

# Concerning CAG's Denial of the "416 Kidnapping Incident" —a Rebuttal

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The official statement<sup>2</sup> published by the Church of Almighty God (CAG) on October 18, 2017 emphatically denies the kidnapping of 34 China Gospel Fellowship (CGF) pastors (note: China Gospel Fellowship referred to it as the "416 Kidnapping Incident"<sup>3</sup> since the kidnapping event occurred on April 16, 2002. We will use the same reference throughout the article). There are four parts in this rebuttal. Part one is an extract from the book by Shen Xiaoming titled, *Kidnapped by A Cult*<sup>4</sup>, which contains the details of his experience of the whole incident. Part two is an abridged version of our interview on July 24, 2018 in Beijing with Pastor Zhang who was one of the 34 pastors kidnapped. This is his own account. Part three is a record from Beijing's Public Security Bureau concerning this incident, when one of the victims escaped and China Gospel Fellowship went to file a report concerning the kidnapping. Part four is my rebuttal in response to CAG's statement based on Shen's book and Pastor Zhang's account.

## Part One: the "416 Kidnapping Incident" according to Shen Xiaoming in his own words (an extract<sup>5</sup>)

In April 2001, about one year before I found myself in the strange Shanghai apartment handing over my mobile phone to a complete stranger, I learned about a sister from the Henan village in Pingdingshan named Ai Yanling who knew about a famous leadership school in Singapore called the Haggai Institute. The Haggai Institute is a Christian training institute that provides training based on the Bible to pastors, theologians, missionaries, business leaders, and even ambassadors and presidents. Their prestigious program is widely recognized and respected (p. 21).

Sister Ai was able to bring a Singaporean businessman by the name of Mr. Lian to Henan to meet with brother Yang, who is one of the leaders in our house church network. By the end of the conversation, Mr. Lian had agreed to sponsor Brother Yang to attend the Haggai Institute, provided that Brother Yang would submit his personal [information] (p.22). This Mr. Lian, we all thought, might be the link that we had been looking for to help provide grounded biblical teaching that would reinforce the foundation of the underground house church movement. We

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<sup>1</sup> [www.asiaresearchcenter.org](http://www.asiaresearchcenter.org)

<sup>2</sup> See <https://www.holyspiritspeaks.org/statement/>

<sup>3</sup> See both [http://chinaforjesus.com/cgf/070702/CGF\\_july\\_7\\_2002\\_ch.htm](http://chinaforjesus.com/cgf/070702/CGF_july_7_2002_ch.htm) and <http://chinaforjesus.com/cgf/070702/index.htm>

<sup>4</sup> *Kidnapped by A Cult: A Pastor's Stand against a Murderous Sect* (2017), Shen Xiaoming, with Eugene Bach, New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. All material in Part One are from the book unless noted otherwise. Exercise was taken not to take any quotes out of context but also to provide a brief and clear storyline of the kidnapping incident. Shen also wrote a short report in Chinese concerning the kidnapping. It is titled "Kidnapping—Before and After" and posted on [http://chinaforjesus.com/cgf/CGF\\_shen\\_july\\_2002\\_ch.htm](http://chinaforjesus.com/cgf/CGF_shen_july_2002_ch.htm).

were all excited for Brother Yang and wanted to know if more of us could join him. The word came back from Brother Yang's contact that the leadership of the Institute would like to meet together with all of us who were interested. We all arranged the paperwork and submitted it, not knowing what would happen next. An entire year went by and we heard nothing back from Mr. Lian (p. 23).

One day in March 2002, Mr. Lian called, "There are new developments regarding your enrollment process. The principal, Mr. Yu, and an assistant would like to visit Pingdingshan to understand the situation better" (p. 27). It was not long after our meeting together that the final decision was made. Mr. Lian called with the exciting news: the school in Singapore had approved us for enrollment—all of us. Their approval was contingent on our completion of an introductory training program to learn more about the Institute, which would be conducted in China. I was elated that we were approved. But on the other hand, the logistics looked impossible. First of all, none of us had passports. We were all convicts and had served time in prison. Second, we had no way to pay for it and we still had the matter of timing. There was simply no way all the leaders could up and leave for training in Singapore for six months to a year. It would be impossible (p. 29).

Mr. Lian recommended that we first attend the three-month training in China, and then our path forward would be clearer. The three-month training would not require passports, visas, and would give us a great idea of what was being offered. After considering their offer, we accepted on the condition that they reduce the training from three months to three weeks. They agreed (p. 30).

[In April 2002, thirty-four coworkers of CGF reported to six different locations from various regions. Shen's team of six members travelled to Shanghai. The day when Shen's team arrived at the Shanghai apartment, every team member was asked to surrender his cell phone sim card as well as the handset for security reasons. Shen's team of six was later split into smaller groups.]

