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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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