

# Prisoner Profile: Liu Fenggang

COMPILED BY CAI JIQUAN

On August 6, 2004, the Hangzhou Intermediate People's Court sentenced Liu Fenggang to three years' imprisonment on the charge of "secretly gathering and illegally providing state intelligence to organizations outside the country."

Liu Fenggang, a Beijing-based Christian, was originally detained on October 13, 2003 by Hangzhou's Xiaoshan District Public Security Bureau. He was formally arrested on December 4 of the same year. In March 2004, the Hangzhou People's Procuratorate filed a public prosecution against Liu with the Hangzhou Intermediate People's Court, and a secret trial followed in May, but no verdict was announced until August. Two fellow Christians, Xu Yonghai and Zhang Shengqi, were tried along with Liu and sentenced to two years and one year in prison, respectively.

In its indictment, the Hangzhou People's Procuratorate stated that Liu's detention followed the arrest of members of a Christian house church in Anshan City, Liaoning Province in 2001. Using 1,000 *yuan* in traveling fees provided by Xu Yonghai, Liu Fenggang went to Anshan City in mid-October 2001 to investigate the case of a Christian named Li Baozhi who had been sentenced to Reeducation Through Labor. Following his trip, Liu Fenggang wrote an article enti-



**Liu Fenggang photographed with the mother of Xu Yonghai.**

tled "My Understanding of the 'Evil Sect' case against Li Baozhi in Anshan City, Liaoning Province," which Xu Yonghai submitted for publication in a U.S.-based Chinese magazine, *Christian Life Quarterly* (Shengming Jikan).

On July 25, 2003, on a request from overseas, Liu went to areas in Zhejiang Province such as Dongtou County, Xiaoshan District and Xihu District to collect information on the persecution of local Christians. Upon his return to Beijing, he wrote an article entitled "A Report from the Motherland," and on August 5, he asked Zhang Shengqi to send the article overseas by e-mail.

On August 18, 2003, Liu Fenggang wrote an article entitled "On Being Interrogated by Police after Evangelizing in the Mountain Suburbs of Beijing," in which he related his experiences at a religious gathering on August 17. Zhang Shengqi typed up this article for Liu and e-mailed it overseas.

Liu Fenggang, Xu Yonghai and Zhang Shengqi did not deny the facts of the authorities' allegations, but maintained that these activities did not constitute crimes. Their defense lawyers likewise all noted that the three articles referred to in the indictment contained no confidential information, and that there was therefore no evidence of crime. However, the Hangzhou Intermediate People's Court ruled that the defendants' activities constituted gathering and providing state intelligence for organizations outside of the country.

The direct reason for the arrest and imprisonment of Liu and the others was their investigation and disclosure of the persecution of Zhejiang Christians. The Chinese authorities began a harsh crackdown against underground churches in March 2003, and since then many unsanctioned houses of worship built by Protestants, Catholics and Buddhists have been destroyed on a variety of pretexts. From the end of July until the end of October, in Hangzhou City alone, at least eleven churches were demolished on the grounds that they were illegal religious structures. In the first ten days of July 2003, Zhejiang Provincial Public Security police arrested more than three hundred members of house churches in Nanyang, Hezhuang and other towns in Hangzhou's Xiaoshan Dis-

trict. Many of the detainees were badly beaten, and many others were imprisoned. Apart from Zhejiang Province, many underground churches in Jiangsu and Hebei Provinces have also been demolished. It was upon learning of this situation that Liu Fenggang went to Hangzhou's Xiaoshan District in July 2003 to record the details of what had taken place.