I didn't know it then, but all of the leadership in our network was being split up into smaller groups for the exact same reason—security. Thirty-four of us were sent alone or in pairs to locations in 17 different cities. We drove for about an hour across the city of Shanghai and [arrived at] a two-story house (p. 39). [The house has] a large and spacious living area. The main room was like a meeting hall and had been set up for studying. They must have set up the study space very quickly because it was only an hour before that we had learned our security had been compromised and we were moving to "Plan B." There were enough room for all of the students. The ten new students all knew each other, Old Shen and I were the only outsiders. The other students were from another network, the majority from the head-covering sect (p. 40).

The instructors at the school taught all morning long and into the afternoon. There were a couple of things I heard that seemed a bit confusing for me. They began to teach about concepts like there being an Age of Law in the Old Testament, an Age of Grace during the days of Jesus, and an Age of Wisdom for today's church. I said to the instructor, Mr. Chen, "Sorry, but what you are talking about sounds a lot like some of the cults that are operating in China." "Well, maybe that is because there are cults in China that use the Bible for the base of their teachings." Even

though Chen's words made sense, there was something that did not feel right about the teaching. But since these guys were with the Haggai Institute, I suppressed my anxiety (p. 50).

I thought of my own classmates. They seemed to really be enjoying the training and were obviously looking for something different from the training than I was. They also seemed to agree with everything that the teacher said during instruction (p. 69).

"We need you to write a letter to your church members who are attending the course," the principal said to me one day. "What is the problem?" I asked. He said, "Nothing is wrong. We just need a letter from you instructing your church members to be respectful of our teachers and to faithfully learn what we are teaching them." (p. 68)

"We need you to write another letter to your church members. Routine, nothing more." The principal said [four or five day later]. In an effort to be agreeable, I began writing another note. I basically said the same thing as I had written before. I asked them to try not to move around or leave the training rooms without permission as it could draw too much attention and risk security. I knew that this is something that all of them knew, but I wrote it anyway to please the teachers (p. 77).

One of the ladies who was attending the classes with us, Sister Lian, had been following me around. When I needed assistance with my crutches or to carry my food at breakfast, she was always there to help. She even offered to massage my head when I had a headache, but I told her I did not need a massage. [She had told me that her husband in Singapore left her for another woman and that she was lonely in China. On that day after I finished writing the letter as requested, she came to my room, sat in the chair next to me, and tried to lean in toward me. [After I told her not to give up on her husband,] she paused, quickly became angry, and stormed out of the room. I needed [my coworker] Old Shen's help. If I could get him to stay close to me, I knew that together we would be able to protect one another from ever being accused of engaging in an inappropriate relationship (p. 78).

[One day my coworker Old Shen offered me his view about the situation with the training.] He said, "Do you notice how all of the students agree with everything that they say? They do not have real questions." Old Shen went on, "They have been whispering to each other and when I approach them, they quickly change the topic. Do you know what I mean?" He added more, "And do you notice how there are two ladies here that follow you and me everywhere we go? One goes with you everywhere you go and one goes with me everywhere I go. They are so eager to stay close to us, share their most intimate stories, and even give us massages." I knew exactly what he was talking about (p. 87). "I believe they are trying to seduce us." (p. 88) "I am afraid that these instructors are all from the Eastern Lightning cult and the students are helping them." (p. 89)

On the twentieth day in the flat, I [thought] it was my last day. I was anxious to pack up and get out. We had some final classes to be taught. The instructor started to speak again about the different ages. The teacher looked directly at me and asked, "Who is greater? God or the Bible? God is a living God. He cannot be boxed up in a mere book. God is greater than the Bible." (p. 117) Just then Old Shen jumped up in a fit of rage, "You are the Eastern Lightning cult!" He did

not show an ounce of fear. “Yes, we are,” the teacher responded back, “and you must accept the truth or be damned.” (p. 118)

Old Shen and I had argued back and forth with the teachers for hours. We did not want to hear anything else that they had to say, but we did not have a choice. When we demanded that they let us go, they simply refused. The doors were locked, the windows were barred, and there was no clear way to escape. We could not overpower them because we were obviously outnumbered (p. 124). At about nine o’clock that night, Old Shen was taken away. When Old Shen left, my earthly chances of making out alive left with him (p. 128).

I decided to fast and pray (p. 135). The instructors wanted me to join their training sessions but I refused. Suddenly a strategy came bursting forth which helped to guide me through the persecution. “I will not listen. I will not watch. I will not think. I will not debate. I will not believe.” I realized that these five things would help me survive their persecution. Even if they killed me, I would die with my faith in Jesus Christ (p. 136).

