



ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS
REPRESENTATIVE CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH, CHAIRMAN
SENATOR MARCO RUBIO, COCHAIRMAN

June 4, 2015

His Excellency Xi Jinping
President of the People's Republic of China

Dear President Xi:

We write as co-chairs of the U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China on the 26th-year anniversary of the nationwide protests that started in and around Beijing's Tiananmen Square. The protests, their violent suppression, and the ongoing prohibition of public or online discussion of the events of 1989, has done more to negatively shape global perceptions of China than almost anything else in your country's recent history.

We solemnly commemorate the Tiananmen massacre annually because of the lives lost and persons permanently injured, because of the profound impact the event has had on U.S.-China relations, because so many former student leaders have made important and lasting contributions to global understanding of China, and because the Chinese people are unable to mark this event, themselves.

We urge you to allow public discussion of the Tiananmen protests, to lift Internet and other censorship about the events of June 3rd and June 4th, and to drop all charges and release those detained last year in part for participating in commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the Tiananmen protests.

The issues surrounding June 4 are symptomatic of broader concerns that continue more than a quarter of a century later. These concerns include, but are not limited to, your government's persistent and intense efforts to suppress civil society and human rights defenders and the growing number of individuals arrested, harassed, and detained for peacefully exercising their right to the freedoms of expression, association, assembly, and religion.

Over the past two years, hundreds of individuals have been arrested and sentenced, often under vague charges such as "gathering a crowd to disturb order in a public place," "illegal assembly," "picking quarrels and creating a disturbance," or "inciting subversion of state power." We note that these trumped-up charges contradict China's commitments to international human rights standards and China's Constitution which provides citizens with the rights of free speech, religious belief, assembly, and association, as well as the right to criticize their government.

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Equally troubling are continued reports of serious abuses that have occurred during government officials' handling of recent cases—including reports of torture, threats or detention of family members, the denial of access to legal counsel, serious impediments to lawyer's efforts to defend their clients, and the closure of trials to the public.

Prior to your trip to the United States in September, we respectfully ask that you release all prisoners of conscience and end harassment and detention of those civil society organizations and individuals who merely seek to advance internationally recognized rights and the rule of law.

The Commission on which we serve has carefully compiled a political prisoner database that presently includes detailed summaries of nearly 1,300 people detained simply for their political beliefs. Among the list are prisoners of conscience, both prominent and unknown: Nobel Prize laureates, journalists, legal advocates, rights defenders, democracy and anti-corruption activists, advocates for free speech and ethnic minority rights, as well as Tibetans, Uyghurs, Falun Gong practitioners, and Christian and Buddhist religious leaders whose peaceful religious activities are somehow viewed as threatening to China's social order or national security.

While some in your government may urge a quick dismissal of our requests as an attempt to interfere in China's "internal affairs," we make them respectfully in the spirit of building better U.S.-China relations. The continued detention of prisoners of conscience and suppression of their legitimate and peaceful activities is a barrier to closer cooperation and efforts to build mutual trust and understanding.

As the recent open letter, signed by many Chinese students studying abroad underscores, the peaceful yearning for greater freedom, transparency and openness which galvanized the Tiananmen generation is alive and well today. Economic growth alone will not satisfy these aspirations.

Your action in these matters will offer tangible demonstration of the promises you made to build a China committed to the "rule of law." Such action will also, more than anything else you can do, improve China's global reputation and be an important building block for a "new type" of relationship between our two great nations.

Most Gratefully,



Chris Smith
Chair



Marco Rubio
Co-Chair