

14 March 2024
For immediate release

Joint statement on the 10-year anniversary of ‘deadly reprisals’ against Chinese activist Cao Shunli

Today, we pay tribute to Cao Shunli, and all human rights defenders targeted by the Chinese government for their commitment to uphold the promise of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

[Cao Shunli](#) was a brave Chinese woman human rights defender and lawyer. Working with fellow activists, Cao documented abuses, including the now-abolished ‘Re-education through Labour’ extrajudicial detention system, which she was also subjected to as a result of her human rights work. She campaigned for independent civil society to be meaningfully consulted and to be able to contribute to the Chinese government’s national reports to its first and second Universal Periodic Reviews (UPR). In an attempt to speak with government officials about the UPR, Cao courageously organised peaceful sit-ins with other concerned citizens outside the Ministry of Foreign Affairs despite great risks. She also submitted information on extralegal detention and torture in China to the UN and expressed the hope that ‘if we could get even 100 words’ into a UN report, ‘many of our problems could start to get addressed.’

On 14 September 2013, Chinese authorities detained Cao at the Beijing Capital International Airport as she was traveling to Geneva to participate in a human rights training, one month before China’s second UPR. Cao was forcibly disappeared for five weeks, until she resurfaced in criminal detention and was charged with ‘picking quarrels and provoking trouble’. By October 2013, it was clear that Cao Shunli was experiencing serious medical issues while in detention. After months of denial of adequate medical treatment, rejected appeals by her lawyers for bail on humanitarian grounds, and despite multiple calls from the international community for her urgent release, Cao died of multiple organ failure on 14 March 2014 in a hospital under heavy police guard to keep out her lawyers and friends.

Cao was one of the [2014 finalists](#) of the prestigious Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders.

To this day, there has been no accountability for Cao Shunli’s death. The Chinese government refuses to admit wrongdoing, despite repeated calls in [2014](#) and [2019](#) by UN Special Procedures experts for a full investigation into this ‘deadly reprisal’.

Her case is one of the longest-standing unresolved cases in the UN Secretary-General’s annual reports on reprisals against civil society actors for engaging with the United Nations. [China is one of the most consistent perpetrators of reprisals](#) over time, and one of the most egregious perpetrators in terms of the sheer number of individuals targeted.

Cao is not alone: her courage, but also the abuses she endured, are unfortunately those of other human rights defenders who paid a high cost for cooperating with the UN. Her close

colleague, [Chen Jianfang](#) was forcibly disappeared under Residential Surveillance at a Designated Location (RSDL) from 19-20 March 2019 after paying tribute to Cao Shunli on the 5th anniversary of her death. Chen was sentenced to four years and six months in jail for ‘inciting subversion of State power’ and left prison on 21 October 2023, after which authorities subjected her to strict surveillance. UN experts have raised with the Chinese government acts of reprisals against [Chen Jianfang](#), but also [Jiang Tianyong](#), [Li Qiaochu](#), [Dolkun Isa](#), [Li Wenzu](#) and [Wang Qiaoling](#), among others. The recent instances of intimidation and harassment against NGO participants in China’s 4th UPR in January 2024 further highlight the gravity of the situation.

Li Qiaochu, Xu Zhiyong, Ding Jiayi, Yu Wensheng, Xu Yan, Huang Xueqin, Li Yuhan, Chang Weiping: many other Chinese human rights defenders are today detained, disappeared, and at grave risk, for upholding the promise of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

These documented acts do not account for the even greater self-censorship and refusal to engage with the United Nation as a result of a [generalised climate of fear](#).

14 March 2024 will mark the 10-year anniversary of Cao Shunli’s death. Ten years ago, when ISHR and many other human rights groups sought to [observe a moment of silence](#) at the Human Rights Council in her memory, the Chinese delegation, together with other delegations, disrupted the session for an hour and half.

Cao Shunli is a paradigmatic case of reprisals, not only because of her prominence, but also due to the array of severe human rights violations against her, committed in total impunity. These range from Chinese authorities blocking her exit from her own country, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention, lack of due process, torture or ill-treatment and denial of adequate medical care, to subsequent death in custody, and the lack of accountability for these abuses. **The lack of any progress in achieving accountability underscores the urgent need for continued international attention and pressure on the Chinese government to ensure justice for Cao and all human rights defenders who face persecution for their work.**

Cao Shunli said before her death: ‘Our impact may be large, may be small, and may be nothing. But we must try. It is our duty to the dispossessed and it is the right of civil society.’

Today, we pay tribute to Cao Shunli’s legacy, one that has inspired countless human rights defenders in China and abroad. We urge UN Member States to call for a full, independent, impartial investigation into her death. We reaffirm that no perpetrator of reprisals, no matter how powerful, is above scrutiny, and that reprisals are fundamentally incompatible with the values of the United Nations and of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Signatories:

1. Art for Human Rights
2. ARTICLE 19
3. Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
4. Asian Lawyers Network (ALN)
5. Campaign for Uyghurs
6. CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation
7. CSW (Christian Solidarity Worldwide)
8. Front Line Defenders
9. HK Labour Rights Monitor
10. Hong Kong Centre for Human Rights
11. Hong Kong Democracy Council (HKDC)
12. Hong Kong Watch
13. Human Rights in China
14. Humanitarian China
15. Humanitarian China
16. International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute (IBAHRI)
17. International Campaign for Tibet
18. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
19. International Service for Human Rights
20. International Tibet Network
21. Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada
22. Martin Ennals Foundation
23. Network of Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD)
24. PEN International
25. Safeguard Defenders
26. The 29 Principles
27. The Rights Practice
28. Tibet Justice Center
29. Uyghur Human Rights Project
30. World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), within the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders
31. World Uyghur Congress

