

URGENT ACTION

BEFORE YOU START

Urgent Actions (UAs) are issued when there is an **URGENT NEED FOR INTERVENTION** to stop human rights violations or abuses against an individual or group and **MASS MOBILISATION** is the most strategic campaign tool to achieve the objective. Therefore, consider whether:

- ✓ It's **urgent**: are appeals needed within the next few days or weeks?
- ✓ It's **simple**: do the text and the appeals briefly encapsulate the necessary details?
- ✓ A **mass response** is needed: is it appropriate to be issued as a public document, and for the UA network to take action?

APPROVAL PROCESS

1. **ORIGINATOR (+ team)** ↔ **IAR CAMPAIGNER**
2. **ORIGINATOR [v2]** ↔ **LAWPOL**
3. **ORIGINATOR [v3]** ↔ **FINAL APPROVER**
4. **ORIGINATOR [final]** → **IAR CAMPAIGNER** who will upload to the IAR Platform, to the web site and distribute to the UA Network.

Note: steps 1 – 3 may require the document to go back and forth several times depending on the required edits and comments, however it will always go back to the originator before being sent to the next reviewer. Therefore, please be clear at all times what stage of review the UA is at, and who has already approved it.

URGENT ACTION TEMPLATE TO BE COMPLETED BY UA ORIGINATOR

INTERNAL INFORMATION

(To be shared on the IAR Platform)

NAME OF IAR	Gao Zhen (高斌)	COUNTRY	China
LINK TO RECORD If this is the first UA for an IAR, or the previous UA was issued before 01/19, then you need to CREATE A RECORD at https://oneamnesty.sharepoint.com/sites/iar/	Individuals at Risk (sharepoint.com)		
URGENT ACTION TYPE Urgent Action or Update	Update UA		
ISSUE(S) Human right keywords	Detention; Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; Freedom of Expression		
PRIORITY SECTIONS + JUSTIFICATION	Sections to be tagged on the IAR Platform are G7 countries who coordinate on human rights in China: UK, US (the country of residence of the I@R) Canada, Germany, France (Macron's cabinet has answered to his brother), Italy and Japan; we add the Netherlands and Taiwan due to their interest in support HRDs/"activism" and their strong China capacity in the Section.		
THEORY OF CHANGE / STRATEGY Needn't be comprehensive rather, try answer: - Why we are targeting this authority.	HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS & WHY UA: Dissident Chinese artist and U.S. permanent resident Gao Zhen,		

- Why we are using this campaign tool. - How to achieve this specific objective for the IAR.	internationally known for his provocative works, was arrested on 26 August 2024 while visiting family in China, on charges of violating the Heroes and Martyrs Protection Law enacted in 2018. This case has already been prosecuted by the prosecutor's office and submitted to the court. According to reliable sources, the trial is scheduled for mid-August. Previously, the prosecutor had attempted to negotiate a guilty plea with Gao, proposing a three-year sentence. However, under current Chinese law, the maximum statutory sentence for this charge is three years of imprisonment. In practice, sentences are usually less than a year and do not exceed three years. Gao rejected the offer, believing the sentence was too severe. His wife and young child have also been subjected to severe restrictions. Gao's wife is banned from leaving the country under the pretext of "national security," though no formal charges have been filed. Their 7-year-old son, a U.S. citizen, is technically allowed to leave the country but is unable to do so without his mother. He was supposed to return to the U.S. to start school. In effect, he is also being held. In this case, international attention could potentially result in 1) the public prosecutor withdrawing the charges against him (though the likelihood is low at present), but could potentially reduce his sentencing; and 2) prompt Chinese authorities to lift the travel restrictions on Gao's family, allowing them to return to the US. OBJECTIVES: • His immediate and unconditional release Pending his release, that • Gao Zhen has regular, unrestricted access to family and his lawyers, and is not subject to torture or other ill-treatment. • Authorities end the harassment of and threats towards his family and lift the travel restrictions on them and ensure that they can enter and leave China freely. TARGETS AND THEIR POWER TO ALLEVIATE THE VIOLATIONS: The primary target is the Director of the Sanhe Branch of the Langfang Public Security Bureau, because: 1. He can drop the charges against Gao Zhen 2. He oversees the management of the detention centre where Zhang is currently being held. Thus, he has the authority to grant Gao's access to her family, a lawyer of his choice, and adequate health care. SYSTEMIC AIM: Through Gao Zhen's case we want to raise awareness of and publicly condemn the use of laws such as the Heroes and Martyrs Protection Law as a tool to suppress the artistic and intellectual
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	expression of Chinese artists. In so doing, we hope to defend the freedom of artistic and other expression in China and prevent political censorship from further stifling creative expression. DURATION: This UA will run until 30 Dec 2025, because, this case may have a verdict by the end of the year.
BEST WAY TO REACH THE TARGET Any additional information, such as: potential email bounce backs, how online petitions should be delivered (i.e. all actions to be sent directly to the target, or rather a single petition delivery with all the accumulated signatures).	The best way to reach the target is by POSTAL MAIL. Postal address: Secretary Ma Xiaojie, <i>Secretary of the Political and Legal Affairs Commission</i> <i>No. 17 Dingsheng East Street,</i> <i>Sanhe City, Langfang, Hebei Province,</i> <i>065200, P.R. China</i> However, letters might be returned or not delivered due to the Chinese government's censorship of mail. Avoid sending letters in big batches or showing Amnesty International logos or other markers of identity on the envelopes. These may increase the likelihood of the authorities rejecting the letters. We urge you to consider sending copies of the appeal also to the Chinese embassy in your own country. This can be done via the following methods: 1. In hard copy (if sending a batch of appeals, we encourage the use of "Signed for" mail or "mail tracking" options) 2. Via email. You can find the email address of the Chinese embassy in your country on the Foreign Ministry's website https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zwjg/. Please let chinateam@amnesty.org know if you have any questions or encounter any challenges in sending letters or confirming their receipt.
TIMELINE [Optional] Any upcoming key dates or campaign hooks (<i>within</i> the 6-month deadline)	We encourage sections to publicize Gao Zhen's case in connection with the following: - Mid-August 2025, Gao's court hearing is expected to be held - 26 August 2025 will mark one year since Gao's arrest - 11 September 2025, since 2000, the Gao brothers have started their "The Utopia of 20 Minutes Embrace" activity on that day until now; (2007 in German, 2006 in the UK) Sections are invited to brainstorm with the China Team ways to elevate this case in any response to announcement of high-level bilateral meetings or visits between their governments and Chinese authorities.

