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China – Ongoing arbitrary detention of 78 year old human rights defender and wife for three years

Human rights defender Mr Mi Chongbiao, aged 78, and his wife, Ms Li Kezhen, aged 68, have been held in arbitrary detention in Guiyang city, Guizhou province since they were detained on 19 June 2013. No charges have been brought against them, nor have they been given permission to meet with a lawyer. The couple's two sons, Messrs Mi Zuheng and Mi Yiming, have been subjected to harassment and intimidation as a result of their advocacy efforts on behalf of their parents. Front Line Defenders previously [issued](#) an Urgent Appeal on their arbitrary detention on 17 November 2014.

Mi Chongbiao is a member of the Guizhou Human Rights Forum, a locally based informal network of human rights defenders promoting international standards and highlighting abuses committed by the authorities. He has submitted complaints to the UN human rights mechanisms, written articles on political persecution, called for justice for the victims of the Tiananmen massacre and protested for the release of jailed human rights defenders.

On 19 June 2013 dozens of police officers raided the home of Mi Chongbiao and Li Kezhen in Guiyang city and the couple were immediately placed under house arrest. It is believed the cause of the raid was related to two articles Mi Chongbiao published online the week previously, one of which was critical of China's now abolished re-education through labour system. The couple were also detained for a number of weeks in 2012 following a protest Mi Chongbiao held in a public park in the city commemorating the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre.

Since their detentions on 19 June 2013, Mi Chongbiao and Li Kezhen have been held in a number of different locations under the control and surveillance of the Guiyang City police, the Public Security Bureau and hired security guards. Following a number of months of house arrest, in September 2013 the couple were brought to various undisclosed locations and held incommunicado until January 2014. At that time their sons were contacted by the security forces after Li Kezhen suffered a stroke. She spent a week in hospital before she and her husband were once again placed under arbitrary detention at a secret location. Since then, Mi Zuheng and Mi Yiming have been permitted to see their parents once every two weeks, under supervision in an allocated restaurant. During politically sensitive occasions, they are not permitted to meet with them and the couple continue to be moved occasionally to ensure their location is kept secret.

Mi Chongbiao and Li Kezhen have reportedly been beaten a number of times and have not been allowed outside during their three-year long detention. Their sons have expressed fear for the health of their father who is 78 and who has suffered years of mistreatment at the hands of the authorities, and for the health of their mother since her stroke. Guards have repeatedly attempted to force Mi Chongbiao to sign a document saying that he would not contact journalists, other human rights defenders or publish any more writings online should he be released. Since demanding accountability from the local authorities and attempting to hire a lawyer for their parents, Mi Zuheng and Mi Yiming have been subjected to surveillance, harassment, intimidation and threats of reprisals, which have intensified since May 2016.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in China to:

1. Immediately and unconditionally release Mi Chongbiao and Li Kezhen, as Front Line Defenders believes that their imprisonment is solely motivated by their legitimate and peaceful work in the defence of human rights;
2. Ensure that the treatment of Mi Chongbiao and Li Kezhen, while in detention, adheres to the conditions set out in the 'Body of Principles for the Protection of All Persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment', adopted by UN General Assembly resolution 43/173 of 9 December 1988;
3. Inform the family of Mi Chongbiao and Li Kezhen of the place of their detention, and allow them immediate and unfettered access to lawyers of their choosing;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in China are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.