to proper medical treatment for injuries suffered in a violent abduction. Wu Zhongqin (right) had three heart attacks in police custody, including two in black jails. (Images: RDN)

The “relief services center” at Jiujiangzhuang, which has thousands of detainees passing through every year, has been the site of several reported heart attacks. Tianjin petitioner Wan Shuming (万淑明) suffered a heart attack there after being seized and beaten on May 19, 2012, by officials from Tianjin’s Hedong District Housing Management Department. After her heart attack, Wan was taken to Hangtian Hospital, where many petitioners are treated if they become ill or injured at Jiujiangzhuang.⁶³ The officials from Tianjin closely monitored Wan at the hospital and prevented supporters from visiting her.

Wu Zhongqin (吴忠琴), a petitioner from Xi’an, Shaanxi Province, suffered three heart attacks after being seized and later detained at Jiujiangzhuang and another black jail in her hometown. The first heart attack occurred on August 14, 2012, after Wu was held for 26 hours at the Qujiang New District Police Station. On November 9 that year, she suffered another heart attack when thugs took her to the Jiujiangzhuang “center.” They did not take her to the hospital, instead holding her for six days without allowing a doctor to examine her. A year later, on November 7, 2013, police locked Wu up again in a holding cell, where she suffered a third heart attack. She was taken to Xi’an People’s No. 9 Hospital and treated for four days while thugs and police guarded her to prevent her from escaping.⁶⁴

VI. Why Have Black Jails Flourished?

Black jails first noticeably mushroomed after the dismantling of the official “custody and repatriation” (*shourong qiansong*) system in 2003. For two decades prior, custody and repatriation centers had served the purpose of detaining migrants and petitioners—who had gone to the cities to look for work or to Beijing to seek redress for injustices—or other “troublesome” individuals seized by police, including beggars, vagrants, and even dissidents. With the abolition of the “custody and repatriation” system, authorities had since relied heavily on RTL camps. But after the labor camps were themselves being phased out in 2013, black jails became a handy substitute.

Local and provincial authorities have resorted to temporary holding cells to continue stopping and punishing petitioners and others. These officials have been highly incentivized by allocations of “stability maintenance fees” and funding based on performance evaluations by central authorities. The evaluations have weighed the “performance” of local governments by considering, among other factors, the number of residents from their jurisdictions who tried to reach central authorities with complaints. Central authorities tried to use this evaluation system to stop petitioners

from traveling to Beijing and from gathering in “crowds” to demand justice, actions that they deemed could potentially threaten political “stability.” Black jails thus became a key tool for stemming the flood of petitioners into Beijing in order to “maintain stability.”

As higher-level authorities have linked the presence of petitioners in Beijing to the “performance” of local officials, the latter have resorted to severe and swift punishment of anyone caught traveling to petition. Seeing that petitioners’ reaching Beijing could put their bonuses and promotions at risk, local officials have hired security personnel (often thugs) or ordered government staff to “intercept” petitioners on their way to or in Beijing.⁶⁵ Once “escorted” home, petitioners have faced administrative detentions, RTL terms, more time in local black jails, or other retaliatory punishments.

VII. The Illegality of Black Jails

The detention and mistreatment of individuals in black jails contravene a plethora of international human rights laws and treaties that China has signed or ratified and is obligated to respect. These include the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which China signed in 1998, and the Convention against Torture, which China ratified in 1988. That China has refused to ratify the ICCPR does not dissolve its “obligation not to defeat the object and purpose” of that Covenant.⁶⁶

In many instances, detention in black jails constitutes “enforced disappearance” under the Convention against Torture.⁶⁷ The International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, which China has not joined, has characterized “enforced disappearance” as a deprivation of liberty “followed by a refusal to acknowledge the deprivation... or by concealment of the fate or whereabouts of the disappeared person.”⁶⁸ Under these circumstances, extralegal procedures or punishments leave a detainee especially vulnerable to abuse, in effect exposing her to greater potential for mistreatment and with less ability to seek redress later (see section X).

In its Concluding Observations to the 2008 review, CAT expressed concern about China’s use of secret detention facilities, including black jails. CAT considers black jails a violation of the Convention Against Torture, as “detainees are allegedly deprived of fundamental legal safeguards, including an oversight mechanism in regard to their treatment and review procedures with respect to their detention.”⁶⁹

Furthermore, although the government affirmed to CAT that allegations of torture should be investigated,⁷⁰ Chinese law-enforcement bodies tend to be unwilling to look into reports of black jail abuses, partly since they are often complicit in ordering illegal detentions. In addition, judicial authorities are under the control of the Communist Party and the government at various levels of administration, and thus are unlikely to consider lawsuits against police or officials involved in running black jails.

Detention and abuse of women in black jails by government officials or their hired guards is a form of state-perpetuated violence and state-sponsored involuntary disappearance, the eradication of which are called for in a number of international instruments (in addition to those cited above), including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women.⁷¹

Detention and abuse of women in black jails also contradict Chinese government claims made to UN human rights bodies about its achievements in protecting women's rights and interests. Dating back to 2004, China has reported to CEDAW on official steps being taken to halt violence against women, violations of women's rights, and illegal detention of women.⁷² But in fact, all gender-specific guarantees concerning women in custody under both international and domestic law—like those on health and sanitation, pregnancy, and gender segregation—are effectively deprived when women are placed in black jails and outside of legal protections.⁷³ Responding to allegations of violence against female detainees raised during the 2008 review of China by the UN Committee against Torture (CAT), the government commented, “China has always attached great importance to the protection of the legitimate rights and interests of women in custody and has forbidden abuse, corporal punishment and ill-treatment of women in custody.”⁷⁴

Locking up women in black jails—and associated abuses discussed in this report—breaches many Chinese laws and standards as well. It violates the country's Law on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women in terms of unlawful detention and deprivation of women's freedom.⁷⁵ Government failures to prosecute those who hold individuals in black jails violates China's Criminal Law, which stipulates imprisonment for up to three years for “[w]hoever unlawfully detains another person or unlawfully deprives the personal freedom of another person by any other means.” According to the law, a punishment should even be heavier if a perpetrator resorts to “battery or humiliation.”⁷⁶ Under these provisions, officials who order black jail detentions and those who seize and assault detainees should be held criminally liable.

Using black jails to detain women—while allowing perpetrators to avoid criminal prosecution—also stands opposed to goals in China’s two Human Rights Actions Plans, which call for protecting the rights and interests of women and for strengthening efforts in investigating and punishing cases of illegal detention.⁷⁷ The deprivation of medical treatment, a widespread violation in black jails, violates China’s Constitution, which guarantees citizens the right to “material assistance” when they are ill.⁷⁸

The use of black jails to punish petitioners also runs counter to regulations that protect the right of Chinese citizens to present grievances and safeguard them from retaliation.⁷⁹ Some national and provincial rules prescribe that petitioners who have allegedly violated laws be given “legal education” or administrative punishments, among other available measures.⁸⁰ These regulations and rules contradict the Constitution, which gives citizens the right to “criticize and make suggestions to any state organ or functionary.”⁸¹ By making “legal education” mandatory and punitive, the government readily permits authorities to mete out extralegal detention in black jails.

