

# An Open Letter to Guo Feixiong from His Wife

*Unable to get a letter to her imprisoned husband through usual channels, Zhang Qing writes an open letter to Yang Maodong (also known as Guo Feixiong) in hopes that he will receive it somehow.*

Dear Yang Maodong,

How are you?

We live in absurd times when you cannot receive my letters, nor I yours. So I have to write you an open letter.

On November 23, when you met with your lawyer, you said that you did not agree with the verdict in your first trial. But you would not appeal. You said that in cases of political persecution, an appeal is hopeless. The verdict would not be changed. I understand your decision.

During the past few days, I have been in touch with the court and with the detention facility to see if the enforcement notice had been issued yet. I asked when the detention facility could arrange a visit. But I couldn't get any useful information from them over the phone. So I decided to go in person.

On December 3, I went to the No. 3 Detention Facility in Guangzhou, to see you. I brought our son Jinbao along with me.

Along its route, the bus wound its way around the tall buildings and through brilliant purple and yellow flowers blooming alongside the road. That day, these plants and flowers just leapt into my field of vision. The bus had to stop beneath an overpass due to traffic congestion, and I looked at the azalea trailing over the side of the bridge, its soft green branches and bright purple flowers, the way it swayed in the breeze—really lovely. The leaves of a tree I can't name floated up and down in the breeze. Like most people, I usually don't pay much attention to this familiar roadside scenery. But I observed it very closely this time because I was imagining what it would be like to see it through your eyes. In your 14 long months of confinement, you have not been able to see these trees and plants; this city of loathsome, reinforced concrete; the viaducts that wind ahead; the grey-white piers standing dumbly; the blue skies and white clouds or the rays of sunshine in their riotous dance on the bus windows. After 14 months of confinement, I would (if I were you) wholeheartedly embrace this bright, lively scene. As I viewed these street scenes through your eyes, the soft azaleas beside the overpass seemed to be waving their arms in a dance as they nodded in the breeze created by passing vehicles. In the very instant these flowers came into view, I was surprisingly moved by them. If you had seen them, they would certainly have brightened your heart.

Today, I started out at 1:30 p.m. and everything went smoothly on the bus; in fact, of all the trips I've taken to the detention facility, it was the easiest. Even Jinbao said, "We had good luck today. The bus came as soon as we got to the station."

In the reception room at the No. 3 Detention Facility, I informed the policewoman of the situation: "A verdict has been reached in Yang Maodong's first trial and he is not appealing. The Court has issued the enforcement notice. It hasn't been received at the detention facility yet, but I, a family member, have come to see him." The policewoman responded, "Impossible. There are procedures! Hasn't the court sent the enforcement notice yet?" I replied that it had—I had asked. On Wednesday of the previous week, the court said that the enforcement notice had been sent. I had telephoned the No. 3 Facility office many times and they said I had to contact the correctional officer directly to ascertain a time to visit. The man said I would have to come to the reception room at the No. 3 Facility and that I could call the correctional officer directly from there on the internal line. "So now, please help me make the call to report that Yang Maodong has family here to visit him," I said.

But the policewoman maintained that it was not possible: "We cannot call for you. I don't know the correctional officer's number."

So I called the internal office of No. 3 Detention Facility again. This time a policewoman answered. I told her what had happened, and she said, "Wait a moment. I have to ask for instructions from my boss. Call back in ten minutes." A few minutes later, the phone in the reception room rang. The policewoman answered and then said to me, "They want you to wait. They're just getting instructions from my boss." I said okay. More than ten minutes later, I again phoned the internal office and a policeman answered. He told me to wait a little longer. "They're still conferring." Over 20 minutes after that, I heard a policewoman behind me ask, "Yang Maodong's family?" I walked over and said it was me. She looked compassionate, but she said, "Since you just came today, it's impossible for us to arrange an immediate visit." "Tomorrow then," I replied. The policewoman said, "I can't be sure that it will be possible tomorrow either. Why don't you fill out a request form first, and when we have a written request, we'll attempt to get permission again for you. We will notify you when a time has been scheduled. We usually don't notify people by phone, but in writing, through the post."

I wrote an application as follows:

#### APPLICATION

I, Zhang Qíng, am the wife of Yang Maodong.

A verdict was announced in Yang Maodong's case on November 14, 2007. He did not appeal. Therefore, I am applying to visit Yang Maodong.

I request that the leadership of the relevant department grant permission.

Applicant: Zhang Qíng.

Application made the afternoon of December 3, 2007, in the visitation room at No. 3 Detention Facility.

I came, but was unable to see you. I submitted the application, but I don't know when I will be notified that I can visit. I left some money for you at the desk, so you would know that I was there.

Jinbao came, too. When he heard we were going out today, he said happily, "Where are we going? If we're going where we can take the No. 283 bus, that will be good. That's where I want to go to do whatever it is we have to do." I said, "That's where we're going."

He was excited the entire way. This is the third time he's come. The first time was on September 23, the day before the Autumn Moon Festival. The second was November 23, for a meeting with the lawyer. Now, since he's not in school, I take him along wherever I go. He's a happy child. On the way here, he was constantly craning his neck to look out the window. And from time to time he would say to me, "Look, Mama, look, train tracks. Look now, Mama, a river."

After the policewoman refused my visit, I took Jinbao up a hill near the No. 3 Detention Facility. Every time we come, we climb this hill. It's covered in weeds taller than a man, with pretty stalks like ears of grain growing out of them. We hang onto these weeds as we climb up and down the hill. The hill is quite steep, but hanging onto these weeds makes it an easy climb. I stood on the hill, looking at the No. 3 Detention Facility. Compared to facilities No. 1 and No. 2, this one is actually shiny and new. The sun shone on it, flooding it with golden light. I thought about you, there in such a sunlit city for 14 months, yet you haven't once seen the sunlight. Even when you're brought out for fresh air, you don't see sunlight. When you're in a detention facility, it's not material things that concern you; it's only what kind of treatment you get.