ADVOCACY GUIDANCE [Optional] Expand on any opportunities for advocacy and lobbying – be as specific as possible	For priority sections, we encourage you to seek meetings with your respective Ministries of Foreign Affairs to present Gao Zhen's case and discuss opportunities for them to raise this in their bilateral discussions with China. Upon request, the China Team will be happy to provide you with tailored advice or support for To Government communications including with respect to framing, content and timing. The China Team will separately work with Amnesty EIO and the International Advocacy Team (IAT) to press for the inclusion of Gao Zhen's case in the regular EU "Item 4" statement at the UNHRC, where human rights issues and detained individuals in China are, as a rule, mentioned. Are you or your sections interested in or already working with museums/art galleries? Exhibitions of Gao Zhen's and his brother's work could be an innovative way to support Gao Zhen, through which their stories could be told to a wider public and call for more attention. In addition, influential artists, including those active in mainstream/social media, and especially those who are actively involved in the defence of art and freedom of expression, may be interested in amplifying our message. Please refer participants/audience of these exhibitions to this UA so that they can take action to support Gao, such as writing letter to the target or sharing the link to the UA on their social media. Potential collaborative exhibitions (past performance locations) or presence in permanent collections: ○ US: MoMA, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Walsh Gallery ○ France: Centre Pompidou ○ Canada: Galerie Art-Mur (Montreal)/Montreal Museum of Fine Art ○ UK: Victoria and Albert Museum ○ Netherlands: Galerie Post + Garcia (Maastricht) ○ Italy: Piazza del Popolo (Rome) ○ Belgium: Gallery Adrian David, International Modern Art foundation, ifa Gallery ○ Norway: Oslo Freedom Forum
ADDITIONAL CALLS AND TARGETS / COPIES TO [Optional] Include if an additional target is necessary for any secondary or systemic calls	As noted above, even when writing to the target directly, please also send a copy ("cc") mail to the Chinese embassy or consulate in your country.
SOCIAL MEDIA GUIDANCE - Details of any SM of the target (Titter handle, Facebook page etc) - Suggested messaging + hahstags - A person to follow/retweet - Any available online petition that can be shared	Official accounts we can use on Twitter to target the Chinese authorities: https://twitter.com/Chinamission2un Chinese mission to the UN in NY @Chinamission2un https://twitter.com/MFA_China Spokesperson MFA @MFA_China https://twitter.com/SpokespersonCHN Foreign Ministry

	Spokesperson @SpokespersonCHN You can find X (Twitter) handles of Ambassador to China's embassies / China embassies at https://twitter.com/MFA_China/following For other platforms: https://www.instagram.com/mfa_chn/ @mfa_chn https://www.facebook.com/MFA.CHN @MFA.CHN https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZflnMvKRR0P_7iV9cYbxbg SUGGESTED MESSAGES: 1. Artist #GaoZhen was arrested a year ago and charged with “slandering China’s heroes and martyrs”, a charge used as a tool to silence the artistic and intellectual expression of Chinese artists. 📢 #China must release him now! #FreeGaoZhen [ADD LINK TO UA] 2. What counts as “slandering China’s heroes and martyrs”? According to #China: freedom of artistic expression and creation. 📢 Call on the government to release detained artist #GaoZhen now! #FreeGaoZhen [ADD LINK TO UA]
ACTIVE SECTIONS [Optional] <i>If you know of specific sections taking action on this case already</i>	
ADDITIONAL MATERIALS [Optional] - Related documents & links - Media & assets - Quotes	ADAM ID: 303766, 303767, 303768 For your information: Execution of Christ by Gao Zhen: ArtWay.eu (https://artway.eu/content.php?id=2678&lang=en&action=show) The works of The Gao Brothers: Gao Brothers - Gao Zhen Gao Qiang Fine Art - Artmasters (https://www.artmasters.co.uk/artist/gao-brothers-gao-zhen-gao-qiang/)
CONSENT	
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGNING/ADVOCACY Assumption is that <u>full consent has been granted</u> – therefore anything in the alternative needs to be expressly stated	Consent granted for advocacy, campaign, and fundraising
EXTERNAL ADVOCACY If identified as a strategic case to submit to the UN Special Mechanisms, please send Anna-Karin Holmlund (annakarin.holmlund@amnesty.org) the final UA, along with any additional information/insights you have.	

