



Written Statement by Human Rights First

Before The Congressional-Executive Commission on China

"The Case and Treatment of Prominent Human Rights Lawyer Gao Zhisheng"

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2118 Rayburn House Office Building

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As the United States welcomes China's Vice President Xi Jinping this week, Human Rights First commends Chairman Chris Smith, Senator Sherrod Brown, and the Congressional-Executive Commission on China for keeping human rights at the forefront by holding today's hearing "The Case and Treatment of Prominent Human Rights Lawyer Gao Zhisheng." Mr. Gao is a fearless human rights lawyer who has been continually detained, disappeared and tortured by the Chinese authorities for his human rights lawyering and criticisms of the Chinese government. He initially came under attack in 2005 for representing some of the country's most vulnerable citizens – religious minorities, petitioners, and victims of illegal land grabs.

Human Rights First has been advocating to the U.S. government for improved rhetoric and action on Mr. Gao's case and five other human rights activists at risk in China today. These activists are being persecuted solely for criticisms of the Chinese government and promoting freedoms protected by the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Unfortunately, they are not alone. Their plight is indicative of so many other human rights activists who have risked their lives and livelihoods to promote human rights in China and things are only getting worse as the Chinese government introduces legislation to make disappearances legal and escalates its intimidation, attacks, arrests and prosecutions of human rights activists. The Chinese government is likely increasing its repressive tactics to stave off a so-called Jasmine Revolution that would mimic the popular calls for reform across the Middle East and North Africa, and now on China's border in Russia. And, we can only expect the repression to continue in 2012 as the top leadership changes in China.

As Chinese human rights activists become more dynamic in their dissent, they need a show of support from the United States. We are encouraged by today's hearing, and urge President Obama and Vice President Biden, the U.S. Department of State and U.S. Department of Defense to also lead on human rights by making it a priority of all discussions with Mr. Xi and its future dealings with China.

Human Rights First has been monitoring and reporting on the following cases of human rights activists at risk in China today:

- **Mr. Chen Guangcheng (Detained):** The Chinese government detained Mr. Chen, a blind human rights lawyer, upon the rejection of his final appeal in 2007. The authorities released him from prison in September 2010, but continue to detain him under house arrest enforced by “police and thugs to keep outsiders away.” Mr. Chen’s captors have beaten him unconscious on at least one occasion and do not allow his six-year old daughter to leave the house to attend school. His home confinement has attracted the attention of activists who attempt to visit him despite government efforts to deter visitors. U.S. Representative Chris Smith held a hearing in November 2011 to raise awareness for Mr. Chen and continues to campaign for Mr. Chen’s freedom. Mr. Chen remains in home-detention, cut-off from the outside world. In December 2011, his security cohort physically fended off an attempted visit by the actor, Christian Bale. More recently, on the 2012 Chinese New Year, the guards prohibited Mr. Chen’s 11-year old son from visiting, though they had permitted the visit last year.
- **Ms. Ni Yulan (Detained):** A former lawyer and housing rights activist began to oppose forced evictions in her neighborhood in 2001. In 2002 the government detained her for filming a forced demolition. While in government custody, Ms. Ni became disabled due to repeated beatings by police. In 2008, the government demolished Ms. Ni’s home in retaliation for her activism. Then, in April 2011, the government again detained Ms. Ni and her husband, charging them “creating a disturbance” and “fraud”; a verdict has not yet been reached. The Dutch Government awarded her its 2011 Human Rights Defenders Tulip Award, but she could not attend the ceremony because she remains detained. Ms. Ni’s daughter planned to receive the award in her mother’s place, but Chinese police prevented her from boarding her flight out of China.
- **Ms. Liu Wei (Law license revoked):** A human rights lawyer from Beijing’s Shunhe Law Firm, Ms. Liu lost her license to practice following an annual performance on May 31, 2009. She numbers among twenty lawyers whose licenses were stripped for taking “sensitive” human rights cases. Most others successfully re-obtained their licenses after negotiating with the authorities. Ms. Liu’s clients include Falun Gong practitioners, human rights activists, and HIV/AIDS carriers whose infection resulted to government misconduct.
- **Mr. Ran Yunfei (Released in August 2011):** Mr. Ran, a well-known and widely read Chinese blogger, frequently aired issues like democracy and human rights online. Government authorities detained him for six months for inciting subversion. The government unexpectedly released him in August 2011, possibly because of an online advocacy effort by government critic, Ai Weiwei.
- **Mr. Li Fangping (Kidnapped):** As a prominent human rights lawyer, Mr. Li took on a number of high-profile cases representing victims of political and religious persecution. In April 2011, the government kidnapped him and held him in an unknown location. The authorities released him on May 4, 2011, following six days in secret detention. The AP reported that following his release, Mr. Li hewed to the practice of many human rights defenders and declined to give details about his detention.