

Testimony of Geng He, wife of imprisoned Christian human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng before US Congressional Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations the House Foreign Affairs Committee

Rayburn House Building Room 2172

April 9, 2013

Honorable Congressman Smith, chairman of the Congressional Human Rights Commission, members of the Foreign Affairs Committee and guests:

Let me express my gratitude to Congress for giving me this opportunity at this hearing to speak on behalf of my husband Gao Zhisheng, a human rights lawyer in China. Let me also express my thanks to everyone here for their concern for Gao Zhisheng's case.

Gao Zhisheng began in 2005 to defend persecuted Christians, Falun Gong practitioners and other persecuted groups. Because of this, the Chinese Communist authorities shut down his law office and revoked his lawyer's license, and they also openly suppressed and persecuted him. In August 2006, the police illegally kidnapped him, and on December 22, 2006, they sentenced Gao Zhisheng to a three-year prison term, suspended for five years, on the charge of "inciting subversion of state power." During the five-year suspension, Gao Zhisheng was kidnapped by the Chinese police and disappeared at least six times. The longest of those disappearances was 20 months. Each time he disappeared, he was also tortured in various ways.

In September 2007, Gao Zhisheng wrote an open letter to the U.S. Congress in which he exposed the human rights abuses of the Chinese Communist authorities. Because of this, the Chinese Communist police again put a black hood on Gao Zhisheng's head and kidnapped him, making him disappear for 50 days. On the day they kidnapped him this time, they took him to a room, stripped him naked and brutally beat him. They also used electric batons to attack him all over his body and his genitals, so that his body shook violently and his skin turned black all over. The torture made him lose consciousness and lose control of his bladder. Later, a police officer blew cigarette smoke into his eyes and stuck a toothpick up his penis. Lawyer Gao pleaded with them to lock him in a prison so as to escape the torture, but the police officer said: "You want to go to a prison? Do it in your dream then! Whenever we want you to disappear, we can do so."

In fact, that's exactly what they have done.

To date, Gao Zhisheng brutal persecution has lasted seven years. In these seven years, the police have lived in my house to monitor me and my children. They didn't allow my daughter to attend school and even set upon her as a group and beat my daughter.

To protect my two children, in January 2009 I escaped from China with my two children with the help of some friends. In February 2009, Lawyer Gao was again kidnapped. In April 2010, 14 months after Lawyer Gao disappeared, the Chinese government arranged for him to be interviewed by the Associated Press. During the interview, he did not follow the Chinese Communist government's instructions in what he said; instead, he exposed and described in

detail to the Associated Press the torture he had personally suffered. After that, the Chinese Communist police officers beat him for two days and two nights with the butt of a pistol. He said it was the most brutal torture he had ever suffered up to that point and his life hung by a thread. After that interview with the Associated Press, Lawyer Gao once again disappeared.

Because my daughter missed her father so much, she has had a nervous breakdown and often dreams that her father has left this world. Whenever Father's Day comes, my son always cries and he has told his teachers over and over again in tears, "I don't have a father."

In December 2011, four days before the end of Gao Zhisheng's [suspended] three-year prison term, the Chinese Communist Party's Xinhua News Agency released a report saying: "For the next three years, Gao Zhisheng will be locked up in a prison." Shortly thereafter, at the end of 2011, Lawyer Gao Zhisheng was secretly transferred to far-away Shaya County Prison in the Aksu district of Xinjiang.

In the one year and four months that Gao Zhisheng has been held in that prison, family members have seen him only twice and each time the visit lasted only 30 minutes; 10 months passed between the first visit and the second one. During the second visit, the police prohibited the family members from asking him for any information about himself. In the three months since then, we have been unable to get any information about him. On August 27, 2012, his eldest brother hired lawyers Li Subin and Li Xiongbing to go meet with Gao Zhisheng, but their request was rejected by the prison authorities.

As is known to all, Gao Zhisheng has all along been a political prisoner of conscience under the strict control of the Chinese Communist authorities. I am very concerned that the torture and the long-term imprisonment pose a serious threat to his life. I appeal to the international community to persist in paying continuous attention to Lawyer Gao Zhisheng as this is the best way to protect him.

Today, the tyrannical Chinese Communists are still brutally persecuting the Chinese people. The miserable experience of Gao Zhisheng, Hu Jia, Guo Feixiong, Guo Quan, Xu Wanping, Wang Dengchao and others is clear evidence of the Chinese Communists' persecution. These brutal facts show that the Chinese people do not enjoy human rights or the rule of law, and do not have freedom or democracy.

I hope the international community can rescue the people just named as it did Chen Guangcheng.

Thank you!

Geng He

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