

Prayer Diary: Missing people

27 August-2 September 2023



Wednesday 30 August marks the International Day for the Victims of Enforced Disappearance. Enforced disappearance is a severe human rights violation, and a common tactic of the Chinese authorities. Before politically sensitive periods, local government officials routinely round up human rights defenders, house church leaders, Falun Gong practitioners and dissidents, and detain them incommunicado.

They are often held in some form of detention, such as Residential Surveillance in a Designated Location (RSDL). This is essentially a form of enforced disappearance in which a person is held in a secret jail – their wellbeing and whereabouts remain unknown.

The cases below are just the tip of the iceberg. It was estimated that between 40,000 and 50,000 people were held either in RSDL or *liuzhi* detention (secretly detained by the Chinese Communist Party's private police force) in 2021.

We invite you to spend a couple of minutes in prayer each day:

- ***For those who are missing in China and across the world.*** Pray for protection, freedom, and the encouragement that they are not forgotten.
- ***For their families, friends and communities.*** Pray for comfort; for information on the whereabouts of missing loved ones, and ultimately their safe return.

Gao Zhisheng has been detained repeatedly since 2006, targeted for his work as a human rights lawyer, which frequently involved defending religious minorities. His family has had no news of his whereabouts since he was taken from his home in Shaanxi, northwest China, on 13 August 2017. Gao is believed to be in some form of detention and may be at high risk of torture and death.

Prominent human rights lawyer **Tang Jitian** was disappeared on his way to attend an EU International Human Rights Day event in Beijing on 10 December 2021. He was missing for over a year, before re- appearing in January 2023. There were no charges against him; police simply placed him in a secret jail, without even a notice of RSDL. Tang is still not able to speak publicly about what happened to him.

Gulshan Abbas is a retired Uyghur doctor who disappeared from her home in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) in 2018. Her family endured two years of complete silence before hearing that she had started serving a 20-year prison sentence on unfounded terrorism charges. It is understood that Gulshan is being punished for her sister's human rights advocacy in the United States.