VIII. Black Jail Denials

Despite abundant evidence to the contrary, the Chinese government has categorically denied the existence of black jails in China. In February 2009, the government maintained that “there are no black jails in the country” at the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of China before the UN Human Rights Council.⁸² That November, a Ministry of Public Security spokeswoman responded to a question about black jail abuses by saying the ministry itself was not responsible for any alleged violations and could not verify that China had any such facilities.⁸³ During the September 2013 Committee on the Rights of the Child review of China, the issue of children reportedly being detained in black jails emerged. In response, the Chinese government merely repeated its position from the previous UPR, asserting that “there is no such thing as the so-called ‘black jails.’”⁸⁴ A month later, the government was resolute about its stance on black jails at China’s second UPR as well as on the treatment of petitioners; during the interactive dialogue with Member States and NGO stakeholders, the Chinese delegation declared that China “would never allow suppression of petitioners or establishment of any forms of ‘black jails.’”⁸⁵

While the Chinese government steadfastly denies the existence of black jails, some journalists from state media continue to take risks to report stories about abuses occurring inside the facilities. Only two weeks after the Ministry of Public Security spokeswoman’s statement in late 2009, a state publication ran a story about the

large-scale detention of petitioners in black jails in Beijing, exposing the political and financial incentives for government officials to lock up petitioners.⁸⁶ In September 2010, the state news agency Xinhua reported that two individuals partly responsible for running a black jail—the chairman and general manager of a security firm named Anyuanding—had been criminally detained.⁸⁷ The story, however, was quickly removed from Xinhua’s website and other state media outlets.⁸⁸ At the time, Anyuanding had agreements with 19 provincial governments to seize and detain petitioners in Beijing before handing them over to local officials. The main outcomes of the Anyuanding case were not criminal but organizational: the company brought in new managers, board of directors, and investors, and eventually changed its name, while the black jail business was spread out more widely in Beijing.⁸⁹ Also, an official story in December 2012 about interceptors being imprisoned turned out to be false, and it was hastily scrubbed from official websites.⁹⁰

IX. New Policies Failing to Address Core Problems

The central government has tried to address some of the problems that have led to the proliferation of black jails and mistreatment of petitioners in particular. Several regulations were introduced in 2013 and 2014 to set new rules on how petitioners can present grievances and how officials should handle citizens who bring complaints. With these policy changes, authorities have acknowledged that petitioners face harassment, and that the system of petitioning is fraught with abuses and inefficiency. But so far, these policies have failed to approach some root causes of the problems and, unsurprisingly, have seemed ineffective.

In February 2013, central authorities ordered the State Bureau for Letters and Visits to stop compiling monthly lists “ranking” local officials based on the number of petitioners from their jurisdictions reaching Beijing. However, officials in the provinces suspect that such record keeping—a major trigger for the creation of black jails—is still being done in some form. Under this notion, officials, who are constantly pressured to “maintain stability” as a principal duty of governance, may lack motivation to stop using black jails to detain petitioners and other “troublesome” individuals.⁹¹

The government launched an online system for citizens to file grievances in July 2013, but the process has not yet proven effective at addressing complaints. In fact, petitioners fear that, by submitting their grievances online—where they are required to register their name and give other identification information—they will be targeted by local officials, who are often the subject of the complaints. The online channel is

no doubt intended to discourage petitioners from delivering in-person grievances, but local officials have incentives to retaliate against those who complain to central authorities about corruption or abuses at home. Thus, the online filing system does not persuade local authorities to close down black jails at the local level.⁹²

In November 2013, a deputy director of the State Bureau for Letters and Visits declared that acts to intercept, detain, or take revenge on petitioners will be investigated and punished. However, such an official statement has not inspired confidence in petitioners or in those who have long observed illegal detention and mistreatment in black jails.⁹³ There remains no expectation that the judicial system will punish perpetrators according to the law, whether they are officials or government-hired personnel.

Regulations used by the State Bureau for Letters and Visits since May 1, 2014, set out that, with rare exclusions, authorities whose citizens turn to higher-level organs with complaints will be warned and possibly punished. These rules are ostensibly meant to increase “efficiency” in the handling of grievances, and state media has indicated a drop in the number of complaints being taken to Beijing. Still, the regulations may only stimulate the formation of black jails, since local officials wary of punishment will resort to any means to stop disgruntled citizens from petitioning. The State Bureau’s regulations also re-emphasized the use of “education” to deal with petitioners, possibly opening up an even greater expansion of the widely criticized system of “legal education.”⁹⁴

The above developments have not yet helped curb the use of black jails or addressed the issue of abuses inside the facilities. In fact, it is conceivable that new regulations may only lead officials in the provinces to set up black jails closer to home, pushing them further into the shadows. Moreover, policies might allow government authorities to ignore its responsibility to bring to justice those who committed the abuses.

X. Impunity for Abusers, Reprisals for Seeking Justice

Besides dismissing the reality of black jails, the Chinese government has not taken effective measures to prosecute the perpetrators of abuses committed inside the facilities. Black jail victims encounter huge obstacles in trying to obtain legal redress, and also face reprisals for doing so. The main obstacle is that the detention facilities are run outside the Chinese legal system. Another significant hurdle is that authorities who order the creation of black jails (and directly commit their share of abuses) are

protected by the same bodies that head the law-enforcement and judicial systems, which at most will reproach only a few officials to serve political priorities. Thus, law-enforcement officials rarely look into alleged abuses inside black jails.⁹⁵ No public security officials are known to have faced prosecution for detentions or abuses involving the facilities. The lack of independence of Chinese judicial bodies leaves victims of black jails with no viable legal channels for seeking justice.

Bad press about black jails seems to have compelled authorities at one point to declare a prominent crackdown, likely to mollify public anger and deflect criticism. In December 2011, after a tourist mistaken for a petitioner was beaten and detained, the Beijing Municipal Public Security Bureau (PSB) announced a campaign to shut down black jails run by private security companies in the capital. But the Beijing PSB fell short of acknowledging any government role in black jails, only declaring that a few “unauthorized companies” had hired individuals to seize petitioners in Beijing, and that such firms were violating citizens’ rights by illegally detaining and mistreating them.⁹⁶ Officially, the PSB’s six-month campaign was supposed to prohibit the formation of black jails and their use as detention facilities. While some operations were disrupted, Beijing authorities were not successful in eliminating black jails or punishing their operators.⁹⁷

“I have no hope that calling the police would help [if I reported my abduction and black jail detention]. Police and local minders who locked me up colluded in my detention.”

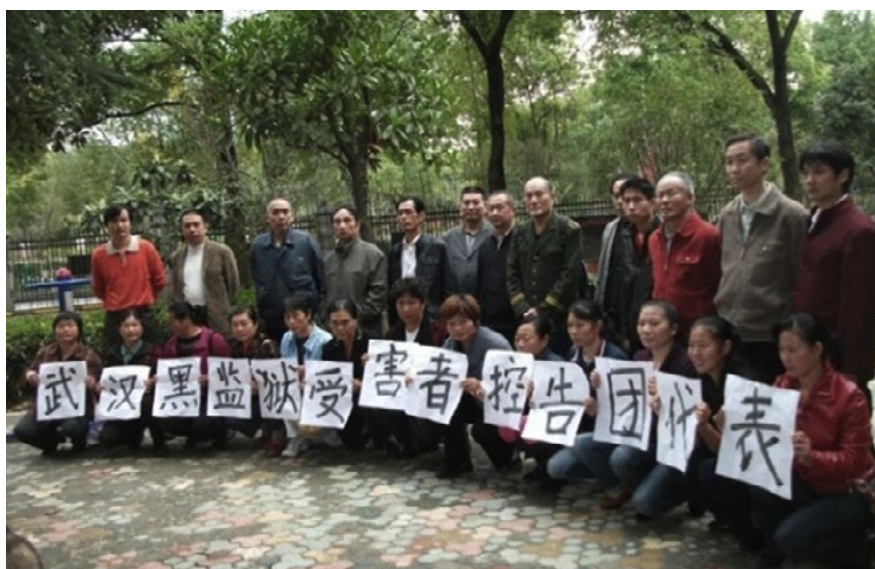
Activist Wang Rongwen, as told to CHRD in March 2014

Frustrated attempts at justice for black jails victims are often manifested in several ways: refusals by police to allow victims to file complaints or criminal reports; refusals by courts to docket victims’ lawsuits against abusers; and authorities’ refusals to disclose information about black jail operations.

