

Chinese Government Crackdown Extends to Humanitarian Workers Helping Girls and Mothers



All Girls Allowed

Testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health and Human Rights
China's Latest Crackdown on Dissent

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by Jing Zhang, Director of Operations

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Preamble

All Girls Allowed is a non-profit Christian organization registered in the U.S., founded by Chai Ling, two-time Nobel peace prize nominee and former leader of the 1989 Tiananmen Square Democracy Movement. AGA's mission is to restore life, value and dignity to girls and mothers, and to reveal the injustice of China's One-Child Policy. As you may know, there are many human rights abuses that are occurring as a result of the repressive One-Child Policy, a policy that President Hu Jintao recently confirmed would continue. These human rights abuses include the gendercide of girls, infant abandonment, child trafficking, and forced abortions and sterilizations. Each day under the Policy, over 35,000 abortions occur (many of which are forced or coerced), 500 women commit suicide, and 1 out of every 6 girls will not make it to life. Today, the Chinese government reports that there are 37 million more men than women.

With the love of Christ and the power of God, AGA is taking on this massive issue, with faith that this will come to an end. AGA is supported through donations from the public, which fund our advocacy work in the U.S. and our humanitarian work in China. AGA has dozens of indigenous Chinese workers on the ground who carry out our four rescue programs. Similar to Mother Theresa, whose love for Jesus motivated her service to the poor, the AGA team's love for Jesus is the motivation to restore life, value and dignity to girls and mothers in China and throughout the world. It is through the work of God and by his transformative power that we will see lasting change in China.

In February 2011, inspired by the wave of democratic movements in the Arab World, the Chinese-language internet community gave birth to messages of the Jasmine Revolution. The Chinese government reacted in panic with a severe crackdown, in blatant violation of the Chinese Constitution and the U.N. Charter. It dismissed international condemnation and arrested hundreds of dissidents, civil rights attorneys, and artists—including Jiang Tianyong and Ai Weiwei. Even members of the public in

the streets who happened to carry jasmine flowers were arrested. Through AGA's communication with house church networks, we know of increased persecution of the Shouwang Church in Beijing, whose members have been systematically threatened, arrested and questioned. In Guizhou province, since March 18th, more than a dozen dissidents have been arrested without reason and detained for over a month. One of them, Ms. Wu Yuqin, had cancer; her eighty-year-old mother was also arrested for defending her daughter. Two other women, Wang Lihong and Liang Haiyi, were also arrested and charged for expressing opinions related to the Jasmine Revolution. The Chinese government has also put non-governmental organizations and their workers under surveillance. The work of All Girls Allowed suffered drastically because of threats and harassment from agents of the Ministry of State Security.

Today, China's cruel control of its own people continues to deepen. This year's Chinese domestic security budget reached 624.4 billion Chinese yuan, exceeding a military budget of 601.1 billion yuan.¹ This huge spending on domestic security control and the founding on March 4th of a new National Internet Information Office lead us to believe that the Chinese government has little intention of allowing greater freedom to its people.

AGA Workers Under Surveillance and Beneficiaries Questioned

The first of AGA's programs, the Baby Shower program, aids rural Chinese mothers and baby girls. Every month, AGA workers distribute stipends to mothers of baby girls; these stipends of about \$20 are used to buy baby formula, food and clothing for their daughters. The purpose of the stipend is to save the baby girls from sex-selective abortion, infanticide or abandonment. The stipend also increases the perceived value of girls and gives dignity to mothers who might otherwise hang their heads in shame for having a baby girl.

Over 550 girls and families have benefited from this program. Surveys of sponsored families have shown a drastic change in culture: despite getting an illegal ultrasound to verify the gender of their current child, the vast majority of families who participated in the Baby Shower program expressed that they would not abort or abandon their next child, even if it were a girl—a remarkable success and breakdown of thousands of years of oppression against girls and women. Unfortunately, since March, AGA workers have been harassed by local police and security agents. Some workers have been detained and interrogated multiple times and forced to divulge every detail of the program. Officials of local towns and villages have disseminated rumors that workers were trouble makers who would be arrested by the police, which troubled and inconvenienced mothers who received aid through the program.

In one instance, police not only conducted forced interrogations, but also sent two

¹ Reuters Report: <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/03/05/china-unrest-idUSTOE72400920110305>



A sampling of the baby girls and families who have received aid through All Girls Allowed's Baby Shower program.

agents to record the aid distribution by video. (In order to protect the personal safety of our workers, we will not identify the specific location.) These agents followed the AGA workers on their visits to families in remote villages, recording the conversations between our workers and the beneficiary families. While AGA workers and local families were talking at the doorstep, they stood nearby. When our workers entered local houses, the police would enter and sit down as well. One may well imagine the anxiety and oppression felt by the AGA workers and rural families. Some families requested to stop receiving aid in order to escape police attention, fearing that the attention would have long-lasting ill effects on the entire family. Many volunteers also decided to stop contributing their time to this charitable program. They had volunteered with AGA to serve the local community, but found themselves treated as suspected felons under open police surveillance. Neighbors of AGA workers also became suspicious and began opposing their work.

