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The Most Reverend Desmond M. Tutu

FREEDOM NOW

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release
October 6, 2010

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30 MEMBERS OF U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CALL ON PRESIDENT
OBAMA TO ADDRESS CASES OF CHINESE PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE
LIU XIAOBO AND GAO ZHISHENG

WASHINGTON, DC: A bipartisan group of 29 members of the United States House of Representatives, led by Rep. James McGovern (D-MA) and Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA), co-chairs of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, urged President Obama to ask Chinese President Hu Jintao at the G20 summit in Seoul, South Korea from November 11-12, 2010, to release Chinese prisoners of conscience and Freedom Now clients Liu Xiaobo and Gao Zhisheng. Rep. Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), the ranking Republican member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, signed separately in a letter attached. In a letter, dated October 4, 2010, and attached, the Congressmen declared:

“Dr. Liu’s detention is symbolic of the Chinese government’s repression of the peaceful freedom of expression of its citizens. . . . We strongly believe that China must be discouraged from detaining individuals for exercising their fundamental right to freedom of expression.”

The Congressmen said of Gao Zhisheng: “Mr. Gao’s case marks the first time that the Chinese government has detained such a prominent individual for a sustained period of time. We strongly believe that the United States government and international community must not allow China to continue to cross this line. If lawyers are hauled away for the “crime” of defending their clients, then even the pretense of rule of law in China has failed.”

Gao Zhisheng’s wife, Geng He, who is now a political asylee in the United States with the couple’s two children, thanked the members of Congress who signed the letter saying, “My children and I are so grateful to the Congressmen who asked President Obama to urge the release of my husband and Liu Xiaobo. I can only hope that personal intervention from President Obama will free my husband.”

Liu Xiaobo is a renowned scholar and democracy activist whose role drafting Charter 08 led to his December 2009 sentence of 11 years in prison for “incitement to subvert state power.” Gao Zhisheng is a human rights lawyer known as the “conscience of China” who was disappeared by the Chinese government in February 2009. He was briefly released in March 2010 and again disappeared on April 20, 2010. He is currently held incommunicado in an unknown location.

Gao Zhisheng’s team of international human rights specialists includes Jerome A. Cohen, Irwin Cotler MP, Albert Ho, David Matas, David Kilgour, and Freedom Now. Liu Xiaobo’s team includes Jerome A. Cohen, David Kilgour, Yang Jianli, and Freedom Now.

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Our mission is to free prisoners of conscience through focused legal, political and public relations advocacy efforts.

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One Hundred and Eleventh Congress
Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission

October 4, 2010

Dear President Obama:

We understand that you will meet with Chinese President Hu Jintao during the G-20 Summit in Seoul, South Korea, which will take place on November 11 and 12. We write to ask that you urge President Hu to release two emblematic Chinese prisoners of conscience, Liu Xiaobo and Gao Zhisheng.

Liu Xiaobo is a renowned scholar and human rights advocate who helped draft Charter 08, which called for an improvement in the human rights situation and respect for rule of law. Dr. Liu was sentenced on December 25, 2009, to 11 years imprisonment on charges of "incitement to subvert state power and overthrow the socialist system" for his role in drafting and circulating Charter 08 and publishing "inciting articles." The Chinese government's conviction of Dr. Liu violates both the Chinese constitution and international law. Furthermore, Dr. Liu's trial failed to meet even the minimum standards of due process of law.

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. We strongly believe that 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 defense of religious minorities. After a sustained international outcry, Mr. Gao was released on March 31, 2010, but again disappeared on April 20 and has since been held *incommunicado*. Mr. Gao's wife and two young children are political asylees in the United States.

HANS HOGREFF
Democratic Staff Director

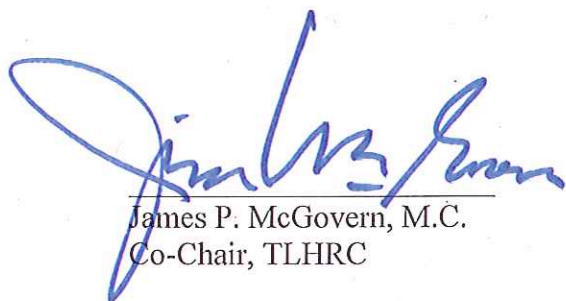
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TLHRC.HOUSE.GOV

ELIZABETH HOFFMAN
Republican Staff Director

Mr. Gao's case is the most egregious example of China's growing pressure on human rights lawyers. Increasingly, these lawyers in China are disbarred or otherwise prevented from practicing. But Mr. Gao's case marks the first time that the Chinese government has detained such a prominent individual for a sustained period of time. We strongly believe that the United States government and international community must not allow China to continue to cross this line. If lawyers are hauled away for the "crime" of defending their clients, then even the pretense of rule of law in China has failed.

We are pleased that U.S. officials have raised Dr. Liu's and Mr. Gao's cases both publicly and privately in the past. We hope that you will underscore these concerns by personally raising their cases with President Hu during the G-20 Summit and pressing for their release.

