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| ASA 17/8821/2024 - China - Date: 5 December 2024 |
| URGENT ACTION |  | UA 106/24 |
| Prominent artist arrested for his work |
| CHINA |

On 26 August 2024, Gao Zhen, a prominent Chinese artist and member of the Gao Brothers, was detained by authorities while traveling in China with his wife and son. Gao is charged with «slandering China’s heroes and martyrs», a crime punishable by up to three years in prison. His formal arrest has been approved, and his wife and child were also prevented from leaving China. Chinese authorities must release Gao Zhen immediately and unconditionally.

Gao Zhen, 68 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 the Sanhe City Procuratorate has approved his formal arrest, and police have warned his wife against speaking to the media about his detention.

In addition, Gao Zhen’s wife and their 6-year-old son, a U.S. citizen, were prevented from leaving China when they attempted to return to New York from Beijing. Gao is also a U.S. green card holder.

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.

TAKE ACTION

* Write an appeal in your own words or use the **model letter** on **page 2**.
* Please take action before **30 March** 2025.
* Preferred language: **English, Chinese**. You can also write in your own language.
* **INFO POSTAGE**: Post delivery is possible to almost all countries. Please check at the Swiss Post whether letters are currently being delivered to the destination country.
If not, please send by email, fax or social media and/or via the embassy with the request for forwarding to the named person. Thank you !

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| APPEALS TO | COPIES TO |
| Director Pan JiqiangSanhe Public Security Bureau in Langfang City, Hebei ProvinceNo.3, Dingsheng West StreetSanhe City, LangfangHebei Province065200, People’s Republic of China | Botschaft der Volksrepublik ChinaKalcheggweg 103006 BernFax: 031 351 45 73E-Mail: dashmishu@hotmail.com |
| ⭢ **Social media guidance** and **additional targets** see online: [amnesty.ch](https://www.amnesty.ch) 🔍**UA 106/24** |

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Director Pan Jiqiang
Sanhe Public Security Bureau in Langfang City

Hebei Province
No.3, Dingsheng West Street
Sanhe City, Langfang
Hebei Province
065200, People’s Republic of China

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Dear Director Pan,

**I am writing to express my grave concern for artist Gao Zhen (高兟), who is currently 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) — a crime punishable by up to three years in prison**. His formal arrest has been approved, but these charges are baseless; he has merely exercised his right to freedom of expression, especially artistic ex-pression and creation.

My distress is heightened by concerns that Gao’s wife and their 6-year-old son, a United States citizen, were also barred from leaving China when they attempted to return to New York from Beijing. Gao Zhen’s wife was also warned by police not to speak to the media about her husband’s detention.

I fear that Gao Zhen’s case reflects the ongoing targeting of freedom of artistic expression and creation with vague ‘slandering China’s heroes and martyrs’ charges. Gao and his brother’s works, most of which were bold critiques of the Cultural Revolution and former Chinese leader Mao Zedong and made over a decade ago, are reported as the sole basis for his charge. The use of the law such as the ‘Heroes and Martyrs Protection Law’ and charges like ‘slandering China’s heroes and martyrs’ as a tool by the authorities to suppress artists and artistic creation is deeply concerning.

This case is a clear example of the Chinese authorities using political censorship to stifle creative ex-pression. 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 Zhen has regular, unrestricted access to his family and lawyers, and is not subject to torture or other ill-treatment;**
* **Stop harassing and threatening his family and ensure that they can enter and leave China freely;**
* **Ensure that Chinese artists can express their views without fear of persecution or arbitrary detention.**

Yours sincerely,

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**Copie**

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