Police typically turn away black jail victims who try to report abuses and seek accountability. Shandong petitioner Wang Rulan (王汝兰), who escaped a black jail in Harbin City in Heilongjiang after being held for nearly two weeks in March 2014, went to a police station to report the crime, where she was told that her detention was “legal.” She had been petitioning in Beijing during the annual “Two Meetings” of China’s legislatures.⁹⁸ In another case, Jiangxi police refused to receive a complaint filed by petitioner Gu Julian (顾菊莲) about her detention in a black jail run by

government personnel in Xinyu City from March 3-16, 2012. While illegally held, Gu was beaten, confined to a room, and deprived of food. In order to pursue criminal charges, Gu went to the Xiannuhu District Branch of the Xinyu City Public Security Bureau to file a report, but officers told her instead to make her case at a local police station. Refusing to take up the matter, police suggested that Gu approach the local commission for discipline inspection, saying that officials “may criticize” the individual who beat her. Gu argued that her deprivation of freedom was a violation of Chinese constitutional provisions and laws, but an officer simply responded that her beating was not a matter under police jurisdiction.⁹⁹

Women who have been abused in black jails have filed countless lawsuits against culpable officials, but courts have generally refused to docket the cases, with very few exceptions. For victims or families, merely getting a court to accept a lawsuit is a daunting task. Isolated from the outside world, black jail detainees have no way to access lawyers or obtain any record of detention—the bare minimum evidence to show that their liberty was illegally deprived. As with hard-to-prove cases of torture, law-enforcement bodies routinely dismiss black jail accounts not only by victims but also by detainees’ family members and others who can corroborate facts regarding mistreatment.



Black jail victims in Wuhan City in Hubei look to file a collective lawsuit. (Image: CRLW)

Even when courts do accept cases, the difficulty of producing evidence of detention almost guarantees that they will be dismissed. Jiangsu petitioner Feng Lanmei of Rugao City was illegally detained and forced to take a “legal education class” in March and April of 2013. Afterwards, police in Nantong City refused to let her file a

complaint, instead referring her to the local procuratorate, which also did not take any action. In June 2013, as she continued to go to the local government to complain, officials told her that the “legal education class” did not exist. This prompted Feng to file an administrative lawsuit against the Rugao City government at the Nantong City Intermediate People’s Court. After the court dismissed her case, Feng appealed in October 2013, this time to the Jiangsu Province High People’s Court, which in January 2014 upheld the lower court’s original decision.¹⁰⁰

In the few rare convictions for black jail abuses that have been documented, those found guilty have received very light sentences, and officials responsible for operating the facilities have evaded punishment. In a highly publicized case, a guard who raped Anhui petitioner Li Ruirui in a black jail in Beijing in August 2009 was given an eight-year prison sentence that December. But this verdict came down only after a public outcry that was mostly fueled by social media. Also, neither the officials who had set up the holding cell inside the guesthouse where Li was assaulted and detained, nor the guesthouse proprietors, were prosecuted.¹⁰¹

A Beijing court in February 2013 sentenced 10 hired guards for operating a black jail that held Henan petitioners; each man received a punishment of six months to two years, though three received commuted sentences since they were minors. Once again, there were no reports of officials being investigated or prosecuted, even though the provincial government in Henan had hired the convicted individuals—all former farmers—to work at the facility.¹⁰² In August 2014, two hired guards at a black jail in Beijing were put on trial for allegedly torturing a detained petitioner from Anhui Province. The court had not issued a sentence by the time of this report’s release, but the men are expected to get relatively light punishments—between 12 to 18 months—in yet another case in which no government officials were investigated.¹⁰³

Victims who seek legal accountability for their detention in black jails put themselves in danger of reprisals. Such is the experience of Li Hongwei (李红卫), a petitioner from Jinan City in Shandong. Ms. Li brought one of the first lawsuits against a local government over a black jail detention to ever be heard in a Chinese court. In February and March 2010, officials from Lixia District in Jinan ordered Li Hongwei detained for 17 days in Dongyi Guesthouse. To counter her accusation that she was unlawfully detained, the district government argued that it was providing Li with “free room and board” while offering her “legal education.” The case centered around three issues: the legality of Li’s detention, the government’s claims about providing Li “education,” and whether a court can even hear a case challenging illegal detention. After two courts held three separate hearings, the landmark suit was eventually rejected. Partly in retaliation for filing this lawsuit against the government, Li was sent in July 2011 to serve 21 months in a Re-education through Labor camp.¹⁰⁴

Some victims have also tried, though without success, to use China’s public information disclosure law to ask the government to provide information about details of black jail operations. For instance, in Wuxi City in Jiangsu, ex-detainees have sought information on “legal education classes,” including on their legal status, location, funding sources, and the government agencies that oversee them. In declining to provide any information, some officials have claimed that the “legal education classes” involve “secrets of the Communist Party system.”¹⁰⁵

In February 2014, a group of lawyers requested that the Henan government publicly disclose information about “reprimand and education centers” within the province, such as who had authorized establishing the “centers,” in part to pinpoint legal responsibility.¹⁰⁶ The lawyers suspected that the facilities have been filling a void left by RTL’s dismantling. Inside the “centers,” detainees who had allegedly engaged in “irregular petitioning” were given disciplinary “lectures” around-the-clock, some for up to six months.¹⁰⁷ The lawyers publicized their requests for information online and attracted a great deal of attention. Acting under media pressure, Henan authorities announced they would immediately close down the “centers.” However, it is not known if any officials have been punished for running them, and many believe that such facilities are still in operation in other parts of China.



Zhang Fengmei was being held in an “illegal petitioning reprimand and education center” in Nanyang City in Henan (at right) days before authorities announced in early 2014 that the facilities would be closed throughout the province. (Images: Beijing News, RDN)

Facing government inaction or refusals to allow victims to seek accountability, many victims, activists, and human rights lawyers have looked to take justice into their own hands. For instance, activists have tried to expose the shadowy facilities with the intention of freeing those held inside. This sort of vigilante activism has placed would-be rescuers at risk of violence, detention, and even criminal punishment. Individuals who have gathered to protest outside black jails have been beaten by security guards or police.¹⁰⁸ In the spring of 2014, four human rights lawyers were seized, tortured, and administratively detained in Jiansanjiang City in Heilongjiang after demanding police allow them to meet their clients, detainees at a “legal education center” being held due to their spiritual practice.¹⁰⁹ Five Jiangsu activists were arrested after freeing detainees from a black jail in a Wuxi hotel in June 2013. The activists, who broke into the holding cell, are to be tried for “intentional destruction of property” within days of this report’s release.¹¹⁰

“I can’t bear this kind of insult. They warned me that if I told the truth about what happened in the black jails after I got out, they’d cause trouble for my child and even my young grandchild.”

