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CECC Hearing on ‘Population Control in China: State-Sponsored Violence Against Women and Children’

U.S. Rep. Chris Smith (NJ-04)
Chairman, U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China
Opening Statement at Hearing on China’s Population Control Policy
April 30, 2015

Today’s hearing will examine the looming demographic, economic, and social problems associated with China’s ‘One-Child Policy’ and seek recommendations on how the international community can assist China to address them.

China’s one child policy is state sponsored violence against women and children, including and especially the girl child, and constitutes massive crimes against humanity.

With us today is Chen Guangcheng, the Chinese legal advocate who was jailed for five years for trying to protect women facing forced abortions and sterilizations.

In his testimony, Chen gets it right. He calls China’s coercive population planning policies “genocide.” He calls for an international tribunal to investigate these crimes against humanity and calls on the Administration to enforce existing US law and bar Chinese officials from the U.S.

In 2000, I wrote a law—the Admiral James W. Nance and Meg Donovan Foreign Relations Act for fiscal years 2000-2001. That bill was signed into law on November 29th, 1999.

Section 801 of Title VII of that Act requires the Secretary of State not to issue any visa to, and the Attorney General not to admit to the U.S. any foreign national whom the Secretary finds, based on credible evidence, to have been directly involved in the establishment of forced abortions or forced sterilizations.

To the best of my knowledge under President Obama, almost one has been rendered inadmissible. It has been a gross failure of the Obama Administration not to enforce existing law, particularly on those in China who so brutally violate women’s rights.

The “One Child Policy” will soon mark its 35th anniversary. That’s 35 years of telling couples what their families must look like; thirty-five years of forced and coerced abortions and sterilizations, thirty-five years of children viewed by the state as “excess baggage” from the day they were conceived.

The human rights violations associated with this policy are massive. We have only recently begun to fully understand the demographic consequences and what that could mean for China, for China's neighbors, and for the world.

Just over a year ago China announced a slight change to the policy—allowing couples in which one parent is an only child to have two children.

The announcement was followed by a tidal wave of international media coverage trumpeting this “relaxation of China's one-child policy” and speculating that the policy was on its way out.

The policy change was really only minimal and was grossly inadequate in light of the coercion the Chinese government has employed for three decades against women and children. Left unchanged was the Chinese government's strangle-hold on deciding who can have children, when they can have children and how many children a family can have.

Left unchanged are the coercive measures and fines that can be taken if a woman is found to be carrying a child without permission. Left unchanged is the large bureaucracy that enforced and continues to enforce the policy of population control.

The minimal change also does nothing to address the three decade decimation of female population. Tens of millions of women and girls are missing from the population—a policy that can only be accurately described as gendercide. The extermination of the girl child in society simply because she happens to be a girl.

China's birth limitation policy continues to increase the gender imbalance--making China a regional magnet for sex and bride trafficking of women from neighboring countries such as Burma, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos and North Korea.

This is unacceptable, it is horrific, it is tragic, and it is wrong. We are waiting for the coercive population planning policies to end. Yet, the Chinese government continues to deny there will be an end.

Of course, ending this brutal policy would be the moral thing to do. And everyone is increasingly aware that ending this policy would also be in the Chinese government's interest.

As the Economist noted just last week, by 2025, nearly 1 in 4 Chinese citizens will be over the age of 60. At the same time, China's working-age population has shrunk in each of the past three years. These factors are likely to hurt not only government balance sheets but also economic growth in China. This should be of particular concern to the Chinese Communist Party, as economic growth is the primary source of their legitimacy.

The government should also be concerned about the dramatically skewed gender ratio. It may be fashionable for the media to write stories about “leftover women,” but I know—and I'm quite sure the Chinese government knows—that its real problem is the 30 million young men who will be unable to find wives in the coming years.

The government should be concerned—as should China's neighbors and the international community—of the consequences of 30 million men, unable to find companionship, unable to start families, coming of age precisely at the time that China's economy is creating fewer jobs to employ them.

We continue to see increased human trafficking for forced marriages. NGOs working in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Burma have all reported an increase in trafficking of women and girls into China in recent years. Even if China ends the one-child policy tomorrow, given the current demographics, this problem of a shortage of women in China will only get worse in the coming decade.

Given this current realities, it is frankly baffling that China would continue to implement its brutal policy of population control. This is a policy that is hated by the Chinese people, recognized as a drain on China's social and economic development, destructive of traditional family relationships, and criticized globally.

China's women and girls have borne the brunt of the one-child policy over the past three and a half decades. All of China's society will feel the effects of this misguided and inhuman policy for decades to come.

I urge the government to do what is right, not only of its people, but what is clearly in its own interest, and end this policy now.