



**Statement of U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown,
Cochairman of the Congressional-Executive
Commission on China (CECC)**

**CECC Hearing on “The Case and Treatment of
Prominent Human Rights Lawyer Gao Zhisheng”**

Tuesday, February 14, 2012, Washington, DC

As prepared for delivery.

Thank you all for attending today’s important hearing on the treatment—or mistreatment—of Chinese human rights lawyer, Gao Zhisheng.

We are here to show support for a man who has devoted his life to defending the rights of his fellow citizens.

A special thank you to his courageous wife, Ms. Geng He, for being here today.

I look forward to hearing from you about your husband’s life and career defending marginalized groups in China.

And know that his—and your—life’s devotion to human rights is a source of inspiration for so many people in China, here in the United States, and across the world.

Thank you also to Ms. Li Jing, the wife of imprisoned Chinese dissident Guo Quan.

She, too, will share her husband’s story of standing up for basic human rights in the face of imprisonment and intimidation.

Today’s hearing comes at an important time in the relationship between the United States and the People’s Republic of China.

As Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping attends meetings just minutes away with our top officials, we are reminded that the real China is represented by the brave individual whose fate remains a mystery and who is the focus of today’s hearing.

In understanding Gao Zhisheng’s story, we understand not only what Gao stands for, but the challenges we face with China today.

Mr. Gao has devoted his life to trying to make the law work for those he represented—the underprivileged and underserved.

He has stood up for those kicked off their land by greedy developers and corrupt officials.

He has stood by factory workers protesting low wages and long hours, and the persecuted practitioners of Falun Gong.

In stark contrast, Chinese authorities showed no concern for Mr. Gao's rights or the law.

They disbarred him. They jailed him. They have reportedly tortured him, and somehow made him "disappear."

Chinese authorities have used Mr. Gao to send a chilling message to other would-be human rights defenders: Stay quiet, do not challenge us, do not hold us accountable—or else.

Mr. Gao himself would say that his case is about more than just his own experience.

As he wrote in his book *A China More Just*, behind each case in China "*are systemic problems.*"

And from the problems that Mr. Gao has faced—the utter disregard for the rule of law by his government and the Communist Party—we see why our nation faces so many systemic problems with China today.

Mr. Gao's case and the cases he worked on show us how easy it is for Chinese officials to cheat, bend the rules, and game the system.

They show us how easy it is for China to ignore labor and environmental standards, hoard raw materials, and manipulate its currency.

They brazenly sell us—with the help of some of our own companies—toxic toys, tainted pet food, and consumer products made by overworked and underpaid workers.

And while I and others in our government are doing all we can to ensure the safety and health of our citizens and a fair trading relationship with China, we know that we can't do it alone. We need brave Chinese citizens like Mr. Gao to defend their rights, to make sure they have a fair and living wage, their food is safe, and their environment is clean.

That's why his case is so important—because if Chinese citizens can defend their rights, we all benefit.

We all benefit—from Ohio and across the country—when we know the products we buy from China are safer and won't cause illness or death.

We all benefit—just as we do here—from a rule of law that ensures the citizens of China have the possibility to hold their government accountable and to rightly petition grievances to effectuate change.

But until Mr. Gao and countless other political prisoners in China are released from their shackles, that day will remain in the distant, unknown future.

That's why we on this Commission and our government must continue to do all we can to spotlight these cases and secure Mr. Gao's release.

Treatment—or mistreatment—of basic human rights deserves nothing less.

Thank you all again for attending today's hearing.