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Human Rights Without Frontiers Int'l

CHINA: Democracy, Rule of Law and Human Rights

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Taihu and shame the lake's major industrial polluters.

But he was detained temporarily in 2002. Wu has said Yixing officials feared his activism would cause economic losses to the region's industry.

After his arrest in 2007, his wife and colleagues clamoured for his release and accused the local government and police of seeking to torture a confession out of him.

A toxic algae bloom in Taihu lake in May that year contaminated water supplies for more than 2.3 million people in Wuxi city, which sits across the lake from Yixing, bringing nationwide attention to the issue.

Wu was finally convicted in August 2007 after repeated delays in his public trial, which his relatives said at the time were ordered by local authorities so that Wang could heal from his prison beatings.

Wu alleged other humiliating treatment in jail, including even tight restrictions on eating.

"When (guards) said 'start', I could eat. When they said 'stop', I had to stop no matter whether I had finished eating or not," he said.

He also said he was forced to run in circles outside after meals "until I was mentally exhausted," and was kept in a windowless cell. The only contact he was allowed was with two prison guards.

CHINA

Study: Indoor pollution kills 2.2 million young

Chinese

Peter Simpson

VOA (17.05.2010) / HRWF (20.05.2010) - Website: www.hrwf.net - A new report released in China says more than two million Chinese youths die each year from health problems related to indoor air pollution, with nearly half of them under five years of age.

Modern, industrial China is synonymous with air pollution.

But now Chinese citizens face another deadly environmental threat - one that lurks in their homes, schools, and places of work and leisure.

A new report released Sunday by the state-run China Center for Disease and Control and Prevention, reveals more than two million young Chinese die each year from indoor pollution. The report says indoor pollution levels can often be 5-10 times higher than those measured in the nation's notoriously bad outdoor air.

Goods and materials used in the home, schools, office and leisure place - from roof insulation to sofas - are manufactured using lethal toxins such as formaldehyde, benzene, ammonia and radon.

The study, which was reported Monday by China's state media, indicates that one million of those prematurely killed by such chemicals in the home and schools are children under the age of five.

The research has shocked international groups that monitor the effects of pollution and hazardous chemicals on Chinese citizens.

Jamie Choi, head of the China Toxins Campaign's for Greenpeace China, says the government, though aware of the health risks caused by such chemicals, needs to implement tighter regulations.

"These are absolutely shocking figures and definitely go to show how important hazardous chemical management in this country should be, although it's not something a lot of people are paying attention to right now," said Jamie Choi. "It is obviously going to become a bigger and bigger problem. There definitely has to be a much more comprehensive manner in which the Chinese government tackles hazardous chemicals and indoor pollution. There has to be a comprehensive management system and that is the route they should be taking."

The reports says formaldehyde poses the biggest threat. It is often found in building materials and new furniture in China. It is slowly released into indoor environments over the course of several years.

The report says long-term exposure to such substances can cause a range of health problems including respiratory diseases, mental impairment and cancer, with young children, fetuses in-utero and the elderly at most risk.

UNICEF spokesman Dale Rutstein says the reported one million deaths of children under the age of five from indoor pollution is alarming. He says it undermines the great work China has made in recent decades cutting infant mortality rates.

"China has made huge strides in reducing the under five mortality rates in the last few

decades. They have come down significantly through things like immunization and women's health - safe motherhood, safe childbirth," said Rutstein. "In general, child mortality has significantly declined and other types of dangers now emerge in the statistics. It's logical that environmental health and toxins in the environment would begin to show up as one of the major threats to children."

No one from the China Center for Disease and Control and Prevention was available for comment on the study.

China's rapid industrialization over three decades has made it one of the world's most polluted countries. Most cities are smothered in smog while some 360 million citizens lack access to clean drinking water. Sixty millions of those citizens are forced to drink stagnant supplies.

Millions die each year as a result of the bad air and polluted water, yet environmental and health concerns remain low on the list of priorities because economic growth remains the main focus.

Human Rights Advocacy 2010: Some activities

Letter to the members of the European Parliament Delegation for Relations with the Korean Peninsula about the imprisonment of 400 conscientious objectors to military service.

Distribution of HRWF report "For South Korea Without Prisoners of Conscience" to several members of the European Parliament (MEPs)

Publication: "Religious Freedom Advocacy Opportunities at the European Parliament", pp 391-400 (University of Dresden, Journal for the Study of Beliefs and Worldviews)

Publication: The sect Issue in Belgium and France, pp 323-329, in "Law and Religion", Wolters Kluwer

Round table on freedom of religion or belief at the European Parliament organized by EPRID

Guest-speaker at the "Women - Religion or Belief - Human Rights Panel" at the United Nations in Geneva and presentation on a report about the "Burqa Issue in the EU" (12 March)

Appointment as a member of the "Advisory Board of the European Parliament Platform for Secularism in Politics" and participation in its meetings

Meeting with Robert King, US Special Envoy for North Korea (6 April)

Screening of the film "Kimjongilia", laureate of the One World Film Festival at the European Parliament (14 April) and "Last Train Home" at the Beaux-Arts in Brussels (15 April)

Invitation to and participation in the meeting of the Fundamental Rights Agency in Vienna (15-16 April)

Member of the jury of the One World Human Rights Documentary Film Festival in Brussels (19 April)

Guest-speaker: Conference at the European Parliament "Uyghurs call for dialogue with China - Implementation of the Chinese Constitution to Safeguard and Protect the Rights of the Uyghur People" (29 April)

Participation in meetings of think tanks in Brussels: European Policy Center, Friedrich Naumann Foundation, EU-Russia Center, European Institute for Asian Studies, etc.

Participation in the briefings and debriefings of the EU-China/ EU-Russia/ EU-Uzbekistan Human Rights Dialogues

Participation in the meetings of Delegations of the European Parliament for Relations with South East Asia, Central Asia, Russia, China, Korean Peninsula, South Caucasus, Iraq, Iran

Co-signing a letter against Libya's candidacy for the elections to the UN Human Rights Council

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The experts are not responsible for the material distributed by HRWF Int'l

These experts can be contacted to participate in conferences as guest-speakers or for interviews.

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