



United States Department of State

Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Taylor:

Thank you for your letter about Chinese attorney Gao Zhisheng. We have followed Mr. Gao's case closely and raised our concerns with Chinese officials frequently and at high levels in Washington and Beijing. The U.S. remains deeply concerned about Mr. Gao and will continue to urge the Chinese government to treat its people in accordance with its constitution and established international human rights standards and norms.

The Government of China convicted Mr. Gao in 2006 of "inciting subversion" and sentenced him to a suspended three year prison term and barred him from practicing law for five years. In September 2007, shortly after he authored a letter to the U.S. Congress about violations of human rights (including religious freedom) by the Chinese government, authorities again detained Mr. Gao for approximately two months. Mr. Gao's detailed account of the torture he underwent in this detention became public in February 2009, days after security officials were seen leading him away from his home in Shaanxi Province. Mr. Gao's whereabouts are currently unknown, and we are deeply concerned about his treatment in custody. We have reported on him in our Annual Country Reports on Human Rights and International Religious Freedom available at www.state.gov. Cases like Mr. Gao's have led Secretaries of State to designate China as a "Country of Particular Concern" under the International Religious Freedom Act for particularly severe violations of religious freedom every year since the designations were introduced in 1999.

Thank you for sharing your concerns about Mr. Gao.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter J. Kovach", written over a circular stamp or seal.

Peter J. Kovach
Director

Office of International Religious Freedom