

CONSTITUENT SERVICE CENTERS:

1540 Kuser Road, Suite A9  
Hamilton, NJ 08619-3828  
(609) 585-7878  
TTY (609) 585-3650

108 Lacey Road, Suite 38A  
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(732) 350-2300

2373 Rayburn House Office Building  
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(202) 225-3765

<http://chrissmith.house.gov>



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## “Guo Feixiong and Freedom of Expression”

*Remarks by Chairman Chris Smith  
Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and Int'l Orgs.  
2255 Rayburn HOB  
October 29, 2013*

Good afternoon. Today's hearing will discuss China's detention of writer, activist, and self-trained legal advocate Guo Feixiong. A veteran of China's "rights defense" movement, Guo was criminally detained on August 8, 2013. We now know that he wasn't formally arrested until early September 2013. Guo's detention appears to be reprisal for his support of government transparency and calls for accountability. In recent months, Beijing has cracked down harshly on dozens of similar-minded advocates seeking political reforms.

Guo is not a newcomer to public advocacy or punishments. A former novelist and businessman, he first became widely known in 2005 for organizing protests of land seizures on the outskirts of Guangzhou city. In 2007, a Chinese court sentenced the outspoken Guo to five years' imprisonment on charges of illegal publishing. He and his supporters maintain the charges were fabricated to silence him and others. In late 2011, he was released. Since that time, he's continued to participate in China's "rights defense" movement. He's continued to express himself freely in the hopes of advancing human rights. He has protested along reporters fighting the Southern Weekly's heavy-handed-censorship and vocally supported recent calls for greater government transparency and an end to corruption.

Now, Guo is being held on charges of "assembling a crowd to disrupt order in a public place." This alleged crime—along with many others—is all-too-often used unjustly against the courageous men and women who want accountability or change. For simply asking for transparency, he is suspected of disrupting the harsh "order" Beijing enforces.

Notwithstanding China's own criminal procedural rules, authorities have denied Guo access to a lawyer and have failed to properly notify his family. Once again, China continues to enforce its legal protections haphazardly when punishing or silencing those who advocate for change.

Today's hearing focuses on the heroism and sacrifices of Mr. Guo. Sadly, Guo is one among many. In recent months, Chinese authorities have cracked down on dozens of human rights advocates participating in a so-called "New Citizens' Movement." The movement, which began forming last year, has been described as a loose network of like-minded, academics and lawyers who hold informal gatherings and promote various issues, including transparency and anti-corruption efforts.

These detentions signify Chinese citizens' growing resolve and Beijing's growing fears. Guo, and many others throughout China, want change. They want accountability, they want transparency, and they want justice. And, increasingly, they are willing to endure great risks and willing to sacrifice their own personal security to speak freely.

We are fortunate today to be joined by Ms. Zhang Qing, Guo's courageous wife, and Ms. Yang Tianjiao, his wonderful daughter. We look forward to their testimony, insights and defense of a beloved husband and father. We are also blessed to have with us two giants in the human rights field – the Reverend Bob Fu and Mr. Chen Guangcheng who will address the persecution of Guo and others and also discuss more broadly the recent developments and China's freedom of expression.

With this current crackdown on Chinese human rights activists, it is important to understand the brave and bold people challenging the Chinese state. Inspiring figures like Guo put another heroic face on these detentions. This face, however, does more than just contextualize the current crackdown or add details to a prisoner file. It causes us to wonder about ourselves, our commitment to human rights, and the risks we are willing to take for those around us. Guo now faces an uncertain punishment, as we must determine our own human rights commitment to him and others.

In July 2013, Guo wrote about a 1989 Tiananmen activist now also facing the possibility of more prison time. He wrote, "[Zhao Changqing] is an important symbol of the 1989 generation, who, in the face of danger, takes action, bears responsibility, persists, pushes forward, and becomes more evolved. This is how one should behave and shoulder his fate!"

Despite the hardships and the odds, Guo reminds us that we must shoulder our responsibilities and our burdens. We are here today to accept our responsibility to Guo and these courageous Chinese human rights advocates. We hope that we can also "take action, bear responsibility, persist, push forward, and evolve" like these heroes. He reminds us that this is how we all should behave.

We hope that the Chinese government is listening. We hope the Chinese citizens seeking change are listening. And, we hope Guo is listening. And we hope President Obama and our Administration are listening and will do everything in their power to help free Guo and others fighting for human rights in China—so far that has not been the case.