

## China Couple Speak Of 'Forced Abortion'



By Mark Stone, Asia Correspondent

A couple have told Sky News how they were physically forced into an abortion by the Chinese authorities, three months before their child was due to be born.

At 4am last Friday, a group of 20 officials from the Shandong Province Family Planning Commission forced their way into the home of Zhou Guoqiang and his wife Liu Xinwen.

The officials kicked down the door of the family's home. Mr Zhou was held down while his wife was pulled from her bed and taken away.

Liu Xinwen, 33, was taken to the People's Hospital of Fangzi District in Weifang City where she was injected with an abortion-inducing drug.



Liu Xinwen says she was forcibly removed from her bed

Her baby, which she would later discover was a boy, died a day later in her womb. It took a further day for the foetus to be delivered.

Her husband was not told where she had been taken. It took him five hours to find her at the hospital. By then, the injection had been given.

Sky News met the couple six days later. Mr Zhou had invited us to the family's modest home in a rural corner of the province to hear their story.

We found his wife lying in the bed she had been taken from a week earlier. She was sobbing quietly.

"I miss him." she said.

"I didn't get to see him. I would be even more upset if I had seen him.

"Baby, I'm sorry. We were not meant to be. You rest in peace in heaven. We will pray for you. We hope your next life is better."

Her heartbreak is the most brutal consequence of China's one-child policy.

The law is designed to keep the country's population in check. It prevents couples from

having more than one child with a few exceptions in some rural provinces.

The policy is supposed to be enforced through financial penalties and not forced abortions. But in some provinces, over-zealous local officials, keen to keep within their birth quotas, break the law and terminate pregnancies by force.

"They don't have any humanity. They are not humans." Liu Xinwen said.

"They must have children and parents too. But they don't have any conscience. This is how China is."

Mr Zhou told how the officials held him down on the sofa while others took his wife away. In all, there were 16 male officials and four females.

We then sit down to look at photos he had taken in the hospital room. They are almost indescribably graphic.

One photograph shows Liu Xinwen lying on the bed. Beside her, on the floor, is a bucket. Inside is her aborted child.

Several other images show the foetus. It is fully formed.



An image of Liu Xinwen in hospital



Mr Zhou broke down after discussing the abortion

"His nose, ears, mouth are all there." Mr Zhou said.

"It is a child that would have lived if not for the forced abortion. It's because of their cruelty. Look, his hand is very obvious."

Mr Zhou broke down as he recalled the moment he arrived in the hospital, just minutes after the injection had been administered.

"My wife was lying in bed. I asked her: 'Have you been injected?' She said 'yes'. I asked if the baby was still moving. She said 'not much'.

"After that, I didn't want my wife to see my crying. I went outside. I cried, but only for a while because I needed to return to comfort her. She was very sad. She cried, day and night.

"Every time I heard babies' voices from other wards, I could hardly control myself. I had to go out. I have lost my child. I am speechless, words can't describe my feelings."



A footprint on the front door of the couple's home

He claimed that his wife was forced to sign papers which said she had agreed to the abortion.

When she initially refused, he said they told her that if she did not sign the papers, they would arrest her husband and she would have nothing. We have not been able to independently verify this.

The couple already have one son. Zhou Junfeng is 10. As we talk to his parents, he runs around the house playing. He is oblivious to the grief around him.

After Zhou Junfeng was born his mother underwent a state-proscribed procedure to insert a contraceptive coil into her body.

She says that this "forced sterilisation" must have failed, allowing her to fall pregnant for a second time.

The couple had the option to tell the authorities about the pregnancy the moment they discovered it, four months after conception.

They decided not to come clean because they were concerned that an abortion may be forced on them.



Mr Zhou and his son cook together

Instead, they said they planned to tell the authorities after the birth and then offer to pay the fine. This is common in parts of China and is sometimes acceptable.

Mr Zhou offered to take us to the hospital to see the room where the abortion happened.

Inside the hospital, we saw the room which is part of a fully functioning maternity ward; it is not a backstreet abortion clinic.

We found just two members of staff. One refused to comment. The other, a young nurse, was reluctant and a little startled to find a foreign TV crew in her hospital.

"I don't know if it's forced or not. And I don't know the reason for it," she said.

"This is a maternity ward; there are many reasons for abortions. I don't know the specific reason for this case and it's not my place to care."

Sky News has approached the Shandong Health and Family Planning Commission, the central government Family Planning Commission in Beijing and the Chinese Embassy in London for a response to this case.

At midday British time, the embassy told Sky News they were looking into the case and would provide a more detailed response later.