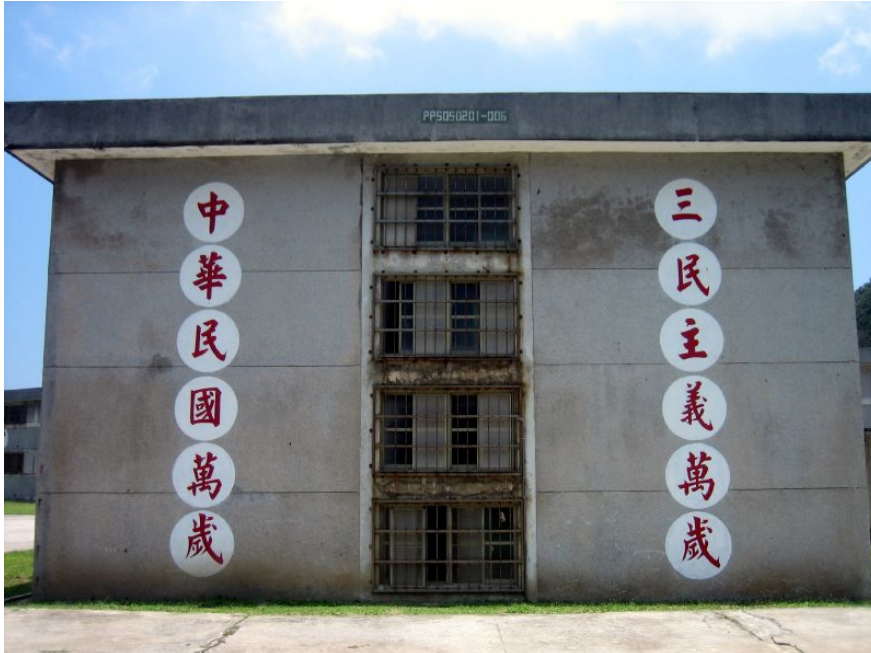


Mr Hu use to be a prison officer. He also served the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) as a teacher and Party cadre. Once he became disenchanted with the shady and corrupt practices of China's prison system, he resigned from all CCP affiliated organizations.

On May 8th Mr Hu spoke to SOH radio, giving us a glimpse into the dark side of China's prison system. What he told us revealed systematic corruption and the flagrant abuse of human rights in many of China's prisons.

When he first joined the CCP, Hu developed an immediate dislike of the organisation: "When I was in college studying a degree, my father suggested I join the CCP. I didn't take his advice. Back then the Party propaganda went like this: 'The majority of Party members are good. Only a small number, a handful of Party members are not good.' However, I noticed that in places where I studied and lived bad cadres outnumbered good ones. It was quite disappointing. I wasn't going to apply for Party membership. Afterwards, when I worked in the prison system, I often heard sarcastic comments from prisoners, like: "From what we can tell, police officers are even worse than us prisoners!"



*An interview with a former prison guard reveals the frightening extent of corruption and brutality*

*in China's prisons (Prince Roy/flickr)*

Mr Hu told SOH that anyone with a hint of humanity would struggle to work in China's penal system: "All I saw was bribery, corruption, and beatings. It was outrageous. I don't think this is a place where humans can stay. I need freedom. I don't want to spend all my time trying to figure out the subtle hints in the body language of officials. One of my former colleagues still works at the propaganda department, putting a favourable spin on everything to police trainees. The last time I called him, I asked if he was pleased with his work. He said he was going crazy. He knows it's all a blatant lie, and everyone else knows it's a lie. Yet, he has to gloss over contradictions and make speeches to police officers. In other words, they fool themselves and lie to each other. So, I'm fed up with it, and don't want to be a part of it. I decided to quit."

### **Sex for favors**

Prison officers actually have the power to reduce prison terms. But some officers take advantage of this power; Mr Hu described one case: "They go out to deceive inmates' families. For example, someone is in a labor camp. The officer tells his wife that he wants her 'to understand the situation,' a not so subtle hint that she should sleep with the officer in exchange for her husband's reduced labour term."

Mr Hu believes the flawed training system actually breeds unfit and violent cadets. Training regimes are lax and many underqualified and unfit cadets become officers: "Some graduated from high school and didn't enrol in college [after failing the entrance exams]. Some finished military service and returned to their hometowns. Those with connections first became workers. After two or three years, he's qualified to take exams to become a police officer. I once supervised the exams. It was completely out of control. Some students had parents who worked in law enforcement and never spent time studying. They copied each other's answers during the exam. We didn't dare stop them, because their parents were chiefs of departments. Officers who supervised the exam had to leave and smoke in the hallway. When I taught at such a school the students even dared to fight with me. After they passed the exam and became prison guards [while in China they still belong to the police system and wear police uniforms], they are most vicious when beating inmates. So vicious, that some inmates were beaten to death. Some inmates had mental breakdowns."

Some prison guards were actually former soldiers. After returning from the military they bring

## Former Prison Officer Exposes Brutality and Corruption in Chinese Prison System

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unprecedented brutality to the prisons: “If you want to find anyone more vicious, it has to be soldiers. Sometimes, prison guards are angry at inmates, but even they don’t go too far with the beatings. Often soldiers are called in. These young soldiers, only 17, 18, or maybe 19 years old, don’t have any sympathy. They treat it like a boxing exercise. They simply lift the inmate off the ground and tie them to a tree using thick metal wire, and start rounds and rounds of punching.”

Mr Hu believes it was worth giving up his secure job in the prison system in exchange for freedom and human decency.