Liu Fenggang went to Xiaoshan District a second time on October 8, 2003 to visit a house church member who had just been released. As he was gathering further details of the persecution Christians had suffered, he was detained by Xiaoshan District Public Security police on October 13. Around noon on October 15, eight police officers from the Xiaoshan District substation, accompanied by four police officers from the Beijing Public Security Bureau, went to Liu Fenggang's home in Beijing and presented a search warrant to Liu's wife, Bi Yuxia, stating that Liu Fenggang was suspected of leaking state secrets. The police told Bi that Liu was not being detained, but only subjected to "restricted movement." Police searched Liu's home for nearly five hours and confiscated 36 items, including a computer that Xu Yonghai had left in Liu's home, Liu's computer, articles, appeal documents, computer file lists, records of house church activities and so on. Police instructed Liu's wife to sign a receipt for the confiscated items, and warned her that if she told the overseas media about Liu's detention, Liu would face harsh consequences. Since Liu Fenggang was detained, no one from his family had been given permission to visit him.

Born in Beijing in 1959, Liu Fenggang originally worked at a Beijing factory producing thermal equipment for hospital use. He was baptized as a Christian in 1989. At first he attended a "Three Self" church authorized by the government, and volunteered at Beijing's famous Chongwenmen Protestant Church. But in September 1990, at a celebration of the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Three Self church, the director general of the State Administration of Religious Affairs described how Eastern Europe had descended into social chaos and economic hardship after the fall of Romania's Communist Party. He also mentioned plans for a new law on religion requiring all pastors to be appointed by the government. After the director general's

speech, the pastors who were present all expressed their love for China and the Communist Party, and described how they had aligned themselves with the Party at the time of the June 4th Massacre in 1989. Liu Fenggang began to feel suspicious of the official church, whose pastors imitated Party cadres more than they imitated Christ. For that reason, he decided to leave the Three Self church. He began joining other independent believers in organizing private Bible readings, and became a member of an unofficial religious organization called the “Beijing Christian Sacred Love Fellowship.” Because of his beliefs, he was dismissed from his job at the medical equipment factory at the end of 1990.

For many years, Liu Fenggang has committed himself to providing support to persecuted Christians. He has helped them find defense lawyers and has advised them on how to use the law to protect themselves. Liu Fenggang insists that the Beijing Christian Sacred Love Fellowship has a right to its independent beliefs and should not have to submit to government control, and he also enthusiastically promotes the protection of these same rights for house churches all over China. His articles on the persecution of Chinese Christians have been widely published on the Internet and in overseas media. In 1995, he participated in the drafting and release of an open letter, “Speaking Up for the Disadvantaged.”

Because of his devotion to house church activities, Liu has been detained many times. He has been subjected to house arrest on a regular basis, and has been harshly beaten. On one occasion he was sentenced to three years of Reeducation Through Labor. But regardless of such persecution, Liu has remained steadfast in his beliefs and in his determination to protect the rights of others.

At the beginning of 2003, Liu Fenggang was struck with a myocardial infarction, and barely survived after more than ten days of emergency care. His health has deteriorated in detention, as he has suffered a recurrence of his heart condition, as well as diabetes and high blood pressure.

Liu Fenggang is currently imprisoned at the Xiaoshan District Public Security Substation Detention Center in Hangzhou.

## LIU FENGGANG’S REPORT ON HIS VISIT TO HANGZHOU

In the first half of July 2003, in the Xiaoshan District of Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, the local Public Security Bureau and Religious Affairs Bureau carried out a sweep of all Christian congregations that had not obtained official registration. Focusing on the towns of Nanyang and Hechuang and the nearby village of Huangfeng, officials routed out more than 300 Christians, beating some, arresting others, driving some from their homes, and destroying places of worship.

The Chinese government claims to the world that China enjoys freedom of religious worship. Why, then, do the authorities forbid Christians from gathering to worship? With that question in mind I went to Nanyang Town on the evening of July 25, 2003.

Through various channels I gained an understanding from the Xiaoshan District Religious Affairs Bureau that some residents of Nanyang Town had brought back evangelism pamphlets from Wenzhou, and that they had distributed these pamphlets during the SARS period. Nonbelievers had reported this incident to the authorities.

Was this official version the truth? I communicated with a Christian named Wang Weiliang who was not directly involved in this incident. Unable to reach her through her cell phone, I called her home, where a person identifying herself as a relative said she had not seen Wang Weiliang for half a year, and that she may have gone to Xiaoshan. When I asked about persecution of Christians, the woman became extremely anxious and immediately hung up the phone. This left me in a quandary of how to find out more.