In another instance, a farmer whose family receives our aid was forcibly pushed into a police vehicle for interrogation. His cell phone was confiscated and he was threatened by the police. They asked him whether the aid carried any conditions, what the volunteers said to him, and whether there was any encouragement to join Falun Gong. After hours of interrogation, he was released.

As a result of police harassment, some field workers and aid-receiving families have requested an early termination of the Baby Shower program. Consequently, hundreds of baby girls and their families have lost the monthly assistance, which carried no conditions except that the family must have a newborn daughter. To a family whose monthly income was only between 300 to 500 Chinese yuan (\$46-\$77), this represents a grave loss.



A police agent followed an AGA worker as he distributed aid to Baby Shower recipients, recording his every action. (Background deliberately blurred to obscure location.)

A field worker told me, “It’s hopeless. If we continue the program, we might end up in prison. If the government wants to arrest someone, there’s no shortage of made-up charges. In China, it’s not easy to do good even if you want to. The government wants to watch everything. They don’t want to overlook any detail, even your thoughts. They have all the money and all the manpower. That’s what it means to have a strong and glorious country.”

Arrests in Tiananmen Don’t Spare Pregnant Woman

The openings of the People’s Congress and the Political Consultation Congress in March coincided with the Jasmine Revolution, when the government’s surveillance and oppression became even more rampant. Police arrested all “questionable personalities” found in sensitive locations in Tiananmen Square and kept them in detention centers such as Jingjiuzhuang in Beijing. Ms. Nie Lina, a woman from Henan province, contacted AGA because of her difficulties. She is currently five-months pregnant. Her family’s house was forcibly demolished, but she could get no redress from the local government. She had no option but to petition the central government in Beijing, and was beaten many times as a result. She was then put into administrative detention in Beijing’s Jingjiuzhuang center. On March 28, 2011, Ms. Nie was transferred from Jingjiuzhuang to her local detention center for ten days, during which time she suffered beatings to her head and body at the hands of government agents.

On April 19th, Ms. Nie was again arrested and kept in a detention center in Xiangcheng, Henan. Seven to eight male government agents undressed her in the court yard of the detention center in front of sixty onlookers, leaving only her bra on her upper body. Afterwards, she was dragged to ultrasound exams and threatened with forced abortion. She was extremely frightened and greatly humiliated. After she reached out to AGA,



On March 15, 2011, Nie Lina was beaten and forcibly arrested by government agents and the police.

our team mobilized hundreds of others to pray for her safety. God answered these prayers, as she was spared a forced abortion in the end because none of the authorities dared sign their name to authorize it. During her three day detention, she was given no food or water by the authorities. Because she was not fed, she suffered severe stomach pain; only a woman working in the kitchen had compassion, sneaking her some bread. The government agents warned her, “We’ll kill you if you go to Beijing to petition again. The police in Beijing told us to arrest you.” I asked if she had visited sensitive locations with connection to the Jasmine Movement. She answered that she had no idea about any “jasmine”. Her only purpose was to uphold her rights by petitioning in Beijing.

In another case, a victim of the Family Planning Policy was detained in Jingjiuzhuang in March 2011. (She has agreed to publicize these details on condition of anonymity.) Several years ago, a farmer’s wife from Nanping, Fujian, was forced to undergo tubal ligation surgery—a forced sterilization. The doctor mistakenly severed the ureter tract of one kidney, leading to infections in her kidney system. Even when Beijing hospitals proved that the ureter tract had been medically severed, the local government and hospital refused to compensate her, leaving her no option but to petition the central government.

After multiple arrests, beatings, and detainment, she was used as an example of an “arrested illegal petitioner” in the local TV station’s program, which led to the eroding of her reputation and collateral punishment to her children and family. When she was taken into the hospital in March for forced “treatment”, she lost all freedom. She was followed by agents even when she returned home to pick up clothing. Local law enforcement agents threatened that if she petitioned the government again, her death would occur under “murky” circumstances. She only recently discovered that the nervous atmosphere was the result of something called “jasmine”. She said that one of her kidneys had already been completely destroyed, and that her head had also been beaten. She estimated that she would not have long to live and had no desire to

continue in this life. We believe, however, that our God is capable of bringing healing and restoration to her and to others in similar suffering. We continue to invite the public to support these courageous women in prayer.

