



6.4.13

CHINA | CSW Calls on Chinese Government to Respect Human Rights

On the 24th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre, Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW) remains deeply concerned about the Chinese government's treatment of human rights defenders, including those defending the right to freedom of religion or belief.

Christian rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng, well-known for his work defending victims of religious freedom violations and other vulnerable social groups, disappeared in April 2010 after talking to the media about being tortured in detention. In December 2011, the Chinese news agency, Xinhua, reported that Gao had violated the terms of his 2006 probation and had been returned to prison for three years. On Aug. 27, 2012, two lawyers hired by Gao's brother were refused access to Gao on the grounds that he had not signed the letter authorizing the visit and did not need legal representation because he is a lawyer.

CSW is also concerned about the situation of other human rights lawyers, including Ni Yulan, a lawyer specializing in housing rights, who was severely beaten for more than 50 hours in police detention in 2002. Since then, she has been disbarred and her home has been destroyed. On April 7, 2011, Ni and her husband were detained by Beijing Police. Ni was formally charged on May 17 with "provoking trouble." Ni's daughter, who was present at the trial, reported that her mother gave evidence from a hospital bed while on oxygen.

The mistreatment of lawyers continues today. On May 13, seven lawyers were beaten severely by unidentified persons when they tried to visit the largest "black jail" in Sichuan. They were later detained for more than 12 hours at Ying Jie Town Police Station on the charge of "obstructing official business." Four other lawyers, who travelled to Sichuan to help the seven lawyers, were also detained and interrogated. All have been released.

Many human rights defenders currently detained in China are signatories to Charter08, which demands various changes and rights, including the right to freedom of religion and

the right to freedom of expression. Among them are Christian activist and organizer, Chen Xi, and Nobel Laureate and rights activist, Liu Xiaobo.

Leading up to the Tiananmen Square massacre anniversary, Chinese activists have been detained, “cautioned” and otherwise prevented from organizing activities related to the events of June 1989. In 2008, the UN Committee Against Torture called on China to “conduct a full and impartial investigation” into these events and to provide information about the possible use of force, torture and other ill treatment. Even now, as in previous years, there is no room for reflective questions and critical analysis of “June Fourth.”

CSW’s Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, “On the anniversary of the Tiananmen Square tragedy, we call upon the Chinese government to fully respect the rights of its citizens, including the right to freedom of religion or belief, and to release all those who have been detained, placed under house arrest or 'disappeared' for endeavoring to defend human rights peacefully. We also urge the government to conduct a full and impartial investigation into the events of June 1989.”