

《天津胡石根等7人因颠覆国家政权罪获刑》

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TIANJIN -- Four people were convicted of subverting state power and sentenced by a court in Tianjin after serial trials in the past four days.

Of the four, Hu Shigen, an illegal church leader, got the longest prison term of 7.5 years. He is the eldest at 61 and had engaged in state power subversion since the 1990s.

Zhou Shifeng, a lawyer who formerly managed the Fengrui Law Firm in Beijing, was sentenced to seven years in prison.

Zhai Yanmin, an unemployed resident of Beijing, was sentenced to three years in prison, suspended for four years.

Entrepreneur Gou Hongguo received a suspended three year sentence.

Zhai and Gou may not be jailed if they do not re-offend during the probation period.

All of them accepted the charges and expressed remorse. None chose to appeal.

The four met to "establish a systematic ideology, method and steps" to subvert state power, according to the court statements.

Hu masterminded, spreading subversive ideas and plans and training agents such as Gou; Zhou ran the law firm as a front to carry out subversive activities with Hu and others; and Zhai, the "enforcer," who was instructed by Hu to organize paid petitioners for illegal protests, according to the statements.

Chen Yaodong, vice head of the Law School of Nankai University who observed proceedings, came to the conclusion that the trials were "open and fair," and that China's judiciary handled these sensitive cases with order.

"There's no place for outlaws in our country under the rule of law, and any activities to subvert state power via violence, 'peaceful evolution' or 'street politics' will be punished by law," he added.

"SPIRITUAL LEADER" HU

Hu is a native of Nanchang city in east China's Jiangxi Province. He was a teacher in a Beijing university before engaging in subversive activities.

He was sentenced to 20 years in prison in 1994 for "counter-revolutionary" crimes. He returned to his subversive ways not long after he was released in 2008.

Hu has been spreading the idea of "pushing down the wall", namely overturning China's existing system and realizing a "color revolution."

"Hu Shigen is our 'spiritual leader,'" Zhai Yanmin said in his testimony, adding Hu greatly influenced his ideas and concepts.

According to testimony of witnesses, Hu has been engaged in "brainwashing" through alleged "missionary" activities. Hu was proud to make a fuss over sensitive legal cases, often, through conflicts raised by paid petitioners.

Hu even misled the petitioners that "it is an honor to be detained," promising them financial compensations if they were.

A witness surnamed Liu said, Hu regarded petitioners as a force to subvert state power, as they "are bold enough and readily stirred up," and "obey his orders."

Gou Hongguo said, petitioners have one thing in common which is a grudge against governments, therefore, if organized, they can be a powerful force against the government.

The Qing'an incident is one example of Hu's "pushing down the wall." In May 2015, police officer Li Lebin shot dead Xu Chunhe at Qing'an County Railway Station in Heilongjiang Province, after Xu attacked Li despite multiple warnings. CCTV cameras and follow-up investigations confirmed that Li had acted within the law.

But Hu instructed Zhai to organize protests at the railway station and in front of the county government buildings, influencing online opinion and misrepresenting the incident as police brutality.

"I just wanted to smear the judicial organs, police and government," confessed Hu.

Hu also put forward the idea of "three factors" -- stronger citizen power, an internal split within the ruling bloc, and interference of international society -- and "five plans" for "peaceful transformation."

"I instilled these ideas to others with the very aim of achieving a 'color revolution,'" Hu said.