On the morning of the second day, I asked people on the road how to reach Huangfeng Village. One person pointed to a bridge on the east side of the road and said, “Once you cross this bridge, you’re in Huangfeng Village.” By following these directions I quickly arrived at the village. The village was divided in half by a road, with shops lining each side. Some shops were open for business, others were not. As I walked along, I entered each open shop and asked, “Do any among you believe in Jesus?” Some shops clearly displayed Christian symbols, but their occu-

pants denied that they were believers, and when I asked if any of their family members were Christians, they emphatically shook their heads. I continued this way from shop to shop.

I reached a shop selling foodstuffs and asked if there were any Christians there. A 40-ish woman looked me up and down, then asked me in return, “Is it against the law to believe in Jesus?” I said, “It’s not against the law, we have freedom of religion! I only want to find out more about things that have happened here recently.” But that woman likewise shook her head and claimed to know nothing, so I had no choice but to leave the shop and continue on my way. But the woman at the food shop sent a little boy after me on a bicycle, and the boy told me, “We came here from Anhui to do business. Our whole family believes in Christ, and our landlord, too. She’s a local person, and she may know more about what you’re asking. If you come back and wait at our shop, we’ll tell her to come over.”

Thanking God, I returned to the shop, and not long afterward a woman aged around 50 approached. I rose to meet her and shook her hand and introduced myself and my purpose in coming to the village. Unfortunately, that woman’s local accent was too strong, and I couldn’t understand anything she said. Likewise I couldn’t understand the Anhui dialect of the other woman. However, there was another 40-ish woman washing clothes nearby, and the woman at the food shop said this woman was also a Christian and could interpret for me. The three women spoke together using a combination of dialects, and I could see from the expressions on their faces that they were very anxious. I quickly interrupted them and pulled out my identity card and said, “I’m from Beijing. I heard that you’ve been persecuted here, and the brothers and sisters in China and overseas are very concerned about what’s happening. They asked me to come here and find out the situation. I’m not here to spread a cult.” The woman washing clothes relaxed slightly, and pointing westward she said, “Over there is a house wares shop run by Wang Fuming – go and talk to him.”

Thanking God, I gladly went to look for the shop run by Brother Wang. I found that because of persecution Brother Wang had left the village for the time being, and his

wife, Chen Aiqin, was looking after the shop. After introducing myself, I said to Sister Chen, “I hear that Christians here have been persecuted because you were passing out evangelism pamphlets during the SARS period. Is that true?” Sister Chen denied this, saying, “No, it’s because we weren’t registered, and the people who were arrested were not in this village, but in Dangshan and Xiaoshan.” I asked, “Can you tell me who was present, or who was beaten?” She replied, “On that day I wasn’t present, but if you go next door to the basement you can ask Brother Xia Xinmin.” I said, “Let me ask you one more thing. When your husband comes back, would he be willing to talk with me?” She said, “Yes,” and she gave me the telephone number of the shop: 0571-8287929.

After leaving the house wares shop, I entered the hardware shop run by Xia Xinmin, and finding him laboring there, I introduced myself and my purpose. Brother Xia sat on his stool and did not utter a word, and there was a terrified look on his face.

The woman who had been washing clothes came over then and said to me, “He hasn’t the courage to speak. People here were arrested because they weren’t registered. Do you think we should register?”

I said, “Premises established for the purposes of worship must register in conformity with the six relevant regulations and standards, but carrying out religious activities without registration is not against the law, and the government can’t use lack of registration as a reason to disrupt these religious activities.”

The woman indicated she completely agreed with what I had said. I asked further, “After the arrests, are people here afraid? Are you still gathering for worship?” She adamantly asserted that people were not afraid, and were still worshipping, but she denied my request to join a worship service.