Chen Chunhong of Jiangsu Province, black jail detainee

Authorities also have tried to silence and intimidate the relatives and supporters who seek justice for victims of black jail abuses. In the previously mentioned case of Wang Delan, who was beaten to death by guards, the local government suppressed news of Wang’s death for months and detained her family members so they could not speak out about the incident.¹¹¹ Petitioners and activists who reported the rape of Li Ruirui to police in Beijing were detained before being forcibly returned to their hometowns and put under travel restrictions. At the time, Anhui authorities also had pressured Li’s family members to sign a letter of consent to send Li to a psychiatric institution, a tactic meant to silence Li and keep her from petitioning again.¹¹² Family members of Li Shulian, the Shandong petitioner who died in a black jail in 2009, went missing for months in 2010 after they pressed authorities to investigate the circumstances of her death and hold those responsible legally accountable. Longkou officials had claimed that Li hanged herself and blocked activists from conducting an independent investigation. Li’s daughter went into hiding for fear of persecution by local authorities, and guards at the city government building beat Li’s sister after she inquired about her family members’ whereabouts.¹¹³

XI. Recommendations

To the Chinese government:

- Release all detainees in black jails, and take effective legal measures to shut down all forms of secret and extrajudicial detention facilities.

The government must order the permanent closure of all extralegal detention facilities and these measures must be authorized by the National People's Congress (rather than declared by the CCP) in order for them to have legal authority. They should apply to both "formalized" facilities—the so-called "legal education" or "reprimand" centers across the country and the "relief services centers" in Beijing—and to the covert, temporary detention facilities run by local officials or hired thugs. Following the abolition of the Re-education through Labor (RTL) system, the government showed it is capable of abolishing a system of arbitrary detention if it has the political will. However, authorities must ensure black jails are not replaced by another form of extrajudicial detention or the increased use of the criminal justice system to prosecute citizens exercising their constitutional rights.

- Adopt a comprehensive law on violence against women, including a provision about state-sponsored violence, to give the Chinese judicial system independent authority to prosecute individuals who abuse women in black jails and other detention facilities.

Women have been disproportionately subjected to violence and deprivation of liberty without due process in black jails. This form of violence against women can be curtailed with strong legal measures to prosecute government officials, law enforcement officers or hired guards who abuse, torture, or mistreat women in all types of black jails, and to protect women when they bring forward accusations against state actors.

- Disclose the existence of secret extrajudicial detention facilities, and investigate the manner in which detainees are treated and the government officials who authorized the establishment of these facilities.

The Chinese government should extend invitations to the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearance, and the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention to visit China and allow them to conduct independent investigations of black jails. The government should also request expertise and assistance from UN human rights bodies on the prevention and elimination of extralegal detention facilities, forced disappearance and torture.

- Hold all those involved in the detention and abuse of men and women in black jails criminally accountable, with special attention paid to the sexual violence and abuse many women have suffered in these facilities.

Public security police and government officials who are implicit in authorizing or carrying out the operations of black jails, and ordering the abuse perpetrated inside, must also be held criminally responsible, instead of shifting the blame to hired interceptors and guards. Due to the disproportionate number of women held in black jails, and the gender-based violence many have been subjected to, judicial authorities must ensure that the abuse of women is properly investigated and prosecuted, using every legal avenue available.

- Provide legal remedies and make reparations to men and women who were subjected to arbitrary detention and abuse in black jails, guarantee their access to justice, and hold legally accountable those who retaliate against them for pursuing justice.

The Chinese government should follow the UN's Basic Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Remedy and Reparation for Victims of Gross Violations of International Human Rights Law and Serious Violations of International Humanitarian Law in ensuring victims of illegal detention in black jails are given access to legal redress. The prosecution and harassment of women who file complaints over abuse and deprivation of liberty in black jails must immediately end, and their constitutional right to "criticize and make suggestions to any state organ or functionary" upheld, as stated in Article 41 of China's Constitution.

- Ensure education and information regarding the prohibition of torture and mistreatment of detainees, as well as gender-specific education, is included in the training of all law enforcement officers, public officials and other persons who may be involved in the custody, interrogation or treatment of any individual subjected to any form of arrest, detention or imprisonment.
- Enforce domestic laws and implement international human rights treaties that China has ratified, such as the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhumane or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The government should also ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), sign the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, and join the Optional Protocols of CAT and CEDAW, such that these treaty bodies can also assist in the investigation and eradication of black jails and violence against women.
- De-link local and provincial government officials' performance evaluations to the numbers of petitioners from their jurisdictions, who travel to Beijing and other cities to lodge complaints about abuses; abolish the ineffective and abuses-ridden petitioning system for addressing citizens' grievances. The legislatures—the people's congresses—at central and local levels should be accessible for all citizens to lodge their grievances against officials, and the police and the court should stop obstructing citizens from seeking legal justice through the judicial procedures.

This link between performance evaluation and petitioning incentivizes local officials to use extrajudicial detention facilities such as black jails to punish intercepted petitioners and prevent them from more attempts. The obstruction of petitioners from filing lawsuits against officials for abuses by law enforcement and the courts have contributed to the continuation of petitioning. These problems perpetuate the vicious cycle of petitioning, illegal detention, abuses, and more petitioning.

- Provide data on any measures taken to close down and prevent black jails, including data showing any changes in their numbers and use across the country over the past five years, and information on any criminal investigation and prosecution of officials or those under official orders who have been allegedly responsible for running black jails and carrying out the abuses. The government must also break

down the data by gender, in order to give an accurate picture of the effect of black jails on women.

Overwhelming evidence of the existence and proliferation of black jails has made the Chinese government's denials disingenuous. Such denials have only ensured escalating abuses and continuing impunity enjoyed by those who operate the detention facilities. The government has the resources and responsibility to provide meaningful data to demonstrate its efforts to effectively shut down black jails and punish the abusers.

Such data should be made publicly available to media and civil society, and provided to international monitoring agencies, such as the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which is reviewing China's treaty obligations on October 23, 2014, and the Committee against Torture, which is likely to review China in 2015. Both bodies have in the past requested specific data like this from China without much success.

To concerned governments and international bodies, such as the United Nations, the United States, the European Union and Member States:

- Express strong concern to Chinese authorities about the persistence and proliferation of black jails and abuses of detainees, especially women, stressing that any form of extrajudicial detention breaches China's own commitment to rule of law and its international obligations to uphold human rights standards, and demanding an end to such abuses, prosecution against the perpetrators, and compensation for victims.

The concerns can be expressed during bilateral US-China and EU-China human rights dialogues, during UN Human Rights Council sessions, and high-level visits, such as the US President Obama's visit to China in November 2014.

- The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, during its review of China in October 2014, and the Committee against Torture, during its expected review of China in 2015, should call on the Chinese government to fully comply with the relevant international Conventions, to end all extralegal detentions

of women and set free all detainees in black jails, hold the perpetrators legally accountable, and provide reparations to victims.

