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## Open Letter Calling for Urgent Action for Girls, 6 and 2, Locked up in a Psychiatric Hospital for over Two Years in China



He Fangmei and Li Xin's three children. Image courtesy: Twitter/@FreeHeFangmei

### To all those who care about human rights:

We are writing to draw your attention to the alarming current circumstances of a Chinese family - Ms. He Fangmei, Mr. Li Xin, and their three young children. He Fangmei's case is already known to UN human rights experts. She has been illegally detained for over two years without having received a sentence; she has a severe congenital hearing impairment. Her husband, Li Xin, a former journalist, has been sentenced through a closed-door trial to five years in prison. Their three young children have been left without parental care, and their families have been refused permission to visit them. We are deeply concerned about the safety and wellbeing of these children.

In March 2018, Li Xin and He Fangmei's one-year-old daughter received Hepatitis A, MMR and DPT vaccines in Huixian, Henan Province. In May 2018, the child became paralysed throughout her whole body and was later diagnosed with quadriplegia and muscle atrophy due to the development of a neurological disease named viral myelitis, caused by a defective vaccine. He Fangmei and Li Xin took their daughter to Beijing for medical treatment and began to raise awareness of faulty vaccines. Later, He Fangmei collaborated with other parents of children who became ill or disabled after defective vaccinations and founded the 'Vaccine Babies Home' group, which advocated more stringent regulation of vaccine safety and establishment of legislation to regulate compensation for defective vaccine victims. Since then, Chinese authorities have subjected He Fangmei and her family to a sustained

campaign of oppression; including detentions, enforced disappearances, and serious restrictions to their freedom of movement.

In March 2019, Ms. He was arrested while raising donations in Beijing with other family members of defective vaccine victims. She was forcibly taken back to Henan by police for allegedly 'picking quarrels and provoking trouble' and detained for ten months, before she was released without charge. Upon Ms. He's release, authorities failed to compensate her for her illegal detention, and subjected her to 'stability maintenance'; where she and her family were frequently harassed, surveilled and had their freedom of movement severely curtailed. Ultimately, she and Mr. Li Xin were unable to take their disabled daughter to Beijing to receive her required medical treatment.

On October 9, 2020, Ms. He threw paint on the front signage of the Huixian local government to protest the government's obstruction of her daughter's medical trip. She and her children were taken away by police. Shortly afterwards, her husband Li Xin was also arrested. The couple and their children were incommunicado until March 2022, when He's family received a notice about her arrest.

Family members subsequently learned that Ms. He, who was five months pregnant at the time, and her then seven-year-old son and four-year-old daughter, were transferred to 'live under surveillance' (a form of enforced disappearance) at the Xinxiang Gongji Psychiatric Hospital in Henan Province in October 2020.

During Ms. He Fangmei's stay at the psychiatric hospital, her son was sent to live with a villager who had assisted Huixian police to guard his mother, and he began to attend elementary school. In February 2021, He Fangmei gave birth to her youngest daughter.

On March 23, 2022, shortly after her baby turned one, Ms. He was arrested on charges of 'bigamy' and 'picking quarrels and provoking trouble' and taken into custody. Her two young daughters continue to live under surveillance in the psychiatric hospital.

In January 2023, the UN published a letter sent to the Chinese authorities written by human rights experts, who expressed concern about five human rights defenders who had been disappeared or arbitrarily detained, including He Fangmei.

Currently, Ms. He is being held in the Xinxiang Detention Center for an unspecified period of time, and still awaits a verdict. Her family learned that the prosecutor's office posits a jail term between five to seven years for her, while her husband, Li Xin, has already been sentenced to five years. He is currently serving his sentence in Jiaozuo Prison, Henan province.

Their disabled six-year-old girl is still detained in the psychiatric hospital, deprived of education. She has been barefoot because the hospital is not equipped to provide her with the custom-made corrective shoes she requires. The two-year-old little girl was born inside the psychiatric hospital and has never experienced life outside it. She has never met her father, and was separated from her mother at 1 month old. Is this a normal childhood?

In May 2023, He Fangmei wrote to her elder sister to entrust the children to her care. However, neither the Xinxiang Gongji Psychiatric Hospital nor the Huixian Public Security Bureau would allow the childrens' aunt to visit them. This violates the Civil Code of the People's Republic of China (Article 27) and the children's rights. Relatives are extremely anxious that no safeguarding is in place to protect these young children from harm.

We, the undersigned, call for urgent action for this family:

**To the international community, especially NGOs and individuals concerned about human rights in China:**

- Pay close attention to the situation of Li Xin and He Fangmei's three children, publicise their plight as widely as possible to generate civic interest, and express your grave concerns about their welfare to the Chinese government as a matter of urgency.

**To the authorities in Huixian, Henan province:**

- Immediately allow the two little girls to live with He Fangmei's sister so that they can receive proper care until their mother is released;
- Close He Fangmei's outstanding court case and release He Fangmei immediately and unconditionally so that she can go home and take care of her three children without further delay;
- Release Li Xin immediately and unconditionally;
- Provide the necessary educational opportunities and rehabilitative healthcare for the disabled girl.

The lives and futures of these three children deserve our collective attention and protection. They should have the right to live in a family that loves them and supports their healthy development, and enjoy a childhood full of love and care. July 21, 2023 is the seventh birthday of the girl disabled by defective vaccines. Please take action and help the children celebrate with their families this year. Let us bring smiles back to these innocent children's faces.

**Co-signatories:**

Changsha Funeng  
China Aid  
China Change  
China Human Rights Lawyers Group  
Citizen Power Initiatives for China  
Civil Rights & Livelihood Watch  
Democratic China  
Human Rights in China  
Humanitarian China  
Safeguard Defenders  
Support Network for the Persecuted in China  
Shining Light Media  
Weiquanwang

Women's Rights in China  
Women's Rights Without Frontiers