[I was moved to another house not too long after, even though I was told that they would release me. But it was only the beginning of another wave of attack.] One day a woman I never met before walked into my room. She came toward me, with one hand on my chest, she pushed me back as she mounted on top of me, and with her other hand she grabbed my collar and began kissing me. I yelled stop. She just continued whispering sexually suggestive words. The Lord completely removed the desire from me and I was able to resist (p. 185).

Some of the leaders who were kidnapped at the same time as I was had much more difficulty dealing with the women than I did, even though I was handicapped. Several of them had sexual stimulants, in pill form, slipped into their drinks. Once the pills kicked in, the women moved in for the kill and began to try to seduce them, though they were all unsuccessful (p. 186).

Some of the brothers reportedly saw several teachers going into empty bedrooms with women and sleeping with them. Several of the male teachers treated the girls that were used to tempt the brothers in our group like playthings. Those poor young ladies were mere pawns whose purity was being thrown away for the lies of the enemy (p. 187).

Every day was a fight. Every evening was a battle. The teachers continued to teach during the day and loud speakers played throughout the night. They knew that they were wearing me down. They knew that it would only be a matter of time before they broke me (p. 215). I started to play with the idea of accepting the teachings and agreeing with them just so that I could go home. I was about to do something that I knew I would regret later, but I couldn’t help it (p. 218).

[Finally after 40 days,] a group of men came bursting into the room. They told me that we were leaving. They lifted me up to my feet and rushed me out to a van and threw me inside (p. 231). Six men and one woman got into the van with me and sat all around me like a large barrier to keep me from banging on the window or jumping out the door (p. 232). When the van finally came to a stop, I could see the signs for the Shanghai railway station. One of the guys in the front seat got out, came around, and helped me out of the van. He handed me my phone and a train

ticket. He got back in the van, slammed the door shut, and the van screeched its wheels as it departed. I stood there in the middle of a busy sidewalk, and I was all alone (p. 233).

## **Part Two: Pastor Zhang's Account of the "416 Kidnapping Incident" (in his own voice<sup>6</sup>)**

The most senior leader in China Gospel Fellowship (CGF) is Feng\*\*. He studied in a missionary school in Tanghe before 1949. Later he became an elder in a church locally. During the Cultural Revolution he was arrested and put into prison for 5 or 7 years. He was released before 1978 right when the reform era began. Besides Feng\*\* there are several others, such as [Old] Shen\*\* who just passed away, Shen\*\*, Wei\*\*, Luo\*\* who is now in California, and Jing\*\*, Lian\*\*, Xing\*\*, myself, and Wang\*\*. Altogether there are ten of us who began CGF.

Before 1983, each of us was preaching the gospel and establishing churches in our own hometown in Tanghe County. We came together in 1983 because of persecution. There was a major crackdown on the Shouters in 1983. So we joined ourselves together and from there we began to spread outward to other areas.

In 1988, we sent forth five teams to preach the gospel and spread the church. Five teams went out in five different directions but all under the banner of CGF.

In 1996, four of us (Feng, Lou, Xing, and myself) were arrested and put in prison. Since Feng was our leader at the time, after his arrest, [Old] Shen\*\*, one of the main co-workers, assumed the position of the head among us. The arrest in 1996 was like a total ransack on our headquarters. After that the Public Security Bureau classified us as a xiejiao.

I was released in 1998, after 2 years. Most others served a sentence of 3 years but mine was reduced due to my poor health. By the time we were all released, the gospel work has been expanded to 25 to 26 teams. In other words, during our imprisonment, the work actually increased.

Old Shen\*\* resigned at the end of 2001 when his term was up, and Shen\*\* [note: no direct relation to Old Shen] became the head of CGF. The EL incident happened shortly after Shen\*\* became our leader. When he began to assume the responsibility, he was still learning many things, and perhaps he was too bold and hence made decisions that led to this incident. I am referring to the decision to cooperate with Haggai Institute. People from the self-proclaimed Haggai Institute first made contact with Old Shen, but EL took advantage of our leadership transition to make further arrangements. Concerning the 416 Kidnapping Incident, I put out a book (in Chinese) about it in 2003 after my release; Shen\*\* also described it in his book published in English in 2017.

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<sup>6</sup> All the narratives in Part Two are taken from an interview with Pastor Zhang in Beijing on July 24, 2018.

I also wrote a report titled “The Truth Concerning 416 Kidnapping Incident by Eastern Lightning” which provides a detailed timeline and truthful accounts of the kidnap. This report is posted online in both English and Chinese.

