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## Emergency Hearing on Chinese Human Rights

### Lawyer Chen Guangcheng

*Statement of U.S. Representative Chris Smith,  
Chairman of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC)  
CECC Hearing: "Examination into the Abuse and Extralegal Detention  
of Legal Advocate Chen Guangcheng and His Family"  
Tuesday, November 1, 2011, Washington DC*

As we sit here in this room today, free to meet, free to move, and free to speak our minds, we are convening to examine the plight of an extraordinarily brave man, and his equally courageous wife, who in every sense of the word is not free and at grave risk.

As we speak, we can only assume that self-taught lawyer Chen Guangcheng, a heroic advocate on behalf of victims of population planning abuses, languishes with his wife Yuan Weijing and six-year-old daughter, locked inside their home in rural Shandong province. However, we do not have the luxury of certainty regarding Chen's or his family's current whereabouts and medical condition, as Chinese officials have used barbaric methods to prevent all unauthorized persons from contacting or visiting their village.

According to Andrew Jacobs of the New York Times, "paid thugs" repel visitors and "journalists and European diplomats who have tried to see him have fared little better."

But in a post on October 18th, Mr. Jacobs reports that the trickle of would be visitors has become a "campaign—Operation Free Chen Guangcheng."

According to Peter Ford in today's edition of the Christian Science Monitor, the violence against human rights activists who travel to visit Chen continue to escalate.

“About seven or eight men rushed up to me, kicked me to the ground, stole my cellphone, smashed my ankle and knocked me out,” Liu recalled Tuesday. “And the police did nothing when I reported what had happened.

“Liu was one of a group of around 40 activists who were attacked and beaten by more than 100 thugs on Sunday afternoon outside the village of Dongshigu in the eastern province of Shandong where Chen has been illegally locked up in his house with his family since being released from jail in September last year.

“I did not think the situation was so dark,” said Liu. “There is no law in that area.

“The violence marked the second weekend in a row that unidentified thugs have violently broken up efforts by human rights activists and ordinary citizens to visit Chen in a burgeoning campaign to win his freedom.

Chen Guangcheng’s only crime that we know of was advocating on behalf of his fellow Chinese citizens and educating them on their rights under Chinese law.

Blinded by a childhood disease, Chen Guangcheng began his legal advocacy career in 1996 educating disabled citizens and farmers about their rights. Decades later, when local villagers started coming to him with their stories of forced abortions and forced sterilizations, Chen and his wife Yuan Weijing investigated and documented these stories, later building briefs and lawsuits against the officials involved.

Their efforts gained international news media attention in 2005, and it appears that this was the straw that broke the camel’s back.

Officials began a barbaric campaign against Chen and his family in 2005, and over the years have subjected them to beatings, extralegal detention, numerous violations of their rights under criminal procedure law, confiscation of their personal belongings, 24-hour surveillance and invasion of their privacy, disconnection from all forms of communication, and even denial of education for their six-year old daughter.

Chen Guangcheng served over four years in prison on allegedly trumped up charges and was officially released in September 2010. However, the abuse he and his family have faced has only worsened. Concern about Chen’s health and well-being is growing worldwide, and numerous activists and journalists have made attempts in the past few months to visit Chen’s village, only to face large groups of hired thugs who savagely beat them and steal their belongings.

I add my voice to a growing campaign of people around the world who have expressed their concern regarding Chen and his family's current status. I urge the Chinese government to release him and his family from extralegal detention and permit outsiders to freely access them.

We ask our witnesses today to help us assess Chen's current status and to describe for us their understanding of his rights under Chinese law.