



Chinese lawyer Gao Zhisheng was named the winner of the *Bindmans Law and Campaigning Award* at the recent *Index on Censorship's Freedom of Expression* awards.

His wife, Geng He, accepted the award on his behalf, via video. She said:

"I wish Gao Zhisheng could receive this award, instead of me accepting on his behalf.

I would have been proud to see him here, I would have cheered for his regained freedom and once again I would have been able to breathe freely, to think freely, and to speak freely.

My husband is a human rights lawyer. He resisted unbearable pressure to support his clients. He voluntarily represented the poor to the best of his ability. He never bowed to money or power; he stood up to threats from people in authority. He regarded his law profession not only a job, but also as a means to propagate fairness, to reinstate justice, and conscience. He was an attorney in great demand until the government revoked his license, closed his law firm, placed our whole family under surveillance. They even deprived my daughter of her education.

Since my husband's last public appearance we have endured nearly a year of total silence. All those days, our children and I have lived with worry and anxiety. Gao's disappearance, in the past, has synchronised with brutality and shocking torture by the state. My husband's case is a true presentation of China's ongoing human rights crisis.

On behalf of my husband Mr Gao Zhisheng, thank you Index On Censorship for this honourable award which recognises Gao for his efforts in safeguarding human rights and freedom of speech in China.

Again, I appreciate your support for Gao and I hope it will help protect his safety."

Background



(Gao Zhisheng photo from <http://www.gaozhisheng.org/>)

Chinese lawyer Gao Zhisheng has been persecuted by the state for speaking out on human rights issues. Gao, a self-taught lawyer, forged a career representing the underdog in cases involving medical malpractice, land redistribution, employment disputes and forced sterilisation.

He has also defended journalists and religious minorities including Christians and members of Falun Gong. In 2005, he resigned from the Communist Party and wrote an open letter to President Hu Jintao and Prime Minister Wen Jiabao, documenting the suffering of Falun Gong practitioners and calling on the leaders to end their “large-scale, organised” abuse.

Security forces took Gao from his home in Shaanxi province on 4 February 2009. Gao claimed the security forces tortured him. The state denied any knowledge of his whereabouts until January 2010, when a foreign ministry official said the lawyer was “where he should be”. Gao disappeared again in April 2010, and the Chinese state has refused to reveal his whereabouts or to register him as a missing person.