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EXTERNAL INFORMATION
(To be shared on [amnesty.org](https://www.amnesty.org))

URGENT ACTION

ARTIST DETAINED FOR ONE YEAR WITHOUT TRIAL

Chinese artist and US permanent resident Gao Zhen was first detained in August 2024 for “slandering heroes and martyrs.” According to reports, his trial is expected in mid-August 2025. His wife and child, who travelled with him to China, have also a *de facto* travel ban since his arrest. No artist or individual should be punished solely for their creative work or for expressing their personal views; Chinese authorities must release Gao Zhen immediately and unconditionally, and lift all extra-legal restrictions on his wife and child, allowing them to leave the country freely and safely.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Secretary Ma Xiaojie,
*Secretary of the Political and Legal Affairs Commission
No. 17 Dingsheng East Street,
Sanhe City, Langfang, Hebei Province,
065200, P.R. China*

Copy to: Chinese Embassy in [Your Country]

Dear Secretary Ma,

*I am writing to express my grave concern for artist **Gao Zhen (高銑)**, who has been detained at Sanhe City Detention Center on charges of 'slandering China's heroes and martyrs' (侵害英雄烈士名譽榮譽罪) for almost one year without trial.*

His case has been submitted to the court by the prosecutor's office, but regret that these charges are wholly baseless; Gao has merely exercised his right to freedom. I fear that Gao Zhen's case reflects the ongoing criminalization of freedom of artistic expression and creation using vague charges such as 'slandering China's heroes and martyrs'. Restricting forms of expression with the only interest of protecting the 'honour' or reputation of public officials, institutions, symbols or flags exceeds what is allowed under international law.

My distress is heightened by concerns that Gao's wife and young son have been banned from leaving the country, purportedly under the pretext of "national security," though no formal charges have been filed or documentation provided to justify these measures. As a result, the 7-year-old boy has been unable to continue his education for a full school year.

This case is a clear example of the Chinese authorities using political censorship to stifle creative expression. No artist or individual should be punished solely for their creative work or for expressing their personal views.

I urge you to:

- ***Immediately and unconditionally release Gao Zhen;***
- ***Pending his release, ensure that Gao's right to communicate with his family is fully respected and protected, and he is not subject to torture or other ill-treatment;***
- ***Stop harassing and threatening his family and allow them to leave the country freely and safely;***

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Gao Zhen, 69 years old, is a prominent artist in contemporary Chinese art and a member of the renowned Gao Brothers duo. On 26 August 2024, Gao was detained while traveling in China with his wife and son. Around 30 police officers raided his studio in Yanjiao, a town in Sanhe City, Hebei province. The authorities photographed his artworks, confiscated and sealed several sculptures – most of which were created over a decade ago—before sealing the studio.

The following day, Gao's wife was informed by the Sanhe City Public Security Bureau of his detention. He has since been held at the Sanhe City Detention Center on charges of "slandering China's heroes and martyrs," a crime punishable by up to three years in prison. Reliable sources report that this case has already been processed by the prosecutor's office and submitted to the court and the trial is scheduled for mid-August.

In addition, from early May to late July 2025, Gao's family has been unable to receive any correspondence from him. This suggests that his legally protected right to communicate with his family has been unjustly restricted or denied.

His wife and young child have also suffered. Gao's wife is banned from leaving the country under the pretext of "national security," though no formal charges have been filed. Their 7-year-old son, a U.S. citizen, has the legal right to leave the country but is in practice unable to do so without being accompanied, ideally by his parents. The de facto travel ban has kept him out of school for a full year.

Since the 1980s, the Gao Brothers have employed satirical humor to shed light on the atrocities of the Cultural Revolution, consistently challenging the limits of social commentary. Their work offers a sharp critique of the Cultural Revolution and former Chinese leader Mao Zedong, exposing the extent of the authoritarian practices employed during Mao's regime. These subjects remain deeply sensitive and taboo in contemporary China.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English or Chinese

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 30 December 2025

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: [Gao Zhen] (he/him/his)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa17/8821/2024/en/>