- The United Nations Human Rights Council should urge China to extend invitations for country visits to the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (WGAD), Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (WGEID), and the Special Rapporteur on Torture and other Special Procedure mandate holders, and place no restrictions on their visits so that they could conduct independent investigation of black jails and meet with detainees and victims. The Working Group on Discrimination against Women in Law and in Practice should follow up with the Chinese government after its 2013 mission to China and inquire about black jails as a substitute form for RTL and “custody and education,” two other types of extralegal detention about which the Working Group has specifically raised concerns.
- All US, EU, or World Bank funded programs intended to push for “rule of law” reform, including trainings of legislators, judges, and police, should emphasize the illegality of black jails, bring up concerns directly with government officials, and demand the dismantling of all extrajudicial detention facilities following the abolition of the Re-education through Labor system.

Notes

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5. RDN, "Chen Meijia's Experience During the Third Plenum: Seized, Put in Black Jail, Hunger Strike, Labeled as 'Female Bin Laden'" (三中全会期间陈美佳经历: 绑架、黑监狱、绝食, 被诬“女拉登”), November 15, 2013, http://wqw2010.blogspot.com/2013/11/blog-post_15.html.
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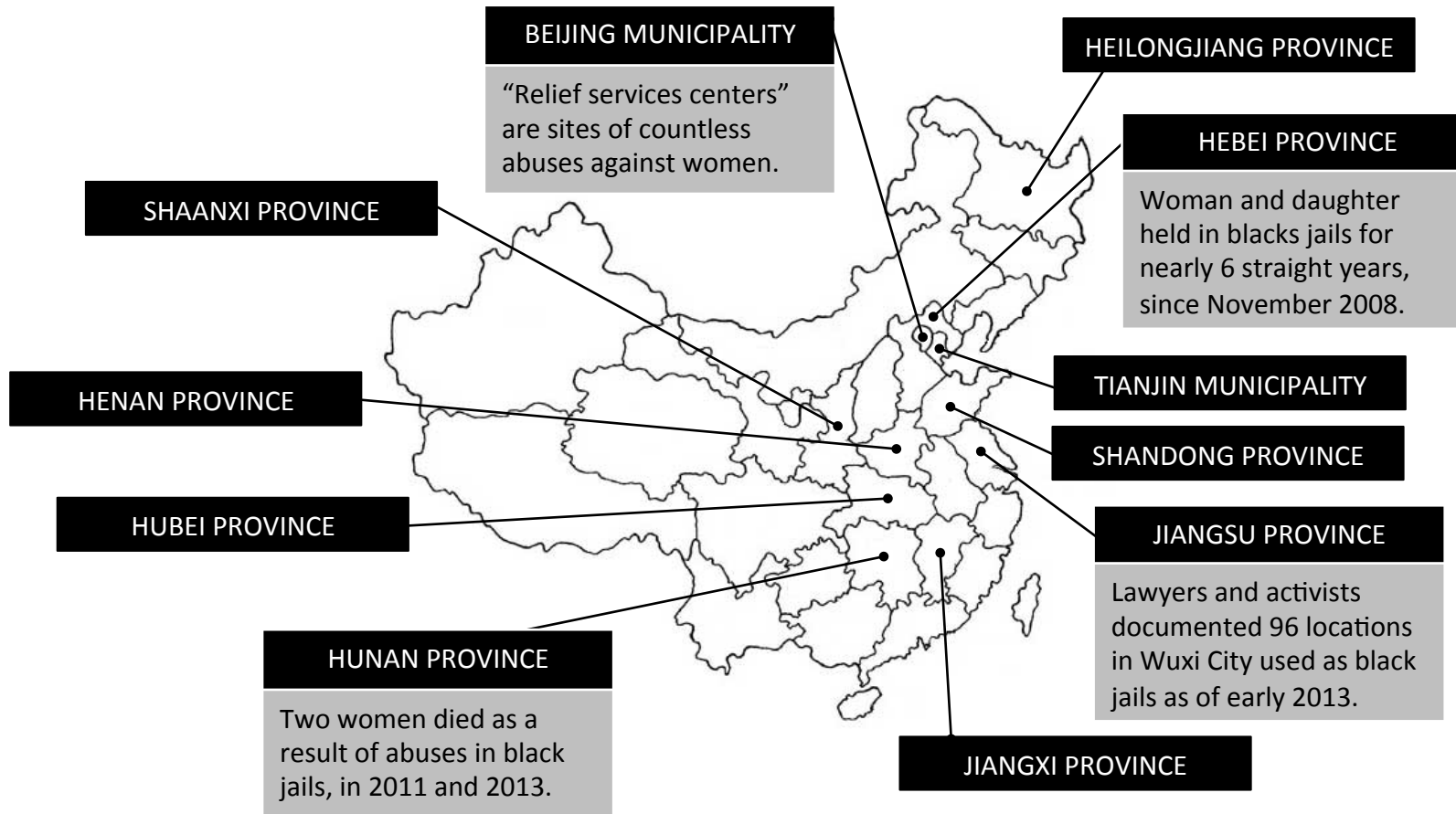
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Appendix I: Map - Locations of Black Jails

This map indicates the locations of black jails in cases noted in the report, though extralegal detention facilities exist in every province and municipality in China

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Appendix II: Women Detained in Black Jails (Partial Data)

The table below lists case information for 163 women who have been detained in black jails between January 2009 and September 2014, according to data compiled by human rights groups, activists, and lawyers based in China.

If not listed with a detainee's name, the "Detention Location" includes her place of residence; for women detained in Beijing and another location, the second location is her place of residence. Some black jail locations could not be identified or confirmed.

Page numbers beneath detainee names indicate where a case is discussed in the report.

Detainee Name	Detention Location	Dates/Duration of Detention
Cao Xingfen (曹杏芬) (page 7)	Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province New Peace South Lake Garden Guesthouse, Plum Garden Guesthouse, Dongfengzhou Xinchang Dragon Hotel	February 2012-July 2013 (91 days total)
Chen Azhen (沈阿珍)	Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province New Lixin Guesthouse	January 12-29, 2010
Chen Chunhong (陈春红) (pages 9, 13)	Zhenjiang City, Jiangsu Province beauty parlor, Zhouyu Guesthouse, Zhangshan Board of Management office, Guixilai Guesthouse, New City Garden	January 26-September 9, 2013
Chen Meilian (陈美莲) of Hainan Province	Beijing Municipality Shiyan City Liaison Office	March 17, 2012
Chen Suying (陈素英) of Jiangsu Province	Beijing Municipality Majialou "relief services center"	September-October 2012 (46+ days)

Chen Xiling (陈喜玲)	Xuchang City, Henan Province Xuchang County Illegal Petitioning Reprimand Center	2014 (30+ days)
Chen Xiulan (陈秀兰)	Beijing Municipality Majialou "relief services center"	December 2013 (9 days)
Cheng Wanjun (程婉君)	Binhu District, Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province Qingshanwan Jinhai Garden Hotel, East Suburb Peaceful Commercial Guesthouse	June 2009, September-October 2009 (40 days)
Deng Rongjuan (邓荣娟)	Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province New Fangyuan Guesthouse	January 2013 (7 days)
Deng Xiaoying (邓晓英)	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang "relief services center," Tuoyue Guesthouse	October 1-3, 2012
Ding Hongfen (丁红芬)	Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province Baolong Guesthouse, Qingshanwan Jinhai Garden Hotel, East Suburb Peaceful Commercial Guesthouse, New Fangyuan Guesthouse	July-September, 2012 (83 days), November 11-28, 2012
Dong Chunmo (董春模) of Sichuan Province	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang "relief services center," Tuoyue Guesthouse	December 29-30, 2011
Dong Kuihong (董奎红) of Jilin Province (pages 12, 14)	Beijing Municipality Majialou "relief services center"	December 15, 2013
Duan Jingling (段静玲)	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang "relief services center"	June 30, 2012
Fan Bangmin (范帮敏)	Zaoyang City, Hubei Province	November-December 2013 (21+ days)

