

PUBLIC

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Further information on UA 24/09 (ASA 17/004/2009, 02 February 2009) – Arbitrary detention/Fear of torture and other ill-treatment

CHINA

Gao Zhisheng (m), aged 44

According to the US-based Radio Free Asia, Gao Zhisheng was taken away from his home in Shaanxi Province by more than 10 security agents on 4 February. His whereabouts are unknown. Amnesty International believes he is at risk of torture and other ill-treatment.

Radio Free Asia also reported 5 February that the authorities had made Gao Zhisheng leave Beijing and return to his hometown in Shaanxi Province before Chinese New Year, which fell on 26 January this year.

Gao Zhisheng received a three-year prison sentence, suspended for five years, in December 2006, for "inciting subversion." He also received one year of deprivation of political rights. He has been kept under constant surveillance since he was sentenced, in a way that goes far beyond what is normal for those serving suspended sentences in China.

The authorities had detained Gao Zhisheng on 22 August 2006, formally arrested him on 12 September and sentenced him on 22 December after a closed trial. This came after he organized a hunger strike campaign to draw further attention to persecution of peaceful activists in China in February 2006.

In April 2007, Gao Zhisheng publicized the torture and ill-treatment he had suffered while in custody awaiting trial. This led to an escalation of the oppression and harassment of him and his family.

On 13 September 2007, Gao Zhisheng published an open letter to the US Congress, which drew attention to the deteriorating human rights situation in China. Nine days later, plainclothes police came to arrest him. They went to his home, stripped off his clothes and beat him unconscious. During the six weeks of illegal detention that followed, the security agents subjected Gao Zhisheng to violent beatings and repeated electric shocks to his genitals. They held lit cigarettes close to his eyes for several hours, which left him partly blind for days afterwards.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Human rights activists in China who attempt to report on human rights violations, challenge policies which the authorities find politically sensitive, or try to rally others to their cause, face serious risk of abuse. Many are jailed as prisoners of conscience after politically motivated trials, while growing numbers are being held under house arrest with the police conducting intrusive surveillance and standing guard outside.

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

- calling on the authorities to release Gao Zhisheng immediately and unconditionally;
- urging the authorities to guarantee that he will not be tortured or otherwise ill-treated while he remains in custody, and to reveal where he is being held;
- urging them to ensure Gao Zhisheng has access to his lawyers, and any medical treatment he may require;

- calling on the authorities to take effective measures to ensure that all human rights defenders can carry out their peaceful activities without fear of arbitrary detention, imprisonment, hindrance or intimidation, in line with the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.

APPEALS TO:

Prime Minister

WEN Jiabao Guojia Zongli
The State Council General Office
2 Fuyoujie
Xichengqu
Beijingshi 100017, People's Republic of China
Fax: +86 10 65961109 (c/o Ministry of Foreign Affairs)
Salutation: Your Excellency

Minister of Public Security

MENG Jianzhu Buzhang
Gong'anbu
14 Dongchang'anjie
Dongchengqu
Beijingshi 100741, People's Republic of China
Fax: +86 10 63099216 (it may be difficult to get through, please keep trying)
Salutation: Your Excellency

Director of the Beijing Public Security Bureau

MA Zhenchuan Juzhang
Beijingshi Gong'anju
9 Qianmen Dongdajie
Dongchengqu
Beijingshi 100740, People's Republic of China
Fax: +86 10 85222320
Salutation: Dear Director

Director of the Shaanxi Provincial Department of Public Security

WANG Rui Tingzhang
Shaanxisheng Gong'anting
Xinchengdayuan Donglou
Xi'anishi 710006
Shaanxisheng, People's Republic of China
Email: info@shxga.gov.cn
Salutation: Dear Director

COPIES 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 23 March 2009.