Shen\*\* had contact with a Mr. Yu who claimed to be the vice president of Haggai Institute. Mr. Yu told us that even though the original plan was for us to attend the training in Singapore where the Institute was located, in view of the situation in China where many of us could not obtain a passport to travel overseas, the Institute has decided to send a team of teachers to China instead to give us the training. As it turned out, this so-called vice president was an imposter. One time the real vice president Yu came through Beijing and I went to meet him. They were two different men. However, I felt the fake vice president might have participated in the training provided by Haggai previously, because he was very familiar with how Haggai operates.

We are aware that Haggai Institute does not normally have dealings with house churches in China. But this man said that they were willing to accommodate us because of our longing to be trained. The communication was through a middle man at the time. The man from Haggai said they would send teachers over to China to give classes to us. For safety concern, he said that instead of having all 34 of us together in one class we should have small classes of no more than 6 persons in each class. He also said that for each class they would assign 6 believers from the Christian Assembly group to join us. As the Christian Assembly people were more conservative, implying that they were less mature than us, we were told to look after them. So it transpired that 34 of us were divided into 6 groups to have the training at 6 different locations. My group, for instance, consisted of 6 of our own people with me taking the lead. We first met in Beijing before setting off. I was living in Beijing at the time and the other 5 came from other places. We rode the train together to Shenyang, the capital of Liaoning in the Northeast, and then 3 cars came to pick us up, two in each car, and brought us to a big property in Panjin, which was our training location. The property seemed to belong to a wealthy family because there were many houses and rooms. That first night we felt a little strange about the arrangement but we put aside the uneasy feeling.

So we began to have classes. During the first class, a teacher in my location used traditional Chinese font when he wrote on the blackboard, to show that he was from Haggai in Singapore. [The Chinese people in China used simplified font in our writing.] Actually he was not very good at it. It was more for show. Generally you can detect where a person comes from by the accent with which he speaks Mandarin. In my location, some were from the Northeast (i.e. they are local) while others were from the south.

[In any one place where the training classes were given, in addition to those of us from CGF, there were usually teachers, guards, a cook, and several believers from Christian Assembly. As the outside situation became tense, unbeknownst to us, we were moved and separated into even smaller groups of twos, and later completely alone, to avoid attention and detection. ]

In the beginning, I remember 4 or 5 teachers took turns to come to my location to give us lessons. The cook was the same one throughout. As to the guards, there was one during the day

and two during the night. Besides these ones, there was also a person who seemed to be in charge of that location. He would come daily to look over things.

We were completely restricted in our movement. The guard at the door was a big fellow who had a big metal pipe within his reach. The door was always locked and the guard sat outside. Sometimes when the debate became fierce, he would come in and bang the metal pipe against the floor making a loud clanging noise as a means to frighten us into submission. It was not possible to flee through the windows because they were covered with wires. Neither did I attempt to yell for help because I did not want to anger the guard. I felt threatened the whole time even though I was never hurt by any of the guards.

[At one point in time when there were just two of us from CGF,] we were put in a three-bedroom apartment on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor. Two of us from CGF stayed in one room and the two from Christian Assembly stayed in another room. I remember that after another two or three days, they separated us again and I was all by myself.

The lessons went like this: on the first day the teacher spent time criticizing the churches, the leaders, and the Pharisees, the kind of things that Pharisees would do during Jesus' time. As he was criticizing, actually some among us already discerned that he might be from Eastern Lightning (EL), because this has been their way of defrauding people. Many of us taking the lead in CGF have not engaged in actual battle with EL. We all knew that EL was heretical but we have not had actual contact with them. Nevertheless, a few among us who did in the past were able to detect that these ones were teaching EL's beliefs. As soon as the situation was exposed, we also realized that both our cell phones and our identification cards were confiscated. We were stuck.

My group of six for instance, from the second day of confinement we suspected something was not right. We then shared our suspicion with those from Christian Assembly. Once we told them our suspicion, the next day we were broken apart into groups of two. That was why we knew that perhaps the ones from Christian Assembly were spies planted by EL.

After they broke us into smaller groups, there was more restriction on our movements. We did not have phones nor our ID cards, and our shoes were also taken away. By the third day, they abandoned all pretense and began to speak to us directly, lecturing us concerning the three ages and the age of the kingdom. Of course once they began to talk about the age of the kingdom, their true identity was completely exposed. And they even showed us their book, *The Word Appears in the Flesh*. Not only so, they played their music all the time and we began to debate every day around that book. I don't remember how many days after that, but as the debate continued, they parted the other brother and me again, totally isolating us. So I was all alone in a place. They did this in three steps.

At first I was debating with them, but as the time went on, I stopped debating. Do you know why? It was because they were not following the reason. If you got involved with them in debates, over time you would also become unprincipled and unreasonable. Hence, I decided not to debate with them. I began to read their books. I am a sensible person and I tend to be clear-

headed. I decided to study their “bible”, *The Word Appears in the Flesh*. I wanted to understand what their beliefs were about.