Afterwards, we went to a higher hill where the ninth division of the Guangzhou Public Security Bureau is located. From the front, you can see the No. 3 Detention Facility. Looking down from the top, everything is spread out before your eyes. The No. 3 Detention Facility sits beside a hill. On the other side is a closed highway. In the distance are the scattered rooftops of a residential area. This part of the city suburbs seems wide-open. But you are not familiar with the environment outside. The rays of the setting sun were falling on No. 3 Detention Facility. I stood high above it, gazing at it for a long time. I didn't know where in that building, encased in golden sunshine, you were kept. What were you doing? I stood at the top of the steps, looking at the space the No. 3 Detention Facility occupies, watching the traffic flying along the highway in the distance, and taking in the deep blue of the sky. I gazed at the slanting rays of the sun illuminating all this, and was overwhelmed with feelings I couldn't put into words.

Behind me was the office building of the ninth division of the Guangzhou Public Security Bureau. There's a very well-tended lawn there, and a white dog was running about on the lawn. There were two workers watering [the lawn]. Jinbao and I washed our hands in their water. The female worker asked, "Why are his hands so dirty?" Her words were almost a laugh.

You haven't held Jinbao's little hands for so very long. His hands were soft and hot—we had just come down the hill, and his hands had grasped the weeds tightly as we descended. We went carefully, but he'd lost his footing, landed on his bottom, and slid right down the rest of the way, letting out a big yell as he went. When he came to a stop, he exclaimed, "I was hanging onto the weeds, but one came out of the ground and that's why I fell." We burst into laughter in spite of ourselves. The way he slid down the hill was really funny. People are so funny when they can't control themselves. It was when he was sliding down the hill that his hands got dirty.

You must want so much to know how we're doing. Nothing very special, just the minutiae of life, but for you it would certainly be very interesting.

When your trial began on July 9, your lawyer warned me to prepare myself for a heavy sentence. The procurator<sup>1</sup> produced false evidence, and in his malicious way had suggested twice to the judge that the defendant maintained a bad attitude toward pleading guilty and requested a heavy sentence.

I think that when someone is not constrained by faith, it can be really frightening, especially in the case of those who wield power. When procurators produce false evidence in court to harm another, they are doing something really evil—yet they are entirely confident and assured as they go about it. If I had not seen their actions with my own eyes, I would have found them truly hard to believe. They are completely without conscience, morals, or justice. They are people without faith, capable of anything. This is truly a cause for grief for the Chinese people, their misfortune. In court, the judges deprive you of even your right to speak, and they are extremely severe. In such circumstances, a heavy sentence looked likely.

So in my letter of July 27, I said we would write weekly, that we would go back to the days of writing letters. That way, you could give me your suggestions, some guidance on our son's education. The child's education is an important issue and I hoped you would be able to give your views on it in your letters. I thought that would make things a bit better. But after I sent off my letter, I received no return letters from you during the whole month of August. It was not until around September 6 that I got any mail from you—three letters in a row. You really had written to me every week. But after that, nothing. On November 23, you told your lawyer that you had sent two letters in October, but I didn't get them. I wrote you in October, too, and you didn't receive anything. Your older sister wrote you in October as well, but you didn't get that one either. You told your lawyer that this was a police action aimed at thwarting our freedom to correspond, and was done on instruction of the Guangzhou Public Security Bureau First Division (Ministry of State Security).

Based on that notion, I began to write you open letters. I really am hoping to establish a steady correspondence with you. Not simply for spiritual or emotional sustenance, but most importantly, I want, through this exchange of letters, to discuss our child's education. A person's golden time of education must not be neglected or left to drift.<sup>2</sup>

Every time I receive one of your letters, it makes me so happy. Thinking back now on those days of early September when I received your letters—I remember that feeling of happiness so clearly. During that period I checked the mailbox nearly everyday. And I imagined that when you received my letters, your mood would be happy, too. Even this little bit of contact has been denied us. Life is really very cruel to us.

When I think back on days past, I skim briefly through most of the years we've been together, but every detail of the last five years is etched in my mind with the precision of a sculptor. I have recorded our lives and feelings during the days you have been away from home, and written down even the trivial events that are happening in our lives during your absence—interesting things about the children's growth—so that you can read them when you return. In this way, the sense of distance and unfamiliarity created by years of separation can be lessened.

Though I submitted an application when I went to the No. 3 Detention Facility to visit you, I don't know if it will be approved and I don't know how long it will take. It has been too long since we've seen each other. In court, you were hustled in and out and I didn't get a clear look at you. I am filled with anticipation of that first visit that will, that must, happen.

Take care of yourself!

Your friends send greetings!

Your children and I miss you!

Zhang Qing

December 5, 2007

Translated by J. Latourelle

This open letter was posted at the Chinese-language website: Zhang Qing [张青], "An Open Letter to Guo Feixiong, Victim of a Miscarriage of Justice, During His Hunger Strike from His Wife, Zhang Qing (1)" [郭飞雄妻子张青于绝食抗议日，致蒙受冤狱的郭飞雄的公开信（一）], Boxun [博讯], December 5, 2007, <http://news.boxun.com/news/gb/china/2007/12/200712050623.shtml>.

#### Note

1. Or prosecutor.
2. Editor's note: Zhang Qing and Guo Feixiong's son has been denied enrollment in the local school.