

PUBLIC

AI Index: ASA 17/047/2006

22 August 2006

**Further Information on UA 14/06 (ASA 17/001/2006, 19 January 2006) Fear for safety/ death threats
New concern: Fear of torture or ill-treatment**

CHINA

Gao Zhisheng (m), aged 42, human rights lawyer

Human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng was detained in Shandong Province on 15 August by police officers from Beijing. He is believed to be held incommunicado at an unknown location and is at risk of torture or ill-treatment.

Gao Zhisheng was detained while visiting his sister's house in Dongying City, Shandong Province. His sister has reportedly been warned not to tell anybody about his detention. The police have reportedly provided no reason for his detention to his family, but on 18 August the state-run Xinhua News Agency reported that Gao Zhisheng was detained on suspicion of engaging in unspecified criminal activities. It is unclear where he is being held.

Gao Zhisheng's wife and two children have reportedly been confined to their home in Beijing by police officers who have been standing guard around their house since Gao Zhisheng was detained. They are prohibited from contacting anybody receiving visitors or contacting anyone. On 20 August, human rights lawyer Teng Biao and academic Jiao Guobiao attempted to visit Gao Zhisheng's wife and daughter. They managed to talk to his daughter briefly but she was quickly taken back into the house by a police officer guarding the home. Immediately afterwards, the police took both Teng Biao and Jiao Guobiao to Xiaoguan Police Station in Chaoyang District. They were released after around one hour of questioning.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Gao Zhisheng is a director of the Beijing-based Shengzhi Law Office. He has taken on several high-profile cases and defended a number of activists, including human rights activist Yang Maodong (the subject of UA 32/06, ASA 17/008/2006, 9 February 2006 and follow-ups), Zheng Yichun, a journalist and former professor, sentenced to seven years' imprisonment for his online writings; and Pastor Cai Zhuohua, who has been imprisoned for three years for 'illegal business practices', including printing and selling copies of the Bible.

In November 2005, the operations of the Shengzhi Law Office were suspended by the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Justice for one year. One month later, Gao Zhisheng's licence to practice law was revoked. These events appear to be linked to his work in defence of activists, and in particular his publication of an open letter calling for religious freedom and an end to the 'barbaric' persecution of the Falun Gong spiritual movement. Since then he has been subjected to continuous surveillance and other forms of harassment and intimidation by the authorities. In January 2006, Gao Zhisheng survived an apparent attempt on his life when he almost collided with a car (see original UA). He believed the incident was instigated by the authorities.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in English or your own language:

- calling on the authorities to reveal the whereabouts of Gao Zhisheng and to release him unless he is to be charged with a recognized criminal offence;
- calling on the authorities to guarantee that Gao Zhisheng will not be tortured or ill-treated while he is in custody, and that he has access to lawyers, members of his family and any necessary medical treatment while he remains in detention;

- expressing concern that Gao Zhisheng's family members are confined to their home and calling for all restrictions on their freedom of movement to be lifted;
- urging the authorities to ensure that Gao Zhisheng can carry out his peaceful and legitimate activities without fear of arbitrary detention, torture or ill-treatment, or other human rights violations.

APPEALS TO:

Prime Minister of the People's Republic of China
WEN Jiabao Guojia Zongli
The State Council
9 Xihuangcheng Genbeijie, Beijingshi 100032
People's Republic of China
Fax: + 86 10 65961109 or 2260 (c/o Minister of Foreign Affairs)
Email: gazette@mail.gov.cn
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Justice of the People's Republic of China
WU Aiyang Buzhang
Sifabu
10 Chaoyangmen Nandajie, Chaoyangqu
Beijingshi 100020
People's Republic of China
Fax: + 86 10 65292345
Email: minister@legalinfo.gov.cn
Salutation: Dear Minister

Minster of Public Security of People's Republic of China
ZHOU Yongkang Buzhang
Gong'anbu
14 Dongchang'anjie, Beijingshi 100741
People's Republic of China
Fax: + 86 10 63099216 (it may be difficult to get through; please keep trying)
Salutation: Dear Minister

COPIES TO:

Director of the Beijing Public Security Bureau
MA Zhenchuan Juzhang
Beijingshi Gong'anju
9 Qianmen Dongdajie, Dongchengqu
Beijingshi 100740, People's Republic of China
Email: 110@bjgaj.gov.cn

and to diplomatic representatives of China accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 3 October 2006.