

[Français](#)[Home](#)[Contact Us](#)[Help](#)[Search](#)[canada.gc.ca](#)[Home](#) > [Research](#) > [Responses to Information Requests](#)

RESPONSES TO INFORMATION REQUESTS (RIRs)

[New Search](#) | [About RIR's](#) | [Help](#)

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China: Reports of forced abortions or sterilization in the province of Liaoning, including information about the circumstances surrounding any that may have taken place (2003 - 2005)

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board, Ottawa

Reports of forced abortions or sterilization in the province of Liaoning for the period between 2003 and 2005 could not be found among the sources consulted within time constraints. However, the following information may be of interest.

While the Chinese government has made efforts to end the practice of coercion in the implementation of family planning policies by prohibiting the use of force and introducing financial rewards for one-child families (*Sunday Times* 18 Sept. 2005; see also *The Independent* 21 Sept. 2005; U.S. Newswire 19 Nov. 2003), some sources report that forced sterilization and abortions continue to occur, particularly in rural areas (AI 2005; AP 15 Sept. 2005; HRW 1 Jan. 2004; VOA 26 Sept. 2005; *The Washington Post* 27 Aug. 2005). According to an article in *The Washington Post*, "many local officials continue to rely on forced abortion and sterilization, in part because the ability to limit population growth remains a top consideration in party deliberations about promotions and raises" (27 Aug. 2005; see also AP 15 Sept. 2005; *Time* 12 Sept. 2005). However, Amnesty International (AI) has cautioned that reports of forced abortions and sterilization are difficult to verify as a result of "tight government control of information in China" (AI 8 Oct. 2004), and Human Rights Watch (HRW) noted in its 2003 overview of human rights conditions in China that reports of forced abortions and sterilization had been received by the organization but could not be confirmed (HRW 1 Jan. 2004).

In what *The Sunday Times* has called "the worst [case of family planning] abuses documented in recent years" (18 Sept. 2005), beginning in March 2005, thousands of men and women were reportedly forcibly sterilized, and fetuses were aborted in the city of Linyi, Shandong Province (AP 15 Sept. 2005; *Sunday Times* 18 Sept. 2005; *Time* 12 Sept. 2005; *Washington Post* 27 Aug. 2005). A local activist, Chen Guangcheng, told the media that local family planning officials had been criticized by provincial authorities in July 2004 for failing to keep population growth down (AP 15 Sept. 2005; see also *Time* 12 Sept. 2005). State media reported that the National Population and Family Planning Commission was investigating the allegations (*China Daily* 9 Sept. 2005), while an unknown number of local health officials in Linyi were also reportedly fired over the allegations (BBC 20 Sept. 2005; *The Independent* 21 Sept. 2005). Meanwhile, Chen Guangcheng, the local activist who had been collecting testimony from Linyi residents and preparing a lawsuit against family planning officials, was reportedly detained on 6 September 2005 by local authorities (*Washington Post* 7 Sept. 2005), and later placed under house arrest (*The Independent* 21 Sept. 2005; *Sunday Times* 18 Sept. 2005).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of additional sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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Internet sites, including: *Asia Times* Online, Human Rights in China, Laogai Research Foundation.

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[Top of Page](#)

[Important Notices](#)