Drugged and Detained: China's Psychiatric Prisons Executive Summary

Drugged and Detained: China's psychiatric prisons investigates one of the most chilling ways China uses to disappear critics – forced hospitalization in a psychiatric facility without medical justification.

Called **Ankang**, after the system of police-run psychiatric prisons launched in the 1980s, nowadays, most victims are locked up in regular psychiatric wards, meaning that doctors and hospitals collude with authorities to subject victims to medically-unnecessary involuntary hospitalizations and forced medication.

Ten years ago, China passed a new Mental Health Law aimed in part at preventing this abuse. But Safeguard Defenders has found that the law has not worked. Local police and government agents continue to routinely and widely practice the political abuse of psychiatry across China.

We used more than 140 secondary sources, the majority interviews with victims and families from 2015 to 2021. This data is just the "tip of the iceberg".

"The hardest part of being held in the psychiatric hospital is there is no expiry date… you could be there for 20 years or 30 years."
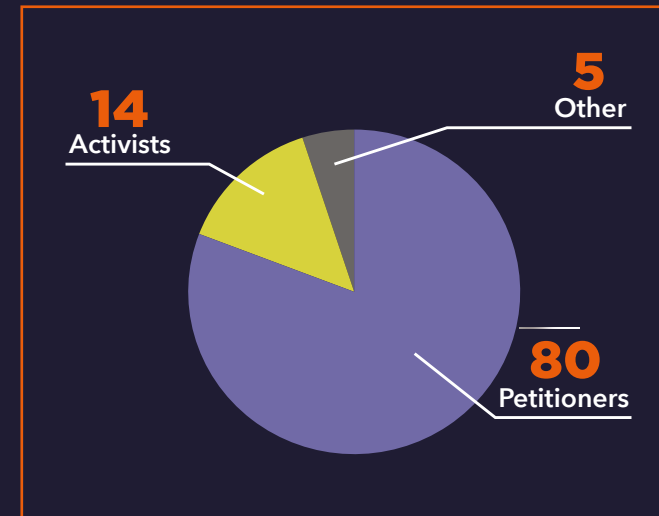
activist Song Zaimin

Why does China lock people into psychiatric hospitals?

It silences them: Locked up, they cannot petition, protest or talk to the media

It acts as a deterrent: Involuntary hospitalization is a terrifying experience; fear may stop them from petitioning or protesting after release

It sitgmatizes them: They are discredited and isolated from others with this false label of "mental illness"

14 Activists — **5** Other — **80** Petitioners

It's mostly **petitioners and activists** who are the victims

It's happening **all over China**

66%
No psychiatric evaluation

Doctors illegally **fail to conduct psychiatric evaluations** before admission

Many are sent back repeatedly, some more **than a dozen times**

Victims are locked up for days, weeks, months or years, some have been there for **more than a decade**

Victims are **beaten**, **tied up**, subjected to **electroshock therapy**, and kept **incommunicado**