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## H. Res. 599: Remembering Tiananmen Square

*U.S. Rep. Chris Smith (NJ-04)*  
*Co-Chair of the U.S. Commission on China*  
*Excerpts of Remarks*  
*Statement on Floor of U.S. House of Representatives*  
*May 28, 2014*

It's been 25 years since China's government crushed the peaceful demonstrations we remember by the name "Tiananmen Square." The resolution before us honors the extraordinary sacrifice endured by thousands of peaceful Chinese democracy activists who rallied for almost two months in Beijing, and in over 400 other cities in China, in a heroic quest for liberty and human rights.

"Tiananmen" has also come to symbolize the brutal lengths China's Communist Party will go to remain in power. When the tanks rolled into the Square on June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1989—mothers lost sons, fathers lost daughters, and China lost an idealistic generation of future leaders.

Some may prefer to look past or even trivialize the slaughter by Chinese soldiers. But the memory of the dead and those arrested, tortured, and exiled requires us to honor them, respect their noble aspirations for fundamental freedoms, and recommit ourselves to the struggle for freedom and human rights in China.

Former Chinese President Jiang Zemin said in an interview that Tiananmen was “no big deal.” But it was a very big deal that has left an enduring mark on both U.S.-China relations and on Chinese society.

The government of China continues to go to astounding lengths to censor and ban open discussions of Tiananmen. This resolution sends the right message: we will never forget Tiananmen as long as the Chinese people cannot discuss its significance openly without harassment or arrest.

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One of the most enduring symbols of the Tiananmen demonstrations was the unveiling of a facsimile of the statue of liberty on May 30<sup>th</sup>, 1989. It was a moment that thrilled freedom-seekers around the globe. There was this enduring symbol of freedom facing the portrait of Mao Zedong hanging in Tiananmen Square.

This moment was extraordinary because it showed that when the Chinese people are able to speak publicly and freely—they ask for greater freedoms, democracy, and justice. These are universal liberties that can be found in demonstrations for liberty worldwide—we see it in Cairo and Caracas, Turkey and Tunisia, Kabul and Kiev.

There was a moment when we all believed that the Tiananmen Square demonstrations would be a triumph of freedom and democracy. Later in 1989, the Warsaw Pact nations started to crumble and eventually the former Soviet Union fell as well. But the Communist leaders of China sought to hang on to power through force. They sent tanks and soldiers into Beijing to “clear the Square” on the evening of June 3<sup>rd</sup> and June 4<sup>th</sup>.

The beating, the bayonetting, torture, and murder of students and the ubiquitous display of tanks turned the dream of freedom into a bloody nightmare.

In 1991 I was able to visit Beijing’s Prison #1, on a trip with Cong. Frank Wolf. It was a bleak gulag where over 40 Tiananmen Square demonstrators were being unjustly detained. We saw firsthand the price paid by brave and tenacious individuals for peacefully petitioning their

government for freedom. And it was not pretty. They looked like the walking skeletons of Auschwitz and they worked grueling hours making products—some of which ended up in U.S. markets.

For the past 25 years, the Tiananmen demonstrations have shaped the way the Chinese government deals with dissent. Despite the country's stunning economic growth over the past two decades, Beijing's leaders remain terrified of their own people. China's ruling Communist Party would rather stifle, imprison or even kill its own people than defer to their demands for freedom and rights.

President Xi Jinping's tenure as President, which started with so much promise of new beginnings, has instead ramped up repression.

Last year was the worst year, since the 1990s, for arrests and imprisonment of dissidents. Over 230 people have been detained for their human rights advocacy. In the past month, leading up to the Tiananmen anniversary, Beijing has detained two dozen activists for seeking to commemorate the anniversary—even criminalizing private gatherings and art installations.

And China remains one of the world's worst offenders of human rights overall. It remains the torture capital of the world, religious freedom abuses continue with impunity, and ethnic minority groups face repression when they peacefully seek rights of culture and language.

Hundreds of millions of women have been forced to abort their precious babies because of a draconian attempt to limit population growth. China's One-Child Policy, even if it is modified, is a demographic and human rights disaster. The preference for having boys has led to a gender imbalance and a mass extermination of girls. This is not only a massive gender-based crime, but a security problem as well. Experts are coming to the conclusion that China's gender imbalance will lead to crime, social instability, worker shortages, sex and bride trafficking, and will make the possibility of war more likely.

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Repression has not dimmed the desires of the Chinese people for freedom and reform. There is an inspiring drive in China to keep fighting for freedom under very difficult and dangerous conditions. This drive is the most important asset in promoting human rights and democratization in China. When democratic change comes to China, it will come from within, not because of outside pressure—though outside pressure continues to be critically needed.

U.S. policy, in both the short and long-term, must be, and be seen to be, supportive of advocates for peaceful change; it must support the champions of liberty, and help nurture a vibrant civil society that seeks to promote rights and freedoms for everyone in China, and support an end to internet censorship—so the Chinese people can finally learn about Tiananmen and the truth about their own government.

Our strategic and moral interests coincide when we seek to promote human rights and democratic openness in China. A more democratic China, one that respects human rights, and is governed by the rule of law, is more likely to be a productive and peaceful partner rather than strategic and hostile competitor.

This future should also be in China's interests, because there is growing evidence that the most prosperous and stable societies are those that protect religious freedom, the freedom of speech, and the rule of law.

I believe that someday China will be free. The people of China will be able to enjoy all of their God-given rights. And a nation of free Chinese men and women will honor, applaud, and celebrate the heroes of Tiananmen Square and all those who sacrificed so much, and so long, for freedom.

I support this resolution and the message that it sends, and I ask that you do as well. I hope it will re-inspire, re-energize, and re-prioritize a struggle for human rights and freedom in China.