

Beat: Arts

Bruises found on body of Chinese human rights activist Cao

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USPA News - Chinese human rights activist Cao Shunli, who died at a military hospital in Beijing after reportedly being denied medical treatment, showed signs of emaciation and had bruises on her body, according to relatives who were briefly allowed to see her. The U.S.-based advocacy group the Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD) said on Thursday that authorities allowed Cao's relatives to only briefly view her body after she died on March 14. "That was when they noticed signs of emaciation as well as bedsores and bruises on the body," the group said, adding that it was unclear where Cao's body was taken.

CHRD, citing unidentified sources, said doctors at the hospital had spoken in "disbelief" about Cao's condition when she first arrived there. "Doctors said that Cao's condition indicated she had not received any care or treatment for a long period of time and she must have been simply left to die in the detention cell - nobody even turned her over or washed her," the group said. Cao died at Beijing No. 309 Military Hospital on the morning of March 14, only an hour after her family was informed of her worsening condition. Police had detained Cao since September 14, 2013, when she was arrested at Beijing Capital International Airport while attempting to travel to Geneva for China's UN Human Rights Council review and a training session of UN human rights mechanisms. Authorities placed Cao under arrest on a charge of "unlawful assembly" and later for "creating a disturbance." According to CHRD, Cao's health seriously deteriorated during the five months she spent at the Chaoyang District Detention Center in Beijing, and officials are accused of repeatedly denying her medical attention. She reportedly developed tuberculosis, liver ascites, fibroid tumors and cysts while at the detention center. Cao was rushed to the intensive-care unit (ICU) of Beijing's Qinghe Emergency Center on February 19, after which she fell into a coma. The next day, Cao was transferred to 309 Military Hospital in Beijing where she remained until the time of her death, suffering from organ failure. The Chinese government said Cao had been sick for a long time and received medical treatment. But activists, who have called for an independent investigation, argue that Cao was in good health when she was arrested at the Beijing airport in September and, when she became ill, authorities repeatedly denied requests for medical bail. Her lawyer and supporters were also barred from visiting her. Cao was a powerful voice in China's human rights movement, having persistently advocated for civil society participation at the national level in both the 2009 and 2013 Universal Periodic Reviews (UPRs) at the United Nations Human Rights Council. She also advocated for the government disclosure of materials about the Universal Periodic Review and the inclusion of the views of petitioners in drafting China's national human rights report for UPR. Cao was also responsible for helping organize several peaceful rallies of up to 200 activists in front of government buildings in Beijing in 2013.

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