At that moment my cell phone rang, and I received the unexpected news that the arrested people were all being held in Xiaoshan’s Lantian Hotel for brainwashing sessions. I immediately bade farewell to Brother Xia and the washerwoman, and took transport to Xiaoshan District. Through a believer in Wenzhou I quickly established contact with Xu Xiaohuan, who was able to tell me the names of some of

the believers detained at the Lantian Hotel. They included Gao Chungdao (0571-2663184), Shen Xiaocheng, Qi Qiangfa and Xu Weimin, a total of 18 house church leaders. They had been offered the opportunity to register, failing which they would be taken to the detention center.

Brother Xu told me a bit more about Gao Chungdao, and about the destruction of the church. I asked him, “Did you personally witness the things you’re telling me?” He replied, “I didn’t personally witness it, but it’s the truth.” I said to him, “If I could speak to a family member or a direct witness, it would provide me with stronger testimony.” He said, “I’ll telephone Gao Chungdao’s brother, Gao Chongyi.” It turned out that Gao Chongyi was willing to see me, so Brother Xu immediately drove me to Yuxin Village in Xiaoshan’s Yutuan Town to meet him. But as we neared Gao Chongyi’s home, Brother Xu stopped his vehicle by the side of the road and said, “Brother Gao’s telephone is monitored, it’s not safe for us to come here.” I thought for a moment and said, “You’re still young. If you want to do more for the church, it’s right to play it safe. But Brother Gao is waiting for us at his home – shouldn’t we at least call him?”

Brother Xu agreed, and after dialing Brother Gao’s telephone number he handed his cell phone to me. I told Brother Gao the purpose of my visit and told him the brothers and sisters in China and overseas were very concerned about what was happening, and asked him if he dared to come out and see me. Brother Gao agreed to come immediately, and we arranged to meet one hour later in the lobby of the Lantian Hotel. After hanging up, I asked Brother Xu if he would be willing to take me to the site of the destroyed church. He became extremely anxious and said Gao Chungdao’s brother would take me. After that, he drove off without providing me with any means of contacting him again.

At that time it was raining hard. Hangzhou had been experiencing temperatures above 100 degrees over the past few days, and even the rain brought no relief. After an hour, Gao Chungdao’s brother arrived. He said this place was not safe, and suggested we go elsewhere. I asked to take a picture of him in front of the Lantian Hotel, and he agreed, and after that we went to another place where I was able to

ask him details about Gao Chungdao’s arrest:

Q: Were you present when Gao Chungdao was arrested?

A: I saw it with my own eyes.

Q: When exactly did the arrest take place?

A: At dawn on July 13, a village official called me and told me my brother was in trouble. When I went out I saw a van parked in front of Gao Chungdao’s home, along with three other vehicles, and a dozen or so plainclothes officials were in my brother’s yard. At that time my brother was only wearing undershorts and a T-shirt. One of the officials let him go back into the house for some clothes. Gao Chungdao said, “Today is Sunday, how can I not go?” Then two officials forced my brother into the van, while his wife wept loudly.

Q: Why did they arrest him?

A: They gave no reason, they just drove off.

Q: Do you know where they took Gao Chungdao?

A: They took him to the Lantian Hotel in Xiaoshan.

Q: How do you know he’s there?

A: Because subsequently Gao Chungdao’s son, Gao Tianqiao, took clothes to him there, and also went to the hotel many times to plead with the Public Security officers to release his father, because the family has 45 *mu* of fields to tend for a living, and a large quantity of melons were ready to harvest and sell to support the family’s livelihood. Gao Chungdao had not broken any laws, and his arrest is causing great hardship to his family.

Q: Could I go to Gao Chungdao’s home to talk with his wife?

A: Yes, I’ll take you there.

So saying, Gao Chongyi took me to Gao Chungdao’s home, where his wife and son were laboring in the fields. The yard was full of harvested melons that no one had bought. Gao Chongyi told me, “I feel they should have arrested me, because I hold worship services in my home, and 400 to 500 people come each time. At Christmas and Easter we have more than 1,000 people come.” I asked him, “How many believers are there in this village?” He replied, “There are 46 households in this village, of which 40 are Christian. People come to my home for worship from Anhui, Nanking, Hongzhou, Fuyang City, Jiande

City, Lan'an City, Shaoxing City, Duji City, and even from Jiangxi Province, Zhenhai, Ninghai, and Shenshan. My father is 83 years old this year, and because of persecution he fled to his daughter's house.

