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## CHINA Release human rights defenders on Tiananmen Anniversary

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Twenty-two years on from the Tiananmen Square massacre, Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) remains deeply concerned about the Chinese government's treatment of human rights defenders.

Christian human rights lawyer, Gao Zhisheng, has been missing for over two years. No news has been heard of him since he briefly reappeared in March 2010, only to disappear again. He revealed details of his severe torture in detention, including being beaten with guns, and there are grave fears for his safety. Gao Zhisheng was once named one of China's 'Top Ten Lawyers' by the Chinese Ministry of Justice. He attracted the attention of the authorities when he began defending 'sensitive' cases, including those of detained house church Christians and Falun Gong practitioners.

Dr. Fan Yafeng, an academic and leader of the Chinese Christian Lawyers' Association, has been under house arrest at his Beijing home since October 2010. Dr Fan, who has been outspoken regarding religious freedom in China, was beaten during questioning by police in December last year.

Chen Guangcheng, the blind human rights activist and lawyer, remains under severe house arrest with severe restrictions in Shandong province, despite having been released from prison after serving a four-year sentence. His wife and child are also under house arrest, and Chen has been denied access to medical treatment for chronic health problems.

On June 4, 1989, the Chinese government used military force to disperse peaceful protesters, many of them young students. Secrecy surrounding the events means the exact number of fatalities is unknown. As the 22nd anniversary of the massacre approaches, the Chinese government's harsh treatment of any form of protest or dissent appears to have made little improvement. In recent months, following online calls for Middle East-style 'Jasmine protests', human rights defenders have been under extreme pressure. Political activists, lawyers, bloggers and artists have reported harassment, detention, imprisonment, beatings and torture.

CSW's Advocacy Director Andrew Johnston said, "On the anniversary of the massacre of hundreds, if not thousands of innocent Chinese citizens, we call upon the Chinese government to show respect for the rights of its citizens by releasing all human rights defenders who are detained, under house arrest or missing, including Gao Zhisheng, Dr. Fan Yafeng and Chen Guangcheng, whose cases are representative of countless others."