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## CHINA | Rights Lawyer Completes Final Year of Sentence

Chinese human rights lawyer, Gao Zhisheng, who was released from prison one year ago, completes the final part of his sentence on Aug. 7, ending one year's deprivation of political rights during which he has had his freedoms restricted.

Gao Zhisheng, a Christian lawyer, was sentenced in December 2006 to three years in prison and one year's deprivation of political rights, with a probation period of five years, on the charge of "inciting to subvert the state power." During his probation, he was forcibly disappeared and severely tortured in detention. In April 2010, Gao was disappeared again and on Dec. 16, 2011, the Chinese media reported that Gao had violated the terms of his probation and had been returned to prison for three years.

The deprivation of his political rights entails certain restrictions stipulated in regulations issued by the Ministry of Public Security, including limitations on the individual's freedom of movement, expression and association. Over the past year, Gao Zhisheng has had contact with friends in other parts of China and with his wife and children in the U.S. However, his movements have been extremely limited, meaning that he has been unable to access necessary medical care. In addition, he has been closely monitored by the authorities.

The anniversary of Gao's release comes just as hundreds of his fellow rights lawyers are being detained and questioned. At least 265 lawyers, activists, associates and family members have been arrested, interrogated or disappeared across China since July 10. Many have been questioned and released, but at least 30 remain in some form of detention or under house arrest, or are believed to have been forcibly disappeared. Many of the lawyers detained have defended the right to freedom of religion or belief and other human rights.

CSW's Chief Executive Mervyn Thomas said, "On the occasion of the completion of the final part of lawyer Gao's sentence, we urge the Chinese authorities to guarantee Gao's rights as a free citizen in accordance with the law. We hope and expect that Gao will now be free to travel inside and outside China, and to return to his work as a lawyer if he so chooses. In light of the recent spate of detentions and disappearances across China since July 10, we also call on the Chinese government to release all lawyers, activists, associates and family members still in detention or held incommunicado, and to ensure that those already released are not subject to any further restrictions on their rights and freedoms."