

December 24 , 2018 Statement by Li Ching-yu, Wife of Li Ming-che

Let us continue writing to Li Ming-che

This is the second time I am holding a press conference for Li Ming-che on Christmas Eve.

This time, however, it was a furious and emaciated Li Ming-che now incarcerated in Chishan Prison who asked me to write down each and every word he said and hold a press conference after my return to Taiwan and tell the entire world about his condition.

Last year, our comrades at Taiwanese NGOs launched a campaign called “Let us write to Li Ming-che,” because he was being subjected to the same treatment as the most wretched of political prisoners were during the period of White Terror in Taiwan.

Those were Chinese who had fled to Taiwan with Chiang Kai-shek but were thrown into prison on suspicion of espionage, who lived out their lives in Taiwan, lonely and miserable, without family or any form of assistance.

This is the life of Li Ming-che in a Chinese prison, with no family or support, imprisoned, alone, in a foreign land.

The situation remains unchanged from a year ago, with Li Ming-che in continued isolation.

Every prisoner in the People's Republic of China can receive letters from family and friends, with no stipulations that the writer be immediate family.

The only exception is Li Ming-che.

To date, Li Ming-che has only received letters from myself and his mother. My letters take six months to reach him, and I have not once received a letter from him in prison.

Every prisoner in the PRC has visitation rights and can receive family once a month.

The only exception is Li Ming-che.

Because I am a foreigner who needs a special permit to enter China.

Not only must I apply for every single visa-on-arrival, this visa is retained on my behalf by Chinese national security personnel; I am accompanied on my visits to Chishan Prison, which are subject to full surveillance. I may also be denied entry into China any time on the fictional premise that "the prison visitation system is being upgraded." This means it could easily be another three months before I see my husband again.

Every prisoner in the PRC can apply for a public phone card to make family calls.

The only exception is Li Ming-che.

Because he is a “foreigner.”

Chishan Prison informed Li Ming-che that a reply letter received from the telephone company said, “Your letter has been received. However, according to national law, users applying through any branch of China Telecom for fixed-line or mobile telephone services must register under their real name. They must provide an authentic and valid second-generation Resident Identity Card in order to register authentic identity information, and must also be photographed so that the user’s photo may be stored in the system. The identity card number provided for Li is that of a ‘Taiwanese,’ and the system cannot recognize this identity card number, so the user cannot apply for a number. We apologize for the inconvenience!”

China declared to the rest of the world that all writings by Li Ming-che, a Taiwanese, penned within the “borders of the Republic of China” fall under the jurisdiction of the “People’s Republic of China.” Yet, it rejects Li Ming-che’s application for a public phone card on the grounds that he is “Taiwanese.” It deprived Li Ming-che of the right to make family phone calls accorded to all Chinese prisoners.

These are rights, not privileges. These are rights that every other prisoner in China enjoys.

But because Li Ming-che is Taiwanese and a foreigner, he is deprived of these rights.

Moreover, the prison has repeatedly violated China’s official regulations.

1. Chishan Prison has violated China's regulation 8511.

The prison labor system mandates no more than eight hours of labor each day, and five days of labor, one day of education, and one day of rest each week.

Li Ming-che works more than 10 hours a day without a day of rest.

There is not a hairsbreadth of difference between reeducation through labor in prison and working at a sweatshop.

2. Chishan Prison has violated China's official regulations on publications.

Every book that I have sent to prison authorities for delivery to Li Ming-che was published in simplified Chinese and reviewed and approved by the PRC. These books of literature and history that Li Ming-che enjoys discuss historical developments dating back thousands or hundreds of years, or philosophy from several hundred years ago.

Yet these "legally published" books were examined and restricted by Chishan Prison.

As a political prisoner, not only his body, but his mind and soul are locked up in jail.

3. Chishan Prison has frozen Li Ming-che's personal bank account, from which he drew funds for living expenses, using his transfer to another prison and other administrative procedures as an excuse.

For unknown reasons, Li Ming-che has twice been removed to other prisons. Not only was his warm clothing discarded because he was transferred, but the account in which his family deposited funds for his living expenses has been frozen.

Chishan Prison provides mostly spoiled food and drinks to inmates. Li Ming-che had long used his own funds to buy food. But now that his account is frozen and he is unable to purchase his own food, he has lost an incredible amount of weight. He has also been unable to purchase clothing to shield against the cold in Chishan Prison, where the average temperature is around 5 degrees Celsius.

Meanwhile, prison authorities have refused to let me send warm clothing to Li Ming-che on the grounds that "the family is not allowed to send any items that can be purchased in prison."

The weather forecast calls for snow in Yuanjiang City this week.

A year has passed. On this Christmas Eve, Li Ming-che remains incarcerated, alone and desolate, in a foreign country.

Therefore, on this Christmas Eve, I again request everyone to please continue sending postcards to Li Ming-che.

The postcards may not reach him, but they will reach the Chinese prison and the Chinese government will learn about it. Sending postcards to him persistently will not only demonstrate our support for him. More importantly, it will make the prison authorities and the Chinese government realize that we are all waiting for Li Ming-che to come home, that we have not forgotten him or abandoned him. The entire world is watching how long the Chinese government plans to keep Li Ming-che behind bars and how it is treating him.

I wish to extend my heartfelt gratitude to every one of you who has supported Li Ming-che.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

(Written by Li Ching-yu on the 646th day after her husband, Li Ming-che, was detained.)