



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on May 21, 2012

Chinese Pro-Life Leader Begins New Life in U.S.

Chen Guangcheng, the Chinese pro-life dissident who suffered years of abuse and imprisonment at the hands of Beijing's communist government for exposing its cruel one-child abortion policy, has been given his freedom. Chen, his wife, and their two children landed at Newark Liberty International Airport May 12 and were immediately whisked off to Lower Manhattan, where Chen spoke to a crowd gathered at New York University (NYU), briefly recounting his ordeal and renewing his commitment to battle the tyranny and injustice he and millions of others have suffered under China's repressive government.



"I believe that no matter how difficult the environment, nothing is impossible if you put your heart to it," Chen told those gathered at NYU, where he has been offered an opportunity to continue his law studies. "We should link our arms to continue in the fight for goodness in the world and to fight against injustice. So I think that all people should apply themselves to this end to work for the common good worldwide."

The [Associated Press](#) reported that Chen was taken from a hospital where he had been confined since leaving the U.S. Embassy in Beijing May 2, and put on a plane with his family after Chinese authorities suddenly made good on their promise to allow him to leave the country. As previously reported by [The New American](#), Chen had been given refuge in the embassy in late April after escaping from Chinese authorities who had confined him to house arrest for his ongoing role in exposing China's repressive one-child policy for families — and its record of forced abortion for mothers who insist on giving birth to more children. An embarrassed Chinese government coerced Chen into leaving the embassy under threats of harm to his family, and only agreed to allow him to leave the country following a firestorm of negative publicity over the incident.

That negative publicity included a hastily called congressional investigation in the U.S. a day after Chen was taken back into custody by Chinese officials. During that investigation, convened at the insistence of U.S. Representative Chris Smith (R-N.J.), the Chinese pro-life leader [phoned from China](#) to testify that he wanted to leave the country. "I want to come to the U.S. to rest," he said in translation. "I have not had a rest in ten years." Chen emphasized to the American lawmakers that both he and his extended family were in danger. "I'm really scared for my other family members' lives," Chen said. "[Chinese officials] have installed seven video cameras and are in my house."

As Chen touched down on U.S. soil following his release, Smith was waiting to welcome him. "After years of enduring physical and psychological torture, imprisonment, and hate, the man, Chen Guangcheng, who defended Chinese women from the crime of forced abortion, is finally free," Smith later told [LifeNews.com](#). "America welcomes this extraordinary family with open arms. Joined by his



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equally heroic wife, Yuan Weijing, and their children, the Chens will finally get to rest, recuperate, and recover. His children can now begin the process of healing from emotional trauma no child should ever endure.”

But Smith, who has been one of Chen’s staunchest supporters in the United States, noted that his release does not indicate a change of heart by China over Chen’s campaign. “Chen’s cause is ending China’s one-child policy and forced abortion. Not all the Chens are free and safe, however. The Chinese government must immediately end its deplorable retaliation against Chen’s family and friends who remain in China.”

Phelim Kine, a spokesperson for the New York-based [Human Rights Watch](#), told [Bloomberg News](#): “We are relieved that the Chinese government has respected Chen Guangcheng and his family’s legal rights to travel overseas.” But, Kine added, “Chen isn’t just one guy. He is a symbol of thousands and thousands of other people who are trying to exercise their legal rights to seek change in what is, in many ways, an abusive status quo.”

[CBS News](#) reported that Chen’s plan to study at NYU “comes from his association with Jerome Cohen, a law professor there who advised Chen while he was in the U.S. Embassy. The two met when Chen came to the United States on a State Department program in 2003, and Cohen has been a staunch advocate for him since.”

Cohen expressed his joy at the news that Chen had finally been released. “I’m very happy at the news that he’s on his way and I look forward to welcoming him and his family and to working with him on his course of study,” Cohen said.

A NYU spokesman said that Chen and his family will live in a university housing facility. But Chen indicated that he is not planning to reside in the U.S. permanently. The Associated Press reported that before leaving China, “Chen asked his supporters and others in the activist community for their understanding of his desire to leave the front lines of the rights struggle in China. ‘I am requesting a leave of absence, and I hope that they will understand,’ he said.”

Chen left China with the understanding that the Beijing government could well continue to harass him through the ill treatment of the family members he left behind. “My elder brother was taken away by these thugs without any reasoning and then they came back and started beating up my nephew, and they used stakes and violently beat him up,” Chen told the House Foreign Affairs Committee in a telephone interview during his earlier call-in testimony from China.

He added that the homes of his relatives had been ransacked, and that other family members had been beaten by government agents. Chen said that his nephew, Chen Kegui, had tried to defend himself from the attacks and is now facing a “totally trumped-up” charge of attempted homicide. “After my nephew was beaten up, he actually was waiting to surrender himself and the police came back again and violently beat up my sister-in-law,” Chen said.

The abuse is all part of China’s retaliation for Chen’s role in exposing the forced abortions faced by women who balk at China’s one-child policy. “Chen documented 7,000 such forced abortion cases, taking down the names and addresses of those women who were victimized, as well as the particulars of the officials who committed these crimes,” reported LifeNews.com. “That is why the Chinese Communist Party is so eager to silence Chen. Not only has he exposed their crimes against the Chinese people, he has at least the potential to generate massive protests against the brutal one-child policy. The documents Chen Guangcheng compiled place the focus squarely on why China subjected him to



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years of house arrest: brutal forced abortions.”

Reggie Littlejohn, president of the organization [Women’s Rights Without Frontiers](#), has released an English translation of [Chen’s field notes](#) documenting the forced abortion and sterilization in China. LifeNews noted that the stories Chen compiled “are shocking, even for those familiar with the forced abortion abuses that take place as a result of China’s one-child policy.”

While expressing joy at the release of Chen and his family, Littlejohn said her group would continue to monitor China’s treatment of the family members and supporters left behind, as well as “advocate for the women and children who are victims of force abortion and involuntary sterilization” under China’s brutally repressive regime.

Photo: Blind Chinese legal activist Chen Guangcheng arrives at Washington Square Village on the campus of New York University, May 19, 2012, in New York: AP Images



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