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MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release
March 9, 2010

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GAO ZHISHENG'S LEGAL TEAM FILES PETITION TO UNITED NATIONS TO OBTAIN OPINION THAT HIS ONGOING DETENTION IS IN VIOLATION OF INTERNATIONAL LAW

Today, Gao Zhisheng's international legal team filed an urgent action petition with the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention on behalf of the leading Chinese human rights lawyer. The legal team hopes to obtain an opinion from the Working Group that the Chinese government's detention of Gao is in violation of international law.

The Chinese government has detained Gao since February 4, 2009 in violation of both Chinese and international law. The government failed to officially arrest and charge Gao with a crime and to notify Gao's family of the location of his detention. The government is currently holding Gao *incommunicado*.

"My children and I need to know where Zhisheng is," said Gao's wife, Geng He. "I hope that the United Nations will ask the Chinese government to follow its own law and to release him."

Once named by the government as one of China's ten best lawyers, Gao became a target for the government after taking on politically sensitive cases relating to police corruption, land seizures, and religious freedom. Gao was convicted of "subversion" in 2006. In 2007, Chinese authorities detained and severely tortured Gao. Authorities threatened to kill him if he disclosed the details of his torture, which he did in 2009.

Gao's high-profile legal team of international human rights specialists includes Jerome A. Cohen, Irwin Cotler MP, Albert Ho, David Matas, David Kilgour, and the NGO Freedom Now. Cohen is considered the United States' foremost expert in Chinese law and is both a professor at New York University Law School and Adjunct Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations. Cotler is a Member of Canada's Parliament and was formerly its Minister of Justice and Attorney General. He served as counsel to Nelson Mandela, in addition to other notable political prisoners. Ho is the Chairman of the Democratic Party and a member of the Legislative Council of Hong Kong. He is also the Secretary General of the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements in China. Matas is a distinguished human rights lawyer and serves as senior counsel to B'nai Brith Canada. Kilgour is a former Member of Canada's Parliament, Secretary of State, Asia Pacific, and Chairman of the Canadian Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights and International Development. Freedom Now represents prisoners of conscience worldwide.

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