I asked, "Is your mother still around?" He replied, "Yes, she lives with me." I asked if I could visit the old lady, and he happily took me to her, and I took a photo with her as a memento.

I also asked Brother Gao if he could take me to see the ruined church, but at this point Brother Gao showed some discomfort and said he was not very familiar with the Huangfeng Village church. I said I only wanted to see the site, and finally Brother Gao agreed to my request. After about an hour's drive, just before nightfall, we reached Huangfeng Village. When I saw the ruined church, I could not restrain myself, and opened the vehicle's door even before it stopped, causing Brother Gao to call out to me in alarm. Upon leaving the vehicle I ran to the site of the ruined church and took photos, at the same time looking for some physical evidence I could take away with me. Finally I located a sifting basket from the church's dining hall, but when Brother Gao saw me pick it up, he worried that it would attract attention and cause problems, and hurried me away from the scene. As we left the village I told Brother Gao that persecuting the church was like bouncing a ball: the harder you hit it, the higher it bounced. I believed that God would provide them with better arrangements.

By the time we returned to Xiaoshan it was already after 9:00 in the evening. As we were sitting down to eat, Gao Chongyi's cell phone rang, and the caller turned out to be Brother Kong Xuanguo of Yuanpu Town in Hangzhou's Xiwu District. I'm not sure how Brother Kong learned of my presence, but in any event he invited me to his home to tell me how in the previous year, two of his premises and a large shed had been destroyed because he had been hosting worship services. We immediately put down our bowls and drove to Brother Kong's home. He was extremely anxious when he saw us, and bolted the doors of both his yard and home. His mother and family warmly welcomed us with a variety of fruits, and Brother Kong told me how in July 2002 the Public Security police had destroyed his home and shed, and how they had held him

in the detention center for seven days without sleep, how eight police officers had interrogated him around the clock, and how his hands and feet had been handcuffed together and he had been instructed to promise never again hold a worship service. Because Brother Kong refused to cooperate, he was detained for an entire month.

As I took out pen and paper to record this information, Brother Kong hurriedly stopped me and said, "China is a dictatorship, not a country under rule of law. If you reveal what I've said to you, it will bring trouble to us here." After he finished speaking, he jumped up and looked around outside (because there was a government office located across the street from his home). Brother Kong's mother then told me that one morning, as she was in the middle of morning prayers, two plainclothes police officers came and forced her into a police vehicle and said they would detain her for 15 days. But as she was an old woman of over 70, when she began to go blue around the lips they finally released her after seven days. I asked to have a photo taken with the old lady, but the family politely refused. When it was time for me to leave Brother Kong's home, he went to his door and carefully looked around, and when he believed the coast was clear he brought the car to his doorway, made sure the car door lined up directly with the door of his home, then motioned for me to climb in. It reminded me of a scene from a movie about secret agents. I didn't know whether to laugh or cry, but at the same time I felt very sorry for them.

Brother Kong drove us home himself, and when we reached the No. 1 Bridge at Qiantang River, the lights on the bridge presented a scene of great beauty, but I still felt very sad. I thought of how in the Old Testament Moses had been obliged to lead the children of Israel in the wilderness for 40 years. This visit had led me to understand the reason – how could the old generation of Israelites, with their slave mentality born of 400 years of enslavement in Egypt, become the new rulers of the Land of Milk and Honey? Today I understood that the most important thing for China's Christians is to overthrow their slave mentality in order for them to be able to stand up as true witnesses.

When we reached my destination and prepared to part, Brother Kong gripped my

hand and said, "Please don't mention my name to anyone!" I promised repeatedly that I would respect his wishes. Xiaoshan is my mother's native place, but for all its beauty, I felt more worried than ever as I departed.

Translated by Stacy Mosher