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MEDIA RELEASE

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CHINA HOLDS HUMAN RIGHTS LAWYER GAO ZHISHENG INCOMMUNICADO FOR ONE YEAR NEW LEGAL TEAM FILES PETITION TO UNITED NATIONS

One year ago today, Chinese authorities illegally detained one of China's most prominent human rights lawyers. The government is holding Gao Zhisheng *incommunicado* and has yet to officially arrest and charge him. His location is unknown.

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 subsequently did.

Professor Jerome Cohen of NYU Law School, and one of Gao's legal team, said, "We urge China to let Gao Zhisheng's family know where he is being held and why he is being detained, in accordance with Chinese law. He should immediately be granted access to counsel and either charged with a crime or released."

Gao's newly formed, international legal team filed a petition on his behalf to the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances today. The team hopes that the Working Group will ask China to make public Gao's location and recommend that the government immediately release him if they cannot charge him with a crime.

Gao's high-profile legal team of international human rights specialists includes Jerome A. Cohen, Irwin Cotler MP, 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. 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.

Geng He, Gao's wife, now living in New York after fleeing China, stated, "Zhisheng is being persecuted for giving a voice to those that China wished to silence. I can only hope that his lawyers can do for him what he was able to do for so many."

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