



FREEDOM NOW

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MEDIA RELEASE

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PROMINENT DISSIDENT LAWYER'S WIFE CONFIRMS THAT GAO IS ALIVE; URGES CHINA TO ALLOW HIM TO COME TO THE U.S.

Today, Gao Zhisheng's children were able to speak to him by telephone and verify that he is alive. Gao says that he is living in Wutai mountain in Shaanxi Province. It is assumed that he is under close surveillance, if not de facto house arrest.

According to Reuters and the Associated Press, Beijing-based human rights lawyer and friend of Gao's, Li Heping, also spoke briefly with Gao. Mr. Li believes that Gao is not truly free from Chinese custody, saying that he was "sure that the people around him are limiting what he can say."

Geng He, who fled China and now lives in the United States, said: "I am tremendously relieved that my husband is alive. I am so happy that my children were able to speak to him. My children and I have not seen their father since January 2009. We urge the Chinese government to allow Zhisheng to leave the country and be reunited with us in the United States."

Geng He and the couple's children, Grace, 16, and Peter, 6, arrived in the United States after fleeing China on January 9, 2009. Gao Zhisheng was detained on February 4, 2009. The Chinese government has never confirmed his location or detention.

Given Gao's history of serious health problems and his current declining health, we urge the Chinese government to allow Gao to travel to the United States on a humanitarian basis for medical treatment and to be reunited with his family.

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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