Feng Guifang (冯桂芳)	Nanning City, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region	September 24, 2012
Feng Jiawen (凤加文) of Zhejiang Province	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang “relief services center”	June 28-July 4, 2012
Feng Lanmei (冯兰美) (pages 13, 24)	Rugao City, Jiangsu Province	March 18-April 15, 2013
Feng Ya (凤雅) of Zhejiang Province	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang “relief services center”	June 28-July 4, 2012
Fu Wenxia (付文侠) (page 10)	Langfang City, Hebei Province Fengyuan Country Villa Village	November 10-17, 2012
Gan Fenying (甘芬英)	Nanning City, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region	September 24, 2012
Gu Julian (顾菊莲) (page 24)	Xinyu City, Jiangxi Province Celebrity Island (on Fairy Maiden Lake)	March 3-16, 2012
Gu Yinying (顾银英) (page 16)	Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province Zhouxing Changlong Guesthouse	November 4-26, 2013
Gu Yinying (顾银英)	Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province Huazhuang Construction Guesthouse, Southern Springs South Garden Guesthouse, Meiyuan No. 2 Guesthouse	February-March 2013 (40+ days)
Guan Yingbao (管英宝)	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang “relief services center” Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province Hongbo Garden Cafeteria, Nanyuan Guesthouse, Middle Bridge Baolong Guesthouse	December 2012

He Zhuqing (何竹青) of Zhejiang Province	Beijing Municipality Majialou "relief services center"	March 13, 2014
Hu Chunliang (胡春良) of Hunan Province (page 15)	Beijing Municipality Majialou "relief services center"	May 2014
Hu Huifen (胡惠芬) of Zhejiang Province	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang "relief services center"	November 8, 2012
Hu Meizhen (胡美珍) of Anhui Province	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang "relief services center"	March 5, 2012
Hu Qinfen (胡琴芬)	Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province Meiyuan No. 2 Hotel, East Suburb Peaceful Commercial Guesthouse	September 2012 (8+ days)
Hua Lianfen (华莲芬)	Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province Fangqian New Fangyuan Guesthouse	February 2010 (6 days)
Huang Lei (黄磊)	Shanghai Municipality	August 2013 (13+ days)
Huang Meizhen (黄美珍) of Hunan Province	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang "relief services center"	June 30, 2013
Huang Miaoyun (黄苗云) of Henan Province	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang "relief services center"	May 8, 2012
Huang Minju (黄民菊)	Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province Fangqian New Fangyuan Guesthouse, Qingshanwan Jinhai Gardens Hotel, International Technology Park	October 2010-2013 (100+ days)

Hui Qinyuan (惠琴媛)	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang “relief services center” Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province Guanhao Hotel, Baolong Guesthouse	June 28-August 20, 2012
Ji Laijuan (季来娟) of Zhejiang Province	Beijing Municipality Majialou “relief services center”	March 12, 2014
Jiang Hong (蒋红) of Zhejiang Province	Beijing Municipality Majialou “relief services center” Zhoushan City, Zhejiang Province government office building	November 2013 (11+ days)
Jiang Nianfang (姜念芳) (pages 11-13)	Zibo City, Shandong Province	January 2014
Jiang Xuemei (江雪梅)	Chengdu City, Sichuan Province bed and breakfast	November 2-17, 2012
Jiang Zichun (蒋子春)	Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province Meiyuan No. 2 Hotel, East Fengyueliang Guesthouse, Xuelang Meijia Guesthouse, Xuelang Haojia Guesthouse	June 2012, November 2012
Jin Fang (金芳)	Hangzhou City, Zhejiang Province country villa	September 21, 2012
Jin Hanqin (金汉琴)	Shiyan City, Hubei Province cottage	March 1, 2014

Jin Hanyan (金汉艳)	Shiyan City, Hubei Province cottage	March 1, 2014
Jin Yuehua (金月花)	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang "relief services center"	October 24, 2012
Li Fenghua (李凤华)	Gaobeidian City, Hebei Province Jiujiu Guesthouse	November-December 2013 (28+ days)
Li Hongwei (李红卫) (page 25)	Jinan City, Shandong Province Dongyi Guesthouse	February 26-March 14, 2010
Li Huifang (李惠芳) of Shanghai Municipality	Beijing Municipality Majialou "relief services center"	February 25, 2012
Li Meifang (李梅芳)	Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province Anzhen National Defense Education & Training Base, Fangqian New Fangyuan Guesthouse, Chinese Communist Party School (in Wushan District)	September 18-October 9, 2011, March 13- 23, 2013
Li Mingcui (李明翠)	Ruzhou City, Henan Province	May 5-8, 2012
Li Ronghao (黎容好)	Dongguan City, Guangdong Province	December 9, 2013
Li Ruirui (李蕊蕊) of Anhui Province (pages 9, 25, 27)	Beijing Municipality Jiyuan Guesthouse	August 2009
Li Shulian (李淑莲) (pages 10, 27)	Longkou City, Shandong Province guesthouse	August 1, 2009

Li Zhiyan (李志艳) (page 8)	Baoding City, Hebei Province Qingyuan County Fire Station, Langyashan Scenic Area, Fanzhuang Nursing Home	November 2008-Present
Lin Lanying (林兰英)	Fuzhou City, Fujian Province	June 4, 2014
Ling Xiaomei (凌小妹) of Zhejiang Province	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang "relief services center"	October 31-November 1, 2012
Liu Cunqin (刘存钦)	Chengdu City, Sichuan Province courtyard	March 8, 2012
Liu Guiqin (刘贵琴) of Hubei Province	Beijing Municipality Majialou "relief services center"	April 10, 2012
Liu Hualin (刘华琳)	Beijing Municipality Majialou "relief services center"	July 27, 2012
Liu Yinzhi (刘银芝) (page 14)	Wuhan City, Hubei Province guesthouse	September 9-28, 2012
Liu Yujie (刘玉洁)	Shiyan City, Hubei Province Maojian Guesthouse	August-September 2013 (43+ days)
Lu Dongcai (陆冬菜)	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang "relief services center" Tiantai County, Zhejiang Province Fengyalan Village	September-October 2013 (16+ days)

Lu Fengjuan (陆凤娟)	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang “relief services center” Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province Huazhuang Construction Guesthouse, Xin’an South Lake Park Guesthouse, East Suburb Peaceful Commercial Guesthouse	March 2012, June 22-September, 2012, February 2013
Luo Guiying (罗桂英)	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang “relief services center”	March 2014 (4+ days)
Luo Xianyin (罗先英)	Sanming City, Fujian Province Zhongcun Township Government building	October 2012-2013 (5 + months)
Mao Hengfeng (毛恒风)	Beijing Municipality Shanghai Municipality Liaison Office	April 4-6, 2012
Niu Chunying (牛春英)	Xuchang City, Henan Province Xuchang County Illegal Petitioning Reprimand Center	2013-2014 (75 days)
Pan Jianfang (潘建芳)	Changzhou City, Jiangsu Province guesthouse	October 28, 2012
Pan Zhihua (潘志花)	Fengcheng City, Liaoning Province hotel	October 24, 2012
Peng Lanlan (彭兰岚)	Fenghuang County, Hunan Province guesthouse	March 3-17, 2014
Qiu Donglian (邱冬连)	Beijing Municipality Majialou “relief services center”	December 2013 (9 days)

