



18 March 2014. UN experts deplore the events leading to the death of Chinese human rights defender Cao Shunli, and ask for full investigation of his death.

A group of UN Human Rights experts today expressed their dismay concerning the death of Cao Sun Ly Shunli in hospital on 14 March.

Ms. Cao was a prominent human rights lawyer in China who had tirelessly campaigned since 2008 for transparency and greater participation of civil society in the second universal periodic review (UPR) of China's human rights record by the UN Human Rights Council. [The Universal Periodic Review \(UPR\)](#)

is a unique process which involves a review of the human rights records of all UN Member States at the Human Rights Council

On 14 September 2013, Ms. Cao was prevented by Chinese authorities from boarding a flight from Beijing to Geneva where she was to participate in a human rights seminar and observe China's UPR. Ms. Cao's whereabouts were unknown until she was charged with the crime of provocation. Her health deteriorated while she was in detention and she was transferred to hospital in a critical condition on 19 February 2014.

Ms. Cao's enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention, failing health and the fact that she was denied medical care were brought to the attention of the UN experts who transmitted urgent appeals to China.

A group of UN human rights experts issued a [public statement](#) on 16 October 2013. A formal response from the Chinese authorities indicating that she had no serious health problems and had access to medical care was questioned by the experts.

The experts urge the Chinese authorities to investigate the circumstances leading to Ms. Cao's death promptly.

"The death of Ms. Cao is a tragic example of the results of criminalization of the activities of human defenders in China and reprisals against them. It is unacceptable that civil society activists pay the ultimate price for peaceful and legitimate interaction with the United Nations and its human rights mechanisms," the experts said.

They recalled that the Secretary-General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and successive presidents of the Human Rights Council have highlighted the legitimate role of civil society in defending human rights enjoyment for all and the importance of prevention and adequate response to reprisals and intimidation.

PHOTO: Human Rights Council in session in Geneva. UN Photo/Jean-Marc Ferré

Background: The members of the group of UN Human Rights experts are: the UN Special Rapporteurs on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; on the right to freedoms of peaceful assembly and association; on the right to freedom of opinion and expression; on the situation of human rights defenders; and on the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; and the Working Groups on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, and on Arbitrary Detention.

The United Nations human rights experts are part of what it is known as the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights, is the general name of the independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms of the Human Rights Council that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world.

They are charged by the Human Rights Council to monitor, report and advise on human rights issues. Currently, there are 37 thematic mandates and 14 mandates related to countries and territories, with 72 mandate holders. In March 2014, three new mandates will be added. Special Procedures experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent from any government or organization and serve in their individual capacity.

Learn more, visit:

Arbitrary detention: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Detention/Pages/WGADIndex.aspx>

Enforced disappearance: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Disappearances/Pages/DisappearancesIndex.aspx>

Freedom of opinion and expression: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/FreedomOpinion/Pages/OpinionIndex.aspx>

Peaceful assembly and association: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/AssemblyAssociation/Pages/SRFreedomAssemblyAssociationIndex.aspx>

Health: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Health/Pages/SRRightHealthIndex.aspx>

Calls for investigation of Chinese activist's death

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Human rights defenders: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/SRHRDefenders/Pages/SRHRDefendersIndex.aspx>

Torture: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Torture/SRTorture/Pages/SRTortureIndex.aspx>

UN Human Rights, country page – China: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Countries/AsiaRegion/Pages/CNIndex.aspx>