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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

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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'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, Ms. He 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 children's 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 her 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.

呼吁为在中国被关在精神病院两年多的 6 岁和 2 岁女孩采取紧急行动的公开信

尊敬的全球人权组织和关注者：

我们联名发布此公开信，希望您关注一个中国家庭目前令人震惊的境况——何方美、李新及其三个年幼的孩子。何方美是一位受到联合国人权专家关注的中国人权捍卫者，患有听力障碍，现已被羁押超过两年，尚未宣判；她的丈夫李新，前媒体人，已被秘密判刑五年。他们的三个未成年的孩子失去父母的照顾，不仅得不到家族亲人的关怀，家人甚至无法自由探望。我们深感忧虑，担心这几个孩子的安全和健康。

2018 年 3 月，李新、何方美一岁多的女儿在河南辉县接种了甲肝、麻腮风和百白破疫苗；2018 年 5 月，孩子发病，后诊断为患病毒性脊髓炎而致四肢瘫痪萎缩。何方美夫妇一边带着女儿在北京治疗，一边上访维权。其后，何方美联合其他疫苗儿童家长，呼吁关注疫苗安全等议题，呼吁国家完善疫苗风险补偿基金。自此，何方美一家遭到当局打压维稳，多次被拘押、强迫失踪、限制人身自由。

2019 年 3 月中共两会期间，何方美与各地问题疫苗家长到北京王府井为残儿募捐，被新乡市辉县警方行政拘留 15 天，又被以涉嫌“寻衅滋事罪”转刑拘，在被羁押 10 个月後无罪获释。辉县当局不仅拒不为此支付国家赔偿，还对何方美一家加重维稳，限制他们出行，阻挠他们带残疾女儿到北京接受急需的医疗。

2020年10月9日，何方美带着女儿到河南省辉县政府门前泼漆抗议政府阻挠其带疫苗致残的女儿去看病，被警察带走。她的丈夫李新不久也被抓捕。这家人自此被强制失踪，直到2022年3月何方美的家人收到她的逮捕通知书。

原来，2020年10月，当时已怀孕五个月的何方美和时年七岁的儿子、四岁的女儿，被送入河南省新乡共济精神病医院监视居住。

在精神病院居住期间，何方美的儿子因到了学龄，被送至曾协助辉县警方看管维稳何方美的一户村民家中寄养，上小学；2021年2月，何方美生下小女儿。

2022年3月23日，在婴儿满周岁不久，何方美被以“重婚罪”、“寻衅滋事罪”逮捕并羁押至看守所。她的两个幼女继续被当局监视居住在精神病院。

2023年1月，联合国公布了2022年12月初多名人权专家发送给中国当局的信件，其中关注了包括何方美在内的五位失踪或被任意拘留的人权捍卫者。

如今，何方美在新乡看守所被超期羁押，仍在等候宣判。家属得知检察院对何方美的量刑是五至七年，而何方美的丈夫李新已被判刑五年，现于焦作监狱服刑。

他们六岁的女儿被关在精神病院，被剥夺受教育的权利，并且一直光着脚，因无量脚定制的矫正鞋子。而两岁的小妹妹更是从未经历过精神病院以外的世界，从未见过自己的父亲，自一岁起被迫与母亲分开。这岂是正常的童年？

2023年5月，何方美写信委托自己的姐姐照顾孩子们。但是，新乡共济精神医院和辉县公安局不让姨母探望孩子们。这不仅违反《中华人民共和国民法典》第二十七条对监护权的规定，也令家人对几个年幼孩子的安全和权益保障更加担忧。

为了这个家庭，我们联名发起以下紧急呼吁：

- 1. 请国际社会，尤其是关注中国人权的机构和个人，密切关注李新、何方美的三个孩子的处境，广泛传播此恶性人权案件，并向中国政府表达严重关切；**
- 2. 请敦促河南辉县政府、公安局立即让何方美的姐姐接走两个小女孩，让她们在母亲获释前能得到合适的照顾；**
- 3. 请敦促河南辉县法院尽快结案，立即无条件释放何方美，让母亲回家照顾三个孩子；**
- 4. 请敦促河南当局立即无条件释放李新；**
- 5. 请敦促河南辉县政府为何方美的残疾女儿提供必要的教育和康复医疗。**

这三个孩子的生活和未来值得我们共同关注和保护。他们应当有权利生活在一个爱他们、支持他们健康成长的家庭中，享受充满爱与关怀的童年。今年7月21日，因疫苗致残的女孩就满七岁了。请一起呼吁，今年的生日，帮助孩子们与亲人一起度过，让孩子们重新绽放笑颜。

2023年6月29日

联名呼吁机构 Co-signatories (联署名单更新 2023年7月7日)

长沙富能 Changsha Funeng

对华援助协会 China Aid

改变中国 China Change

中国人权律师团律师 China Human Rights Lawyers Group

中国人权捍卫者联盟 Chinese Human Rights Defenders

公民力量 Citizen Power Initiatives for China

民生观察 Civil Rights & Livelihood Watch

CSW

民主中国 Democratic China

对话中国 Dialogue China

中国人权 Human Rights in China

人道中国 Humanitarian China

国际人权服务社 International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)

华人民主书院 New School for Democracy

保护卫士 Safeguard Defenders

中国政治及宗教受难者后援会 Support Network for the Persecuted in China

光传媒 Shining Light Media

维权网 Weiquanwang

中国妇权 Women's Rights in China

女权无疆界 Women's Rights Without Frontiers