

His Excellency Mr Liu Xiaoming,
Embassy of the People's Republic of China
49-51 Portland Place
London
W1B 1JL

Dear Ambassador Mr Liu Xiaoming,

It is with great concern that we petition the People's Republic of China for the immediate and unconditional release of Gao Zhisheng. He was formally arrested in 2006 after being under heavy surveillance for providing legal assistance to religious minority groups and underprivileged individuals in China. Prior to his arrest, Gao was hailed as one of the top 10 lawyers by the Ministry of Justice of the People's Republic of China and was nominated three times for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Gao spent the next eight years in and out of prison. He was tortured by way of sleep deprivation, brutal beatings, and shocks with electric batons. He was released from prison in 2014 and was then effectively under house arrest in the Shaanxi Province with limited access to medical care and outside world. He disappeared in August, 2017 and his current whereabouts are not known, but it is believed that he has been put in custody again by the Chinese government.

Gao's imprisonment and torture has not only severely affected his health, but his family has suffered a great deal. Gao's wife, Geng He, and their family were harassed constantly by the government and eventually left China for the United States. Geng said the Chinese Communist Party has never stopped persecuting her family in China. She is afraid to call her family because that might result in them being further harassed and persecuted.

The prison sentence and treatment of Gao Zhisheng and the harassment of his family are violations of their Human Rights. China has repeatedly stated its commitment to Human Rights and has enshrined in its constitution the fundamental rights of its citizens to adhere to freedom of speech, the press and religion. Moreover, President Xi Jinping has publicly stated China's commitment to the rule of law. It is imperative that China stand by its declaration and commitment to safeguarding and promoting these rights. We strongly urge your government to immediately and unconditionally release Gao Zhisheng if he is being held, and cease the harassment of his family. We urge you to ask your government to allow the peaceful work of human rights defenders and their families without fear of hindrance, intimidation, arbitrary detention or imprisonment, in line with the UN Declaration on Human rights, to which the Chinese government claims to adhere.

Be assured of our best wishes for you and your country.

Yours sincerely