They put drugs in our food. Later I learned that at some places our people experienced incessant diarrhea after eating the food. Also at some places, they put drugs that stimulated your sexual urges into the food. After you ate the food, you felt differently. How I coped was to only eat steam buns and not touched other dishes. So basically I felt more or less the same. Nevertheless, sometimes I still felt different after I ate. In that kind of situations where you were constantly in fear, how could you possibly have sexual desires? That was how I knew the food was drugged. It was obvious to me.

The last place where I was confined there were two people from Christian Assembly, one of whom was a young man tall and strong and the other was a young woman in her late 20s. The two followed me wherever I went. We spent the day time together, sitting in a room studying, and at night the brother and I shared a room. I believe these ones were genuine believers from Christian Assembly but they have been converted by EL.

[I learned later that] they arranged different people to be with us in each location depending on who we are. Usually a young man would be with us to watch us and a young woman would also be with us to look after us, such as washing our clothes, bringing water to wash our feet, and even offering to massage our feet. But I believe none of us let the women massage our feet. The woman would also try to shower attention on us, and when there was no one around, she would discuss things of sexual nature with you. She would say that according to *The Word Appears in the Flesh*, every follower of EL should leave home and join the EL faith. Examples in the Bible were also brought up to support their teaching, such as Judah having relations with his daughter-in-law and Lot having relations with his daughters. They considered these examples correct. I scolded the young woman who conversed with me.

Perhaps it is because I was older and more sensible; when I was in that predicament, I asked the young man to stay in the same room with me. The original arrangement was that each of us would have our own room. I did not agree with the arrangement. I was afraid that at night if I had fallen asleep and the young woman would come into my room, I would not be able to defend myself. Furthermore, what if one of the guards came into the bedroom and took pictures of us sharing a bed, no amount of words could explain my innocence. That was why I insisted that the young man share a room with me. There was only one large bed in each room. Once I knew that they were EL, I had to take precaution against their methods.

Such was the situation during my confinement. Daily I lived in fear, because in the village where my wife came from, there was a case of an older sister in her 70s (in Chinese culture she is addressed as an aunt even if there was no direct family connection) whom the EL set a trap for and broke her legs. This older aunt’s house was designated by the church for hospitality (receiving out-of-town visitors). One evening a brother came to her on a bicycle saying that his mother was ill and asked the aunt to visit her and pray for her healing. So the aunt went with him, both on bicycles. As they were on their way, a young fellow appeared with a metal rod and began beating her. The young man who was with her assisted by pinning her on the ground.



They broke both of her legs and left her by the road. This took place around 1997 when I was still in prison.

On that same night in another village, an older brother in his 60s was also beaten and his legs broken; one of his ears was also cut off. This brother is still alive and about 90 years old now. These attacks were well known among the churches. You can also find their records online. Later when the Public Security people arrested the culprits because of other cases, they admitted to committing these crimes. It is a well-known fact among the villagers that these ones are EL members. We all know them. During those years from 1996 to 1998, EL members were very active and very bold. They openly and aggressively recruited believers in the churches with persuasive speech. So the churches endeavored to refute them and expose them. Because of this, EL targeted the leaders in the churches with their attacks.

Those from the Christian Assembly were indeed members, but they were converted to EL before they came, not while we were having our lessons. One of the things EL instructed their believers is that after conversion each one should go and convert another one.

I was confined for more than 20 days. I believe the longest confinement was 40 days.

Eventually we were released. I believe the reason is that a sister in my original group of six escaped successfully on the 2<sup>nd</sup> day. That sister surnamed Zhao is from Shenyang, which means she is local and knew where to go after she took the first opportunity to escape.

So our confinement became known and those outside began to discuss what to do. Eventually they decided to go to the authorities in Beijing as this kidnapping took place in several locations. As the authorities began to take actions, we who were inside could also sense the pressure even though we did not know what was going on.

After sister Zhao escaped, we were guarded more closely. The doors were always locked and we moved from place to place every week. If I remember correctly, I was moved three times.

One day they took me to the train station, returned my cell phone and ID card to me, and said, "You see, we did not harm you or mistreat you. Please contact us in the future." Then I was set free.

I was dropped off at the Panjin station. I bought a ticket with my own money. I still had the money I brought with me in the beginning. They took my phone and my ID but not my money.

A few days before they released me, one day out of nowhere I was given my phone and instructed to call my wife and inform her that I was safe. I was told that as Christians my wife should not have gone to the central police headquarters to report my disappearance. Because of this phone call, when I was set free and returned home, the brothers and sisters in our Fellowship were concerned that I have been brainwashed by EL people. They quarantined me. In fact all of us were quarantined for 3 to 4 days, until they were assured that we had not been corrupted.