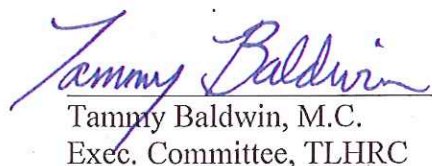
Sincerely,



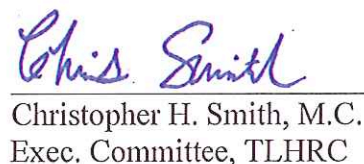
James P. McGovern, M.C.
Co-Chair, TLHRC



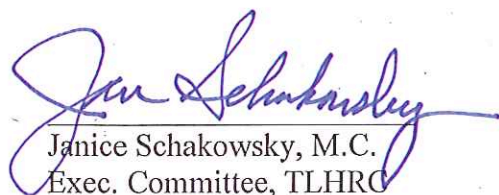
Frank R. Wolf, M.C.
Co-Chair, TLHRC



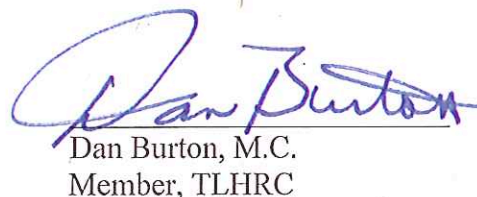
Tammy Baldwin, M.C.
Exec. Committee, TLHRC



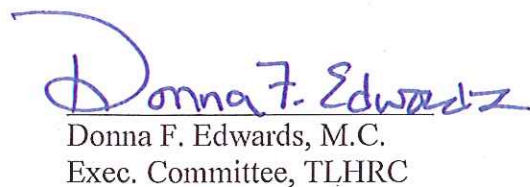
Christopher H. Smith, M.C.
Exec. Committee, TLHRC



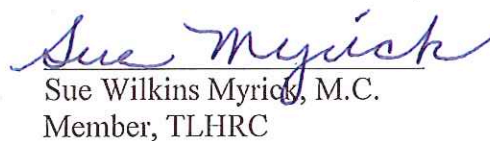
Janice Schakowsky, M.C.
Exec. Committee, TLHRC



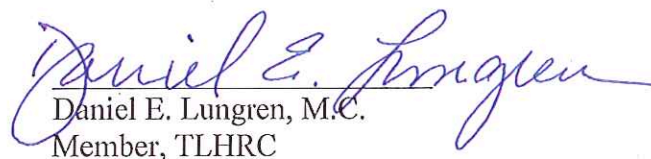
Dan Burton, M.C.
Member, TLHRC



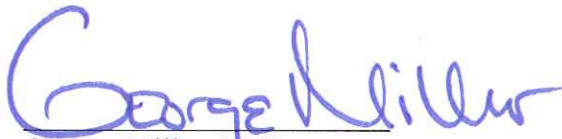
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Sue Wilkins Myrick, M.C.
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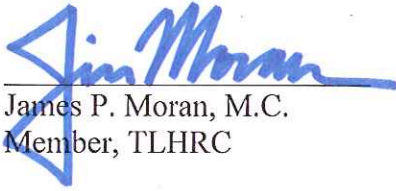
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Member, TLHRC



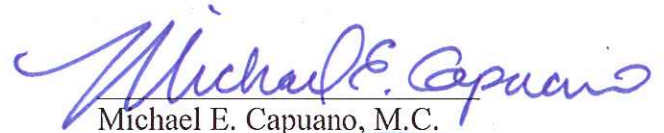
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Maxine Waters, M.C.
Member, TLHRC



Jesse L. Jackson Jr., M.C.
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Michael E. Capuano, M.C.
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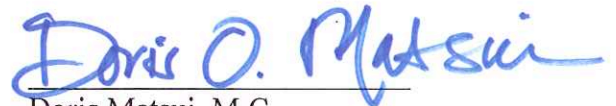
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David Wu, M.C.
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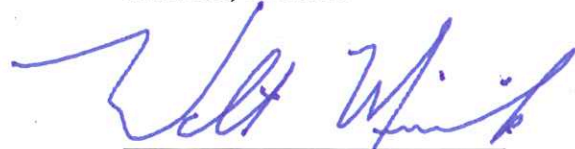
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DOUGLAS C. ANDERSON
REPUBLICAN CHIEF COUNSEL

October 5, 2010

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama,

I write to respectfully urge you to, at the upcoming G20 summit (November 11-12) in Seoul, South Korea, to seek the unconditional release of Chinese political prisoners Liu Xiaobo and Gao Zhisheng. Your personal attention could help to secure their freedom. We must support Dr. Liu and Mr. Gao's brave and peaceful efforts for reform in China, beginning with securing their release.

Dr. Liu is a distinguished scholar and poet, whose efforts in drafting the Charter 08 statement urging democratization in China led to a sentence of 11 years imprisonment for "inciting subversion of state power." This followed a trial that violated international human rights and legal standards. Dr. Liu's democracy efforts include a call for the end to one-party rule in China and respect for human rights. Dr. Liu is one of the strongest advocates of democratic reform in China, and with his imprisonment, the Chinese Communist Party aims to silence him.

Gao Zhisheng is a Chinese human rights lawyer known as "the conscience of China" for his brave efforts on behalf of the oppressed in China, particularly religious minorities. The Chinese government has illegally detained Mr. Gao without charge or trial in unknown locations since February 2009. Mr. Gao was released in March 2010 but remained under strict surveillance. However, less than a month later, on April 20, 2010, Mr. Gao again disappeared through the intervention of government security agents. Mr. Gao is being held incommunicado with no information regarding his current location or welfare.

There are many others illegally and unjustly imprisoned in China, but I fear if China is allowed to continue illegally detaining two such prominent dissidents, then even more will soon disappear like Mr. Gao.

The U.S. Government and other responsible nations must hold the Chinese regime accountable for these blatant violations of universally recognized human rights and liberties.

Your personal attention to Dr. Liu and Mr. Gao's detentions could be instrumental in securing their freedom. I, again, respectfully request that you raise their cases at every opportunity during the upcoming G20 summit.

Sincerely,



ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN

Ranking Member