Qiu Meie (裘美娥) of Zhejiang Province	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang “relief services center”	November 19, 2013
Shan Yajuan (单亚娟) of Heilongjiang Province	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang “relief services center,” residential building	March 9-10, 2012
Shao Guiping (邵贵萍)	Xinyu City, Jiangxi Province hostel	February 28, 2012
Shen Jianqun (沈建群)	Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province Wuxi branch of State Council building	March 2009, January 2010
Shen Lihua (沈利华) of Zhejiang Province	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang “relief services center”	December 10, 2012
Shen Yuefen (沈月份) of Zhejiang Province	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang “relief services center”	October 31, 2012
Shen Zhihua (沈志华) of Zhejiang Province (page 12)	Beijing Municipality Majialou “relief services center”	November 11, 2013
Shen Zhihua (沈志华) of Jiangsu Province	Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province New Anzhen South Lake Hotel, Qian Bridge Longsheng Country Villa Qingdao City, Shandong Province Wangzhuang Changjiang Hotel, Mashantao Park Country Villa, Lipin Hotel, abandoned housing in Wangzhuang Town, Wangzhuang Xinlianxin Hotel	June 2011, November 8-11, 2011

Sheng Qiaozhen (盛巧真) (page 11)	Jining City, Shandong Province guesthouse	February-March 2014
Shi Xinhong (石新红) of Anhui Province	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang “relief services center” Bengbu City, Anhui Province guesthouse	March 2013 (4+ days)
Song Cuirong (宋翠荣)	Jalaad Banner, Inner Mongolia guesthouse	March 2014 (5+ days)
Song Qiaozhi (宋巧枝) of Henan Province (page 10)	Beijing Municipality Majialou “relief services center”	February, 2013
Tan Fengrong (谭风荣) (page 16)	Tianjin Municipality Hedong District Government Communist Party School	November 2013 & March 2014
Tan Lanying (谈兰英) of Shanghai Municipality	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang “relief services center”	June 28, 2012
Tan Yin'e (谭银娥)	Beijing Municipality Majialou & Jiujingzhuang “relief services centers”	August 2013 (4+ days)
Tao Fenya (陶芬雅) of Zhejiang Province	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang “relief services center”	November 8, 2012
Tao Guofen (陶国芬) (page 14)	Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province Xiajingang Guesthouse	November-December 2013

Wan Shaohua (万少华)	Wuhan City, Hubei Province legal education class	August 21, 2013
Wan Shuming (万淑明) of Tianjin Municipality (page 17)	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang "relief services center"	March 19, 2012
Wang Chunmei (王春梅) of Liaoning Province	Beijing Municipality Majialou "relief services center"	February 10, 2012
Wang Delan (王德兰) (pages 11, 27)	Yicheng City, Hubei Province Yancheng Neighborhood Committee office	August 1-7, 2013
Wang Gongying (王功英) (page 2)	Linyi City, Shandong Province guesthouse	November-December 2012
Wang Jianfen (王建芬)	Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province Fangqian New Fangyuan Guesthouse, East Tinghanyou Hotel	January-February 2010 (14 days), December 10-28, 2010
Wang Jindi (王金娣)	Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province	August 27-September 10, 2013
Wang Jufang (王菊芳)	Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province Southern Springs South Garden Guesthouse	July 2011 (10 days)
Wang Junfang (汪俊芳) of Hubei Province (page 12)	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang "relief services center"	October 1, 2012
Wang Rulan (王汝兰) (page 23)	Harbin City, Heilongjiang Province residence on farm	March 2-16, 2014

Wang Xiaoping (王晓平)	Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province Three Kingdoms City Guanhao Hotel, Middle Bridge Baolong Hotel	June-August 2012 (53 days)
Wang Xifeng (王喜凤)	Wuhan City, Hubei Province	June 2012 (13+ days)
Wang Yinghua (王英华)	Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province Lixin Guesthouse, Qianqiao Huiquan Hostel, Yangshan Huadong Hostel, Yangshan Xunda Guesthouse, Qianqiao Blue Dawn Hotel	February 14-19, 2011, March 3-20, 2012, September 26-October 3, 2012
Wang Yuehua (王月花)	Shanghai Municipality Jianhe Hotel	August 6, 2012
Wang Yujie (王玉洁) (page 11)	Wuhan City, Hubei Province Hubei Provincial Legal Education Institute	March-May 2011
Wang Yuling (王玉玲) of Jilin Province	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang "relief services center"	December 1, 2012
Wei Lanyu (魏兰玉)	Linyi City, Shandong Province guesthouse	December 9-11, 2012
Wen Dingyuan (文定元)	Langfang City, Hebei Province guesthouse	March 6-19, 2013
Wu Guoxin (吴国新)	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang "relief services center" Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province Lixin Guesthouse	December 26, 2012-February 28, 2013

Wu Hedi (吴荷娣)	Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province Blue Sky Guesthouse, Hengshan Guesthouse	January-February 2010
Wu Xiaoyan (吴晓燕)	Changshu City, Jiangsu Province legal education class	March 8, 2014
Wu Yanli (吴艳丽)	Wuhan City, Hubei Province	November 12, 2012
Wu Yuanxiu (吴远秀)	Danjiangkou City, Hubei Province guesthouse	September-October 2012 (35+ days)
Wu Zhongqin (吴忠琴) (pages 17)	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang "relief services center"	November 9, 2012, November 7, 2013
Xi Zhiying (席志英)	Beijing Municipality Majialou "relief services center" Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province Chongan Guangyi Materials Factory, Longshan Guesthouse, Baolong Guesthouse	March-April 2013 (47 days)
Xie Shuzhen (谢书珍) of Hubei Province	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang "relief services center" Qianjiang City, Hubei Province	March 1, 2012
Xie Yuhua (谢玉花) (page 10)	Baoding City, Hebei Province	January 2, 2013-January 9, 2014
Xu Baozhu (许宝珠) of Jiangsu Province	Beijing Municipality	February-March 2014 (4+ days)
Xu Dejuan (许德娟)	Nanning City, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region	September 24, 2012

Xu Heping (徐和平)	Hangzhou City, Zhejiang Province Holiday Inn	November 6, 2012
Xu Jiangjiao (徐江姣)	Tiantai County, Zhejiang Province Tiantai Guesthouse	November-December 2012 (30+ days)
Xu Jinyuan (徐锦媛)	Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province Middle Branch Food Research Center	March 8-12, 2012
Xu Liyan (徐丽艳)	Nantong City, Jiangsu Province	September 17-November 25, 2012
Xu Qiuqin (徐秋琴) of Shanghai Municipality	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang "relief services center"	February 25, 2012
Xu Xiaoli (许小丽)	Beijing Municipality	February-March 2014 (4+ days)
Xu Xiaoqin (许小琴)	Beijing Municipality	February-March 2014 (4+ days)
Yan Yaxin (严雅言)	Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province Rujia Guesthouse, Nanchang Jianhonglü Hotel, Fubang Guesthouse	June-August 2012 (60 days)
Yang Baoqin (杨宝琴)	Xuchang City, Henan Province Xuchang County Illegal Petitioning Reprimand and Education Center	2013-2014 (72 days)
Yang Caiyun (杨彩云)	Xuchang City, Henan Province Xuchang County Illegal Petitioning Reprimand and Education Center	2014 (20+ days)
Yang Jianyan (杨剑艳)	Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province Anzhen East Suburb Commercial Guesthouse	June 1, 2013