Cutting Off Foreign Funding for Orphans

Another of AGA's programs is our Orphan Scholarship program. As a result of the One-Child Policy and the traditional bias against girls, many newborn girls are abandoned by parents quickly after birth. The latest estimates are that up to one million babies are abandoned each year, most of them girls. A number of poor Buddhist nuns in Tongcheng, Anhui, have adopted several dozen abandoned girls. They provide shelter and care, but cannot afford to send them to school. AGA stepped in to provide monthly scholarships for the girls, who are now attending elementary, secondary or undergraduate schools. Among these orphans are Shi Minjie, who was found nearly frozen in a basket eighteen years ago, but who is now able to attend college with the help of AGA's scholarship; and "Little Thing", who was found last year and received life-saving medical treatment through AGA's assistance.



Shi Minjie (left) was rescued 18 years ago and is now attending Anhui Agricultural University.

"Little Thing" (right) was rescued last year and received life-saving medical care.

Since the beginning of 2011, the nuns suddenly became unenthusiastic about AGA's assistance, nearly terminating all aid in February and March. After a special investigation, we discovered that the nun in charge of processing the funding, a member of the Tongcheng Buddhist Association, had received pressure through "talks" with local authorities. She was no longer willing to have any connection with economic aid from abroad, even charitable foreign Christian donations.

Many months ago, the central government announced a program to assist orphans

who did not already receive government funding.² This funding was supposed to be retroactive back to January 2010. However, in our March 2011 special investigation, we discovered that even provincial-level welfare agencies had not received any such funding, let alone city-, county-, and township-level agencies. Among the Tongcheng nunneries, not one has received any assistance.

We do not know whether AGA's Orphan Scholarship program had any connections with the government crackdown during the Jasmine Revolution, nor do we know the exact content of the conversations between Tongcheng police and the nuns, but the sudden change in the nuns' attitudes towards AGA's assistance speaks to the pressure they received. It also speaks to the government's suspicion of foreign charities and donations. This suspicion completely dismisses the needs of the most vulnerable group, the abandoned orphans.

Conclusion and Action Steps

In conclusion, All Girls Allowed testifies that the recent crackdown has included not only political dissidents, civil rights advocates and internet opinion, but also the Chinese government has been restricting the purely humanitarian activities of organizations such as All Girls Allowed and continues to persecute our workers. Because AGA works mainly to benefit girls and mothers, such restrictions have led to the direct suffering of the most vulnerable communities. Perhaps more importantly, the strict One-Child Policy continues to control the entire population, disproportionately oppressing girls and mothers, bringing about tremendous loss of life and creating an atmosphere of fear among the people.

What can and should be done in response to this evidence? In a statement earlier this week on May 9th, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said, "China and the United States face a wide range of common regional and global challenges. How our two countries work together to meet those challenges will help define the trajectory, not only of our relationship going forward, but the future peace, prosperity, and progress of the world." We at AGA agree, and we believe that the future peace, prosperity and progress of the world depend on the moral uprightness of an emerging China. As China begins to grow in its influence in the global network, now is the time to confront them on their treatment of their own people.

While detractors may say that China does not respond to outside pressure, we have observed that drawing attention to these abuses have resulted in greater justice for the victims. One example is that of Xiao Aiying, a woman who was forced to abort her second child while eight-months pregnant. Shortly after her forced abortion, she was interviewed by Al Jazeera TV, and AGA's human rights lawyers immediately contacted her to defend her case. Through this exposure, the local government apologized and

² China's Legal Evening News Report: <http://news.163.com/10/1231/14/6P84M0L800014AED.html>

gave financial compensation and free housing to the couple. This is but one example of the importance of speaking up on behalf of these, the most vulnerable in society.



A screen capture of Xiao Aiying, as filmed by Al Jazeera TV immediately following her forced abortion.

We urge American leaders to stand in solidarity with girls and mothers in China by continuing to support humanitarian organizations such as AGA, and also to act in the following ways:

- 1) Appoint a special investigator to determine the extent of human rights violations as a result of the One-Child Policy.
- 2) Apply diplomatic pressure to the Chinese government and issue a Congressional Resolution condemning the One-Child Policy.
- 3) Partner with the Chinese government to develop an alternative solution to population growth that is humane and effective.

All Girls Allowed has collected the signatures of over 2,000 people who are asking you, their representatives in government, to perform these actions and any others in your power, in order to bring an end to this inhumane policy. In the short period of AGA's existence, we have seen God's hand at work in remarkable ways to rescue girls and mothers. With your help, we believe we will see an end to these grave human rights violations in China. Thank you very much for your attention.