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## **‘China in 1989 & 2015: Tiananmen, Human Rights & Democracy’**

*Chairman Chris Smith (NJ-04)*  
*Congressional-Executive Commission on China*  
*Congressional Hearing, June 3, 2015*

Twenty-six years ago the world watched as millions of Chinese gathered to peacefully demand political reform and democratic openness. The hopes and promises of those heady days ended with needless violence tears, bloodshed, arrests and exile.

Mothers lost sons, fathers lost daughters, and China lost an idealistic generation to the tanks that rolled down Tiananmen Square on June 4th, 1989.

Tiananmen Square has come to symbolize the persistent and brutal lengths the Chinese Communist Party will go to remain in power. This event has done more to negatively shape global perceptions of China than any other in recent history.

We remember the Tiananmen massacre here in Congress because of its enduring impact on U.S.-China relations. We remember it also because an unknown number of people died, were arrested, and exiled for simply seeking universally recognized freedoms. We also remember Tiananmen because so many people were arrested last year for trying to commemorate the anniversary in China.

*We remember this date each year because it is too important to forget and because it is too dangerous to commemorate in China.*

The Chinese government should allow open discussion of the Tiananmen protests and end the enforced amnesia surrounding the events of 1989. And, more importantly, the Chinese government should take responsibility for the national tragedy that occurred on June 3<sup>rd</sup> and June 4<sup>th</sup>, 1989.

Sadly, it seems that a China lead by President Xi Jinping will not take such responsibility. President Xi and top Communist Party leaders regularly unleash bellicose attacks on “universal values,” “Western ideals,” and “revisionism of the Party’s history.”

The domestic screws on dissent have tightened considerably since Xi Jinping assumed the Presidency. Over 230 people have been detained for their human rights advocacy and peaceful efforts at political reform. A number some rights groups are calling the largest crackdown in two decades.

The Chinese government rounds up not only reformers, but those who defend them. It views most Uyghurs as security threats and then jails Uyghur intellectuals peacefully seeking ethnic reconciliation. It not only smothers internet freedom and its domestic media but threatens foreign journalists and spurs self-censorship from Harvard Square to Hollywood.

The Chinese government also threatens foreign citizens or foreign institutions who speak out for greater human rights. The family members of Canada’s Miss Universe, for example, were threatened for her outspokenness about human rights. Also, China’s new and troubling NGO law, could bar an American university from China, or even detain its representatives in China, if a campus student group *stages a protest in the US* against the Chinese government’s treatment of Tibetans, Christians, or Falun Gong; the detention of Liu Xiaobo, or the criminal tragedy of China’s 35 year “One-Child Policy.”

U.S. policy must support Chinese advocates who promote human rights and political reform and stand firm for U.S. interests in greater freedom and democracy in China.

Our strategic and moral interests coincide when we support human rights and democracy 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.

We should remember this fact as we watch China building bases and threatening free and open seas lanes in the East and South China Sea.

The U.S. must also make strong appeals to China’s self-interest. The rule of law, freedom of the press, an independent judiciary, a flourishing civil society and accountable officials would promote all of China’s primary goals--economic progress, political stability, reconciliation with Taiwan, good relations with America, and international stature and influence.

At the same time, the U.S. must also be willing to use political and economic sanctions to respond to gross violations of human rights in China—torture, prolonged and arbitrary detention, forced abortions and sterilizations, psychiatric experimentation or organ harvesting from prisoners.

That is why I introduced yesterday the China Human Rights Protection Act of 2015 (HR 2621) The bill will deny U.S. entry visas and issue financial penalties to any Chinese official who engages in gross violations of human rights.

The U.S. must show leadership in this regard and send a strong message. The worst violators of the rights of the Chinese people, those who abuse universal freedoms with impunity, should not prosper from access to the U.S. and our economic or political freedoms.

It is tempting to be pessimistic about China's future and the future of U.S-China relations. I am not pessimistic, but hopeful. Constant repression has not dimmed the desires of the Chinese people for freedom and reform.

While the hopes of the Tiananmen Square demonstrators have not yet been realized, their demands for universal freedoms continues to inspire the Chinese people today and has passed on to a new generation.

We have with us today participants of the Tiananmen protests of 1989 and new generations of advocates for democratic openness and human rights. They fight for universal freedoms, they fight for the release of their fathers and families, and they fight for reform and a future China that protects human rights. It is the new generation that will inspire change in China.

I believe that someday China will be free. Someday, 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.