



3.28.2012

CHINA | Gao Zhisheng's family allowed to visit him in prison

Christian human rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng, who is currently in prison in China's Xinjiang province, was allowed a visit from his brother and father-in-law on Saturday, March 24, according to Associated Press.

Gao had not been seen since April 2010. However, in December 2011 the authorities announced that he had been sentenced to three years in jail for "violating the terms of his probation". For his family, Saturday's visit was the first confirmation in almost two years that Gao is alive, and his wife, Geng He, was reportedly informed he appeared to be in good health.

The prominent self-taught lawyer, who has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize on two occasions, initially went missing on 4 February 2009. Following a brief reappearance in March 2010, Gao went missing again on 20 April 2010 as he travelled home to Beijing after visiting relatives in Xinjiang Province. His wife and two children fled China and are currently living in the United States.

Gao, who was once named one of China's Top Ten Lawyers by the Ministry of Justice, attracted attention from authorities for defending cases of religious persecution, including house church leaders and Falun Gong practitioners. In 2007 he wrote an open letter to the US Congress highlighting the use of torture by Chinese authorities.

Andrew Johnston, Advocacy Director of Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), said, "CSW is pleased to hear that members of Gao Zhisheng's family have been able to visit him and confirm that he is alive and in relatively good health. However, we are still concerned about the manner of his disappearance and subsequent imprisonment, and the charges against him. We continue to call upon the international community to express their concern for Gao and to press the Chinese government to release him immediately."