

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Mills, Cheryl D <MillsCD@state.gov>
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From: OpsNewsTicker
Sent: Thursday, May 10, 2012 03:14 AM
To: NEWS-Mahogany
Subject: China's Chen says officials launch crazed reprisals on family (Reuters)

BEIJING (Reuters) - Blind Chinese activist Chen Guangcheng and a family lawyer have accused local officials of detaining two of his relatives and hounding and harassing others in revenge for his recent escape from house arrest and for sparking an international furore.

Chen, whose escape last month caused embarrassment for China and led to a diplomatic crisis in U.S.-Sino relations, said a sister-in-law and nephew had both been detained, though the lawyer added that Chen's sister-in-law had since been released.

Chen has spoken previously of his fears for reprisals against his family, but his remarks to Reuters on Thursday, corroborated by the lawyer, are the first time he has relayed details of what he says is a crazed campaign of reprisals.

"Now they're going crazy with reprisals," Chen said in a telephone interview from a Beijing hospital where he is being treated for injuries suffered during his escape.

"In fact, they've already started taking revenge."

Chen's story has overshadowed Sino-U.S. diplomacy since he foiled guards and security cameras around his home in Shandong province, in rural east China, and was taken by supporters to Beijing where he sheltered in the U.S. embassy for six days.

Chen is also being treated in hospital for an intestinal ailment left untreated while under house arrest for 19 months. He now plans to study in the United States, where he has been offered fellowships by New York University and the University of Washington, under a deal between Beijing and Washington.

Chen said relatives back in Shandong appeared to be bearing the brunt of officials' anger over his audacious escape and the international uproar it sparked.

The reprisals were, he said, weighing heavily on his mind though for now he was unlikely to delay his plans to go to the United States. "It shouldn't. We'll see," he said.