

---

## Testimony of Shi Minglei, Wife of jailed Chinese activist Cheng Yuan

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the Congressional-Executive Commission on China for convening this hearing.

My Name is Shi Minglei. I am the wife of a famous Chinese human rights activist, Cheng Yuan, who is currently serving a five-year sentence at a facility called Hunan Chishan Prison. There, as I will discuss in more detail later, prisoners are forced to work making gloves for a famous American brand, Milwaukee Tool.

### **Short Introduction of Cheng Yuan:**

But first, I'd like to tell you about my husband. In 2008, Cheng Yuan left a job in finance to found an NGO called 'Nanjing based Justice For All', which was initially focused on combating employment discrimination against persons with hepatitis B, which is a significant issue in the People's Republic of China. From there, he expanded his work to other areas of social justice, including advocating for an end to the PRC's one-child policy and standing up for the rights of Chinese human rights lawyers after the 709 Crackdown by founding NGO ChangSha Funeng.

### **About The Changsha Funeng Case:**

Cheng Yuan's fruitful and influential human rights work led PRC security agents to arrest Cheng Yuan and his two colleagues WuGe Jianxiong, Liu Dazhi on July 22, 2019, which is known as 'ChangSha Funeng NGO Case.' And they were called The Changsha3.

I haven't seen Cheng Yuan since he was arrested in 2019. [He was arbitrarily detained](#), tortured, charged with 'Subversion Of State Power', deprived legal rights of access to his legal defense, deprived of communication rights with family members and lawyers, and [secretly tried and sentenced](#) to 5 years' imprisonment. That is how he ended up at Hunan Chishan Prison.

### **Persecution against Cheng Yuan's family members to force him to confess guilty:**

The persecution against Cheng Yuan also expanded to our family members. The same day he was arrested in 2019, I was suddenly put into home arrest with my 3-year-old daughter. I was handcuffed, put into a black hood, and interrogated for almost 20 hrs in a secret place by the Chinese national security agents and plain clothes. The Chinese national security agents threatened me that they would bring my 3-year-old girl to accept interrogation together. That night my daughter was left in the preschool till night, and they didn't allow me to pick up my daughter. After that day, my daughter and I lived under surveillance for half a year. The Chinese national security agents also froze my bank account and seized my photo ID, passport, driver's license, and even my Medicare card to silence me. Cheng Yuan's brother, sister, my mom, and my relatives, also my colleagues, and my ex-boss were harassed by Chinese national security agents.

### **No Rule of Law in China:**

Here I want to point out that the sentences against Cheng Yuan and Changsha3 are totally illegal. It indicates the PRC government's abuse of Chinese national security law against NGO activists and Chinese civil society, its arbitrary detention, deprivation of lawyers' rights, torture, and secret sentence. All of these are against the UN conventions the PRC government signed in the UN, and these are even against Chinese constitution law and Chinese procedure law itself.

And even now, our family members are still refused to get Cheng Yuan's verdict document from the court, it becomes a state secret and hidden away from the public, which is also against Chinese procedure law itself.

### **Released prisoners testified for the forced labor in Hunan Chishan prison:**

Another activist who was imprisoned there is [Lee Mingche](#), a Taiwanese human rights activist who was arrested by the PRC government in March 2017 and released in April 2022. After his release, Lee revealed that, while he was imprisoned at Hunan Chishan Prison, he was forced to produce gloves, including gloves bearing the Milwaukee Tool logo. One of Lee's jobs was to cut materials into the shape of a glove. Lee said that there were three to four cutting machines devoted to cutting Milwaukee Tool gloves. Another of Lee's jobs was sewing the cut materials into actual gloves. I am told my husband is currently forced to do a significant amount of sewing as well. Lee said that if prisoners refused to work or to meet quotas, they were subject to a variety of punishments, including being forced to stand for several hours straight, having their contact with family members cut off, being denied commissary rights, and, in some cases, being subjected to beatings, including with electric batons. Lee has attested to many of these facts under penalty of perjury and is willing to testify to them under oath as well, though he is currently facing difficulties traveling to the United States.

Another recently released prisoner, whom I will refer to using the pseudonym Xu Lun, as he is still in the PRC, has similarly reported being forced to produce gloves bearing the Milwaukee Tool logo while imprisoned at Hunan Chishan Prison. Xu confirmed that failure to meet the production quotas was met with punishments like being forced to stand and beaten and shocked with electric batons. Xu also confirmed workdays of about 11 hours a day, at least six days a week, with minimal breaks, and being paid only 20RMB, or about \$3 USD, per month. That works out to an hourly wage of 1 cent.

### **Reasons about big companies like Milwaukee Tool use forced labor in China:**

Due to the lack of rule of law in the PRC, however, it is extremely dangerous for former prisoners located there to speak publicly about these issues. That is precisely why big companies like Milwaukee Tool are able to get away with benefiting from forced labor in the PRC. They know that the lack of human rights protections in the PRC means it is difficult, if not impossible, for victims to hold them accountable. Meanwhile, it is extremely beneficial to Milwaukee Tool's

bottom line if those who are actually making their gloves are paid only 1 cent per hour. Of course, they would prefer to have their gloves manufactured in the PRC, rather than in the U.S., where they'd have to pay workers several thousand times more, and where the kinds of abuses people like Mr. Lee and Mr. Xu suffered would not be tolerated. In this way, American workers can also be counted among the victims of Milwaukee Tool's disregard for human rights.

**Concerns about Cheng Yuan's well-being and call for action to stop forced labor :**

As for my husband, I am deeply concerned about his well-being. In recent visits by other family members, he has confirmed that he is forced to work 11 to 12 hours a day, hunched over a sewing machine. He has also said that he has been subjected to solitary confinement, forced to stand for hours, deprived of sleep and food, and being forced to drink water from the toilet. And, although he has not specifically said that he has been working on gloves bearing the Milwaukee Tool logo, the mere chance that he might be should be intolerable to Americans.

Thus, Mr. Chairman, Senators, and CECC representatives, I am calling on you to stop American companies like Milwaukee Tool from using forced labor in the PRC now!

**Two documents are attached:**

And Mr. Chairman, I ask that two documents be entered into the record. The first is an investigation report from the Wisconsin Watch about Milwaukee Tool's forced labor in Hunan Chishan prison, and the second an Explainer regarding Cheng Yuan's case.

Thank you!

Shi Minglei

July 10, 2023