Out of the 34 who were subject to involuntary confinement, two did not return to the fellowship after they were released. We realized these two must have been affected by EL during the confinement because after we were all released, they did not come in contact with any of us.

Either they succumbed to the sexual temptation or something else happened; otherwise, why would they not return to meet with us? One is from Shangqiu, Henan, and the other is from Xinjiang. Both joined EL, but the one from Xinjiang left EL at a later time. He did not return to our fellowship even after he left EL. We have not heard from the other one.

This kidnapping case is rather big because it involved the public security offices in six provinces. When the Beijing office sent directions down to the provincial levels, which took a while, EL also got wind of it. Hence, they set us free and went into hiding. By the time the public security office at the local level went to the various locations to find them, they have cleared out and moved away.

EL had a statement denying that this kidnapping ever happened. One of the reasons was that CGF was also listed as a xiejiao. We were one of the xiejiao groups in 1995, but by in 1999 our name was removed from the list of 14. When I was in prison between 1996 and 1998, Beijing Public Security office investigated me and our group. At the end they said we are a civilian religious group and not xiejiao. That was why our name was removed from the list in 1999.

Before my wife and the wife of Shen\*\* went to the Beijing authorities, they were faced with a dilemma. They ran the risk of falling into either the hand of the government authorities or that of EL. They decided that it was better to put themselves into the hand of the authorities because EL has no qualm at killing people whereas the authorities may simply detain you for a couple of years at most. So they went to Beijing and reported the kidnapping to the authorities. The official in charge of the case actually thanked them for coming forward since our group has suffered much persecution by the government over the years.

We were identified as a xiejiao group in 1996, but in 1999 our group was removed from the list. On the list of 14 xiejiao groups in 1999, CGF was not there. They investigated us when I was imprisoned in Henan and concluded that we are a civilian religious group and not a xiejiao.

As to the reason the government seemed to be passive with regard to the kidnapping, this is my understanding. First, no one was injured or dead among us, even though there was involuntary confinement, sexual temptations, and fraud, and involving many people. Second, this case involved not only EL but also CGF, which is an unregistered organization. In spite of the fact that the government official accepted our report, it put the authorities in a quandary as to how to enter our name as an organization. Nevertheless, one can never say that this kidnapping did not take place simply because there was no record in the official document, because there were 34, at least 32, witnesses. One of the 34 just passed away, but the rest is still all alive and could testify to this experience personally.

[Note: at the time of the interview with Pastor Zhang, neither Zhang nor we were aware that a “record” of sorts of the 416 Incident does exist and is in possession by the Beijing Public Security office. See below.]

### **Part Three: the Record from Beijing’s Public Security Bureau**

#### **The Situation Concerning the Illegal Confinement of “China Gospel Fellowship” by “Eastern Lightning”**

On April 27, 2002, Luo Y., [wife of] Zhang F., and [wife of] Shen X. came to Beijing to report a situation of illegal confinement of 34 believers.

1. According to Luo's report, they were illegally confined by "Eastern Lightning."

In April of 2001, Yang D., a believer from Lushan County, Henan province, became acquainted with Li S. through another woman named Ai Y. Yang also came to know a person surnamed Lian who claimed to be from Singapore. Lian claimed that he had established a Haggai Seminary in Singapore and asked Yang D. to contact responsible ones from the house churches and invite them to participate in free trainings offered by Haggai Seminary. Yang D. relayed this message to Luo Y. In April 2002, according to Lian's arrangement, Lu informed Zhang F., Shen X., Lian C., etc to head toward Qingdao, Shanghai, Jinzhou, Xian, Zhongxiang in Hubei, and Renqiu in Hebei, to participate in the trainings. Luo Y. himself did not participate due to an illness.

On April 15 at 7 pm, Shen X. called his wife, saying, "I am in Shanghai right now and have been kidnapped by Eastern Lightning." On April 19, Luo Y. received a phone call from Zhao X., a believer residing in Tiefu City, Liaoning Province, informing him that she together with Zhang F. were kidnapped by Eastern Lightning while participating in the training in Panjin City, Liaoning Province, but she has now escaped.