Yang Jijing (杨积静) of Sichuan Province	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang "relief services center"	December 2, 2012
Yang Qianzhen (杨乾珍)	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang "relief services center" Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province Schistosomiasis Prevention Center, Wenyuan Guesthouse, Ximei Guesthouse	December 2012-January 2013 (65 days)
Yang Xiaoxing (杨晓星) of Sichuan Province	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang "relief services center"	June 27-30, 2012
Yang Zelian (杨泽莲) of Hubei Province	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang "relief services center"	March 13, 2012
Yao Saiqun (姚赛群)	Changsha City, Hunan Province	April 17, 2012
Yin Dengzhen (尹登珍) of Hubei Province	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang "relief services center" Yunxi County, Hubei Province	November 2012 (4+ days)
You Guifeng (尤桂凤)	Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province Xishan Tiyu Guesthouse, Guangyi Beikang Wrapping Materials Factory, Nanyuan Guesthouse	February 2009, February 2010, October 8-19, 2010 (99 days)
Yu Chunxiang (虞春香) of Shanghai Municipality	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang "relief services center"	March 11, 2012
Zhan Sangui (詹三桂)	Wuhan City, Hubei Province	September 11, 2012

Zhang Dinghua (张定花) (page 13)	Lianyungang City, Jiangsu Province	March 2012-January 2013 (3 times, 1 month total)
Zhang Fengmei (张凤梅)	Beijing Municipality Majialou "relief services center" Nantong City, Jiangsu Province Nantong City Illegal Petitioning Reprimand and Education Center	February 2014
Zhang Guizhi (张桂枝) (page 15)	Zhengzhou City, Henan Province	November 12-23, 2012
Zhang Julan (张菊兰)	Xinyu City, Jiangxi Province bed and breakfast	October-November 2012 (27+ days)
Zhang Lijun (张丽君)	Xuchang City, Henan Province Xuchang County Illegal Petitioning Reprimand Center	January 1, 2014
Zhang Shanjiao (张善姣)	Shiyan City, Hubei Province Shangjin Town Retirement Home	July 25, 2012
Zhang Shizhen (张仕珍)	Hefei City, Anhui Province	February 9, 2012
Zhang Suzhen (张素珍)	Luoyang City, Henan Province irregular petitioning reprimand center	October-November 2012
Zhang Xianjuan (张贤娟) of Zhejiang Province	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang "relief services center"	October 31, 2012
Zhang Yaohua (张耀花)	Pingdingshan City, Henan Province guesthouse	November 13, 2012

Zhang Yueling (张月玲) (page 11)	Xuchang City, Henan Province Xuchang County Illegal Petitioning Reprimand and Education Center	January 9-29, 2014
Zhang Zijuan (张紫娟) (page 8)	Baoding City, Hebei Province Qingyuan County Fire Station, Langyashan Scenic Area, Fanzhuang Nursing Home	November 2008-Present
Zhao Chunqin (赵春琴) (page 15)	Zhenjiang City, Jiangsu Province Daiweifu Farm	March 3-11, 2014
Zhao Guoli (赵国莉)	Shenzhen City, Guangdong Province guesthouse	September 2009
Zhao Xuemei (赵学梅) of Jiangsu Province	Beijing Municipality	February-March 2014
Zheng Chunying (郑春英) of Fujian Province	Beijing Municipality Huaqile Hotel	March 1, 2013
Zhou Dazhen (周大珍) of Hubei Province (page 13)	Beijing Municipality Jiujingzhuang "relief services center" Shiyan City, Hubei Province guesthouse	August 2013 (3+ days)
Zhou Jingjuan (周静娟)	Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province legal education class	November 4-25, 2013
Zhou Qinfen (周琴芬)	Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province New Lixin Guesthouse	November 2012 (48 days)

Zhou Xijuan (周锡娟)	Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province Qingshanwan Jinhai Flower Garden Hotel	June 29-July 30, 2012
Zhou Xingping (周兴萍)	Shiyan City, Hubei Province Maojian Guesthouse	March 2012 (25+ days)
Zhou Yahong (周亚红)	Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province Qingshanwan Jinhai Flower Garden Hotel, Fangqian New Fangyuan Guesthouse, Wangzhuang Xinlianxin Hotel, Longsheng Country Villa	July 28-August 7, 2012, November 2012
Zhu Caixia (朱彩霞)	Xuchang City, Henan Province Xuchang County Illegal Petitioning Reprimand and Education Center	2013-2014 (68 days)
Zhu Guiqin (朱桂芹)	Fushun City, Liaoning Province Luotaishan Guesthouse	November 2-4, 2012
Zhu Jindi (朱金娣)	Shanghai Municipality Jinhua Guesthouse	August 2012 (5+ days)
Zhu Qizhen (朱琪珍)	Wuxi City, Jiangsu Province Guangyi Beikang Wrapping Materials Factory, Nanyuan Guesthouse, Longshan Guesthouse, Suzhou Three Mountain Island	August 2011, July 2012

Despite the Chinese government's staunch denials regarding the existence of black jails—and ineffective actions to shutter some of them—these unlawful detention facilities have proliferated and remain breeding grounds for horrific abuses. Women, who make up the great majority of black jail detainees, are particularly vulnerable to these abuses, which include physical violence, sexual assaults, abject conditions, and deprivation of medical treatment.

CHRD's report, *"We Can Beat You to Death With Impunity": Secret Detention & Abuse of Women in China's "Black Jails"*, provides an overview of more than 30 cases of detention and abuse of women in black jails. The report explains factors that contribute to the continued use of black jails, and explores both the barriers for victims to seek justice and the virtual impunity enjoyed by abusers. No government officials are known to have even been investigated for their role in operating the facilities, while many of them have perpetrated violent attacks and threats. Courts rarely accept lawsuits that black jail victims try to file. Many victims who persist in bringing cases against authorities by petitioning to government organs often face more abuse—like further detention in black jails—as a consequence for seeking redress.

Drawing largely on information from China-based human rights groups as well as victims' families and lawyers, this report details cases of detention and abuse from 11 provinces and municipalities that have mostly taken place since 2012. CHRD calls on the Chinese government to release all detainees in black jails and shut down all forms of secret and extrajudicial detention facilities; adopt a comprehensive law on violence against women, including a provision about state-sponsored violence; hold criminally responsible those involved in black jail detentions and abuses; and provide reparations to black jail victims.



Back cover (clockwise from top left): Yang Mingzhu was injured while trying to help a black jail detainee escape in Hubei Province in August 2013; Cao Xingfen was locked up in "legal education classes" in Jiangsu Province in 2012 and 2013; an elderly woman was reportedly beaten to death in March 2013 in a black jail inside the Jiruigong Hotel in Beijing; Zhou Dazhen was refused medical treatment after she fell ill in a black jail in Hubei Province in August 2013.

Front cover: Detained petitioners Chen Bixiang and Yu Hong lean out the windows of a black jail in Beijing in January 2012. (Image: anonymous source in China)