

Falun Gong practitioner home after China ordeal

Written by Taipei Times

Saturday, 08 August 2009 08:37 -

Taiwanese Falun Gong practitioner Shao Yuhua, who was arrested in China late last month, was released and returned to Taiwan on Thursday.

Shao, a former Chinese national who moved to Taiwan 11 years ago after marrying a Taiwanese and who now holds Republic of China (ROC) citizenship, traveled to China last month with her daughter to visit her family in Nanyang, Henan Province.

On the morning of July 31, several Chinese state security agents arrested her at her sister's house, where she was staying.

After receiving the news from Shao's family in China, her husband, Cheng Shu-ta, along with other Falun Gong practitioners in Taiwan, launched efforts to rescue Shao by using both their own connections in China and asking for help from government agencies in charge of cross-strait affairs, including the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) and the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF).

"We asked the SEF to contact [China's] Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Strait a day after [the arrest] happened, and the Ministry of Justice also made rescue efforts through channels created by the cross-strait mutual judicial assistance agreement," MAC Vice-Chairman Liu Teh-hsun told the Taipei Times.

"Fortunately, the mission was successful and Shao was released and returned to Taiwan [on Thursday] afternoon," Liu said.

Falun Gong practitioner and attorney Theresa Chu said yesterday that Shao's arrest and the seven-day detention that followed was because she was a Falun Gong practitioner.

"[Shao told me] that she was tortured in detention — Chinese state security agents tried to keep her awake all the time, forced her to write self-criticisms, tried to brainwash her and threatened to hurt her family," Chu said.

Chu said Shao's release was the result of international attention as well as strong protest from Falun Gong practitioners worldwide.

A draft outline of Shao's self-criticism — which she said was written by Chinese state security agents — that she brought back from China listed "unlawful acts" such as "distributing Falun Gong information," "providing financial support to Falun Gong activities" and "spreading and teaching Falun Gong."

It was not known whether Shao had told the Chinese law enforcement personnel that she was an ROC citizen at the time of her arrest.

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The Falun Gong newspaper Epoch Times reported yesterday that Shao thanked everyone for the rescue effort as she stepped out of the airport on Thursday and urged continued efforts to save all Falun Gong practitioners in China who are suffering because of their religions beliefs.

Source: [Taipei Times 2009/08/08](#)