2. According to Yang D's report, they were illegally confined by Eastern Lightning.

In the afternoon of April 16, Yang arrived at the Long-distance Bus Depot in Renqiu, Hebei province, according to Shen Y's arrangement. A man who called himself Wang C. received Yang D. to his home. Wang C. is slightly chubby, about 172 cm in height, and speaks with a local accent. Present at the bus station was a man surnamed Ho from Zheng County, Henan, who was said to be a training participant, together with Wang C's "mother" and "aunt." In the evening of the same day, a total of 12 training participants were taken by three teachers said to be from Haggai Seminary to three different locations for the training. Before they set forth, they were asked to hand over their money and means of communication. Yang D. and Jing, another brother from Inner Mongolia, were taken to Hejian City, Hebei province, to a two-bedroom place (said to be Wang C's aunt's home). From April 17 to 25, lessons were given by Liu J., a teacher said to be from Haggai Seminary. (Liu J. is medium build, about 175 cm in height, speaks Mandarin, and wears gold-rimmed glasses.) The content of the lessons was mainly on the "change of the ages" according to the Bible with some messages from Eastern Lightning mixed in. From April 26 onward, Liu J. openly preached that "the age of the kingdom has arrived, and the female Christ has been incarnated to judge the people in the world," and that they are to "overturn the ruling of the great red dragon." Moreover, he also claimed that "during the 2008 Olympic Games, all sort of foreign organizations will enter China to turn China upside down and China will be disintegrated just as the former Soviet Union was." Yang D. realized that this teaching was from Eastern Lightning and proceeded to debate with Liu. While they were arguing back and forth, Yang discovered that the other four participants (two male and two female) were also members of EL. All these ones banded together to attack Yang and they even used sex to try to seduce him. Yang rejected all

their attacks. In the afternoon of April 27, after engaged in a series of struggles with EL, Yang and brother Jing escaped.

List of those that were illegally confined (main members):

Xing J., Lian C., Wei J., Shen Y., Niu W., Wang J., Jing R., Hu C., Yang D., Zhang F., Shen X.

#### **Part Four: My Rebuttal and Conclusion**

The CAG statement, which contains five points, totally denies the kidnapping incident. Interestingly, this statement is only available in English and not in Chinese. Our suspicion is that as many CAG members are applying for refuge asylum in various Western and Asian countries this statement will help support and strengthen their cases. Another possible intention for the absence of a statement in Chinese is to hide this incident from the attention of the Chinese media as well as the government agencies and even the organization that suffered most severely from this incident, China Gospel Fellowship, itself.

CAG's response is rather far-fetched; it does not make sense and it contradicts itself.

First, CAG claims that the Chinese Communist Party began to persecute CAG in 1991. "Under this condition, that CAG was able to imprison and detain leaders and co-workers of CGF for about two months is utterly unbelievable." We feel that the 416 Kidnapping Incident has nothing to do with CAG being persecuted. Instead, CAG is actually very aggressive in recruiting church leaders, even with improper means and with violence.

In June of 2016, we had opportunities to visit and interview three house church Christian pastors in Henan, Pastor Wang, Pastor Shi, and Pastor Liu. All three pastors testified that they were led by different CAG members to believe that some Christian believers were in urgent need of spiritual help, and while walking or riding a bicycle on their way to visit the said Christian believers they were subsequently ambushed and beaten with iron bars and other instruments. The three pastors also testified that they were targeted because they stood up to warn Christian believers not to be persuaded and influenced by the distorted and evil teaching of CAG members. One of the three pastors still kept his hospital medical record which showed that he suffered broken legs and facial trauma from that encounter. Furthermore, during our interview with Pastor Shi, the wife of Shi kept trying to stop Shi from talking about the incident involving CAG for fear that other CAG members might hear us. We can remember vividly her frightened face and the psychological scar Pastor Shi's incident has left on her. Mrs. Shi was fearful that their talking with us would draw retaliation from local CAG members.

Through our visits for two years to China with CAG victims it is obvious that in the late 1990s CAG employed tactics of beating and torture to punish or silence Christian pastors. As the tactics of threat and violence proved to be effective, it is not difficult to understand that CAG became emboldened to use kidnapping and illegal confinement to further their cause.

Second, CAG claims that CGF leaders have been successful in keeping their information secret (from the government); hence, it is highly unlikely for CGF to supply names and locations of their leaders and even photographs of their IDs to two strangers, Lian and Yu.

According to our interview with Pastor Zhang, four CGF leaders were put into prison in 1996 for two to three years during which time the leadership of CGF went through a transition and new leadership was established. The fact that Lian and Yu initiated the contacts with CGF and that the contact was made while the leadership was rather new partly explain the strong desire of CGF members to be trained and such a desire to be trained motivated them to surrender their information to Lian and Yu.

Shen Y. was the head of CGF until the end of 2001. He left the post when his term ended at which time Shen X. took over. The alleged personnel from Haggai Institute, Lian and Yu, first made contact with Shen Y. while he was still the head. A whole year had elapsed before the second contact was made, and this time it was with the new head, Shen X. It is likely that during this one-year period Mr. Yu, the alleged president of Haggai, has familiarized himself with the structure of Haggai's curriculum sufficiently to know how to present it convincingly. Furthermore, it is also likely that this time was spent seeing to the logistics of having the "training" in six different cities in China. The fact that six cities with multiple places in each city were used in this incident indicates that a large amount of planning and forethought were involved.