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供立即发布

中国活动人士曹顺利遭“致命报复”十周年联合声明

今天，我们向曹顺利以及所有被中国政府针对的人权捍卫者致以敬意，感谢他们致力于维护《世界人权宣言》的承诺。

[曹顺利](#)是一位勇敢的中国女性人权捍卫者和律师。曹顺利与其他活动人士一起记录了侵权行为，包括现已废除的“劳动教养”法外拘留制度，她也因人权工作而遭受过这种制度的侵害。她致力于争取由独立的民间社会对中国政府第一次和第二次普遍定期审议(UPR)的国家报告进行有意义的磋商和贡献。为了与政府官员谈论普遍定期审议，曹顺利不顾巨大风险，勇敢地组织了在外交部前与其他关心此事的公民的和平静坐。她还向联合国提交了有关中国法外拘留和酷刑的信息，并表示希望“如果我们能在一份联合国报告中写下哪怕100个字”，“我们的许多问题就可以开始得到解决”。

2013年9月14日，中国当局在北京首都国际机场拘留了曹顺利，当时她正前往日内瓦参加人权培训，此时距离中国第二次普遍定期审议还有一个月。她被强迫失踪五周，重新露面时，被指控“寻衅滋事”而遭刑拘。2013年10月，曹顺利在拘留期间出现严重的健康问题。数月来她一直得不到足够的医疗救治，律师以人道主义为由提出的保释请求被驳回，尽管国际社会多次呼吁紧急释放曹顺利，但她还是于2014年3月14日在一家医院因多器官衰竭去世，医院有重兵把守，以阻止她的律师和朋友进入。

曹顺利是著名的马丁·恩纳尔斯人权捍卫者奖 [2014年的决赛入围者](#)之一。

时至今日，尚未对曹顺利之死进行任何追责。尽管联合国特别程序专家在 [2014年](#)和 [2019年](#)多次呼吁对这一“致命报复”进行全面调查，但中国政府拒不承认不当行为。

在联合国秘书长关于民间社会行为方因参与联合国活动而遭到报复的年度报告中，她的案件是悬而未决的最长案件之一。长期以来，[中国是实施报复行为最频繁的国家之一](#)，而且就报复针对个人的绝对数量而言，也是最恶劣的肇事国之一。

曹顺利的案例并不是一个孤立的事件：不幸的是，她的勇气，以及她所遭受的虐待，都是那些为与联合国合作付出高昂代价的其他人权捍卫者的经历。2019年3月19日至20日，与曹顺利亲近的同事[陈建芳](#)在曹顺利逝世五周年之际悼念她之后，遭指定居所监视居住而被强制失踪。陈建芳被以“煽动颠覆国家政权罪”判处四年零六个月有期徒刑，并于2023年10月21日出狱，此后当局对她进行了严格的监视。联合国专家已向中国政府提出对[陈建芳](#)、[江天勇](#)、[李翘楚](#)、[多力坤·艾萨](#)(Dolkun Isa)、[李文足](#)和[王峭岭](#)等人的报复行为。最近在2024年1月中国第四次普遍定期审议期间发生的针对非政府组织参与者的恐吓和骚扰事件，进一步凸显了局势的严重性。

[李翘楚](#)、[许志永](#)、[丁家喜](#)、[余文生](#)、[许艳](#)、[黄雪琴](#)、[李昱函](#)、[常玮平](#)：今天，还有许多其他中国人权捍卫者因维护《世界人权宣言》的承诺而遭到拘留、失踪，并面临严重危险。

这些记录在案的行为并没有说明由于[普遍的恐惧气氛](#)而导致的更严重的自我审查和拒绝与联合国接触的情况。

2024年3月14日是曹顺利逝世十周年纪念日。十年前，当国际人权服务社 (ISHR) 和许多其他人权组织试图在人权理事会[默哀片刻](#)以纪念她时，中国代表团与其他代表团一起将会议扰乱了一个半小时。

曹顺利的案例是报复的典型案列，不仅因为她的声望，还因为她遭受了一系列严重侵犯人权的行为，而且这些行为完全没有受到惩罚。这些侵权行为包括中国当局阻止她出境、强迫失踪、任意拘留、缺乏正当程序、酷刑或虐待以及拒绝提供足够的医疗救治，到随后在拘留期间的死亡，以及对这些侵权行为缺乏问责。在追责方面毫无进展，凸显了国际社会迫切需要持续关注并向中国政府施压，以确保曹顺利和所有因工作而面临迫害的人权捍卫者能得到正义。

曹顺利临终前说：“我们的影响可能很大，可能很小，也可能没什么。但我们必须尝试。这是我们对被剥夺者的责任，也是公民社会的权利。”

今天，我们向曹顺利的遗志致敬，她的遗志激励了国内外无数的人权捍卫者。我们敦促联合国会员国呼吁对她的死亡进行全面、独立、公正的调查。我们重申，任何报复行为的实施者，无论多么强大，都无法逃脱审查，而且报复行为从根本上不符合联合国和《世界人权宣言》的价值观。

签署组织：

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