



House of Lords

THE BARONESS COX

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The House of Lords
SW1A 0PW

The House of Commons
SW1A 0AA

5th November, 2010

Dear Prime Minister,

We understand that you will meet with Chinese President Hu Jintao during the G-20 Summit in Seoul on November 11 and 12. We write to request that you urge President Hu to release two prominent Chinese prisoners of conscience, Dr. Liu Xiaobo and Lawyer Gao Zhisheng.

2010 Nobel Peace Prize winner, Dr. Liu Xiaobo, the renowned scholar and human rights advocate, helped to draft Charter 08, which advocated political reform, respect for human rights and the development of rule of law. On Christmas Day, 2009, Dr. Liu was sentenced to 11 years imprisonment on charges of “inciting subversion of state power and to overthrow the socialist system”, due to his involvement in Charter 08. His conviction is contrary to both the Chinese constitution and international law. Dr. Liu’s trial failed to meet the minimum standards of due legal procedure.

Dr. Liu’s detention is symbolic of the Chinese government’s repression of the peaceful freedom of expression of its citizens. The charge of subversion under Article 105 of the Criminal Law of the People’s Republic of China is regularly used to silence political dissidents, such as Dr. Liu. China must be discouraged from detaining individuals for exercising their fundamental right to freedom of expression.

Gao Zhisheng is a Chinese human rights lawyer known as “the conscience of China”.

The Chinese government has illegally detained Mr. Gao without charge or trial in unknown locations since February 2009. Experts believe that Mr. Gao was targeted as a result of his defence of religious minorities, and his outspoken open letters to the international community detailing his horrific torture in Chinese custody. On March 31, this year, Mr. Gao was briefly released to give media interviews before disappearing for a second time on April 20. No news has been heard of him since this date and his current whereabouts are unknown. Repeated requests to the Chinese government for information regarding Mr. Gao’s status, included those from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, have not solicited replies of any substance. Mr. Gao’s wife and two children are political asylees in the United States.


The case of Mr. Gao is easily the most egregious example of China's growing pressure on human rights lawyers. Lawyers who choose to defend cases deemed "sensitive" by the Chinese authorities are under increasing pressure and in many cases have had their licences to practise revoked, been physically harassed and placed under close surveillance. Mr. Gao's case is in itself unprecedented in China. It is the first time such a prominent individual has been detained without the Chinese government providing information on the individual's whereabouts. We, the undersigned, implore Her Majesty's Government to urge China to release Mr. Gao immediately; safeguard the right of human rights lawyers to practise and ensure that rule of law is upheld in China.

Representatives of Her Majesty's Government have consistently raised Dr. Liu and Mr. Gao's cases both publicly and privately with the Chinese government since details of their cases emerged. We humbly request that this commitment continue at the G-20 Summit.

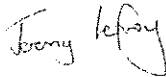
Yours Sincerely,



Baroness Cox of Queensbury



Baroness D'Souza of Wychwood



Mr Jeremy Lefroy MP



Ms Jo Swinson MP



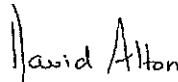
Mr Peter Bottomley MP



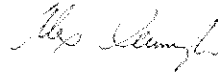
Ms Madeline Moon MP



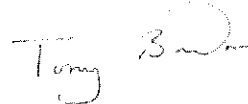
Mr Geraint Davies MP



Lord Alton of Liverpool



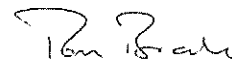
Mr Alex Cunningham MP



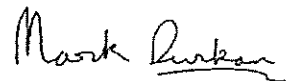
Mr Tony Baldry MP



Mr Nick Smith MP



Mr Tom Brake MP



Mr Mark Duncan MP

Mr Julian Huppert MP