Third, CAG also states that Haggai Institute was known to Christians in China to work with Chinese government agencies, such as TSPM and SARA; hence, for an unrecognized organization such as CGF to supply Haggai with their information is unthinkable.

Pastor Zhang, in our interview with him, commented that it was actually Haggai Institute who said that they have never worked with CGF before and had nothing to do with arranging for this "training." CAG took Haggai Institute's statement and made it their own. Pastor Zhang testified that in their meeting with Mr. Yu, the alleged president of Haggai, Mr. Yu also said the same thing, which is that Haggai does not work with underground Christian groups in China. However, Mr. Yu said, seeing as CGF was longing to be trained, Haggai was willing to accommodate CGF and provide the training. Yu's statement helped alleviate the uncomfortable feeling CGF had toward Haggai's past history with the Chinese government.

Fourth, CGF is a religious group under persecution. CAG asked: Why would CGF take the risk of going to the police and surrender the names of their leaders? If the kidnapping incident did happen, why did the government not publicize and report it at that time? If the fact were like what CGF said, the case should have been transferred to the relevant Procuratorate for verification and prosecution. However, there were no police raids, no arrests, and no trials.

In response to the fourth point, we have in our possession an official document which says that three persons (Luo, wife of Zhang, and wife of Shen) went to Beijing to report a situation of illegal confinement on April 27, 2002. The document used a particular expression, *fanying* (反应 loosely translated "a response report"), to describe it, which indicates that it is not an official case (which will require investigation), just a report on file. Perhaps it is due to the fact that this

incident involves not random individuals but members of an organization not recognized by the government. The Beijing Public Security chose to file it as a *fanying qingkuang* (反应情况 lit. a response report of a situation), not as an actual case, to avoid having to investigate activities involving two unregistered groups.

This document proves that the 416 Kidnapping Incident was brought to the government's attention. Pastor Zhang's wife informed us that she and Shen X's wife were both involved in going to Beijing to report the incident. Sister Zhao who was the first person to escape from the confinement was later called to Beijing for questioning.

The fact that both groups, CAG and CGF, are unregistered churches presented a dilemma to the Chinese government. The Chinese government typically does not pay attention or take active response to things involving unregistered groups. This is especially true when no one involved in the incident was injured or killed at the end. It is not the practice of the Chinese government to protect unregistered church members. As mentioned early in 1998 when scores of Christian believers in Henan suffered surprised attacks under false claims and had their legs broken or ears severed, the government took action and tracked down the perpetrators, even though the actions were somewhat half-hearted and the perpetrators were located because of their involvement in other unrelated cases. In general the government does not actively pursue cases involving unacknowledged parties unless lives were lost or severe injuries were involved, and it was usually conducted case by case.

From the interviews with Pastor Zhang, right after the kidnapping was reported, some volunteers went to the location where Zhang was kept and found that the entire building was vacant. No arrest could be made.

Lastly, CAG asserted that "our Church has strict requirements for admission. Only those who have true belief in Almighty God and attend Church meetings willingly can be admitted, after their applications are approved by the Church leaders and deacons," and "according to our Church's Principles for Expelling and Purging People, so far we have expelled from 300,000 to 500,000 members from CAG."

This last argument from CAG is the most far-fetched and ridiculous ever heard from any so-called religious organization. On one hand CAG "has strict requirements for admission" but on the other hand in recent modern history, we have never heard an organization to expel such a large number of members. If this were true, it only shows that CAG is composed of criminals that can later be expelled by itself. Which religious organization in modern society ever reported that it expelled three hundred thousand to five hundred thousand members? All indications put doubts to the fact that CAG is a Christian organization as suggested by some sociologists.

CAG's statement also mentioned that a number of CGF members have converted to CAG; the testimony of one person, Xie Qiang, was given in the statement as an example. If one reads Xie Qiang's testimony (available in both English<sup>7</sup> and Chinese<sup>8</sup>), one can easily identify that he was

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.holyspiritspeaks.org/19-i-have-received-almighty-gods-great-salvation> (English)

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.kingdomsalvation.org/tiezheng-018.html> (Chinese)

one of those involved in the April 2002 incident. According to Pastor Zhang, two of the 34 who were involuntarily confined ceased to remain in fellowship with CGF after they were released. Perhaps these two were the ones negatively affected by their experience. As far as Pastor Zhang knows, both became CAG members but after a period of time one left CAG again.