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“Tiananmen at 35: The Ongoing Struggle for Human Rights and Democracy in China”

Congressional-Executive Commission on China

Five years ago today, on the 30th anniversary of June 4th, I took to the streets for the first time, committing myself to the movement for democracy in China.

I was deeply intimidated by the atmosphere of fear cultivated by the Chinese Communist Party in Canada. I was cautious around everyone, wearing sunglasses and masks.

However, the 2019 Hong Kong anti-extradition movement further secured my determination to engage in the democracy movement. In Toronto, I actively participated with my Hong Kong friends in organizing support for the Hong Kong people. As someone from mainland China, I also faced considerable from my own community, dealing with psychological stress from harassment by Communist Party supporters and suffering political depression filled with powerlessness. I constantly worried about receiving midnight phone calls from China, from my father— a Communist Party official— hysterically threatening to cut off my tuition to force me to return to China. I worried about being unable to complete my studies and being forced back to a land where expressing different opinions means facing bullying from teachers and classmates.

Things that happened during the protests reminded me that the national border cannot stop the Communist Party from spreading fear overseas. Some Chinese, organized by the consulate, drove their luxury cars through our protest lines, shouting insults. They burned our flowers at the Statue of Democracy; some protesters even received death threats. My life was filled with harassment from strangers, and I felt isolated within my own community.

In 2020, Dr. Li Wenliang, the whistleblower of COVID-19, who could have prevented this global disaster, was accused by Chinese police of spreading "false statements," and subsequently labelled a "criminal." He died from the virus shortly after. Surprisingly, many young Chinese students attended a memorial event I organized in downtown Toronto, which deeply moved me. I called on everyone to organize and band together to overcome this fear and despair and fight for a life of human rights, freedom, and democracy. Which led to the founding of our organization, " Assembly of Citizens."

Before the summer of 2022, we remained a secret society, in our group, we had events like movie screenings, discussion sessions and learned the history of the Tiananmen generation. More importantly, we have tried to re-establish a union based on respect for Human Rights, and equality between individuals, fighting to create a public space and

seeking Chinese Democracy. With our solidarity, the Assembly of Citizens successfully organized the Tiananmen Square massacre anniversary event as a young generation during the summer of 2022, and this is the point that we started to turn to the public. It was also the moment that I decided to stand on the stage and openly against the threat and fear of the CCP spreading.

Over the 3 years of COVID-19, the young generation in China has suffered from our human rights disaster. The most familiar way of life has been modified, it has accelerated the awakening of human rights, it has also caused the establishment of various young groups around the world. During the White Paper Revolution winter of 2022, the Assembly of Citizens is capable of organizing protests and events faster and more professionally to support the movement in China. Our friends in Europe became the mailbox for contributors and resistance fighters inside the Great Firewall, becoming one of the most influential Mandarin accounts on X. He collected the testimonies and stories of human rights catastrophes inside the Great Firewall and told these stories have been neglected by international society to millions of people every day, simultaneously facing the threat of the CCP. Our friends in the US are trying to make movies, talk shows, and other forms of art to spread awareness of the oppression of human rights. Our friends in Japan and Korea are establishing cultural and creative businesses to emphasize resistance as a lifestyle. Through dealing with various issues, we realized how to avoid division, build a professional organization, and more inclusively and strongly link with other groups.

We inherited the spirit of resistance from the Tiananmen generation, along with our characteristics. Our actions reflected what Taiwanese people often mention: "A lifestyle of democracy and freedom." Based on this spirit, although our political beliefs may be different, we were able to effectively connect with Taiwanese, Tibetans, Hongkongers, Uyghurs and other groups to combat our common terror and oppression of human rights.

29 years ago, in the same congressional hall, Major General Charles Sweeney, who testified about the decision to drop atomic bombs, said, "One can only forgive by remembering. And to forget is to risk repeating history." The last rapid deterioration of human rights under a major power was in 1933 in Germany, the year when they enacted the *Enabling Act*, a law that brought Germany under dictatorship. In that year, Peter Drucker began writing his first book, "*The End of Economic Man: The Origins of Totalitarianism*." Today, as we open this book, we feel as if history is repeating itself. Let me adapt his words to today's situation in China.

The form which the totalitarian revolution has been taking indicates in itself that such an order will eventually arrive. That the Chinese substitute CCP for order when they cannot have a real order, that they worship Xijingsping when they have no God to worship and no concept of man to respect, shows by its very intensity that they must have an order, a

creed, and a rational concept of man. The more fervently they turn Nationalism, the more feverishly do they search for something else. And the more eagerly will they embrace the new order when it appears. Military intimidation against Taiwan, the totalitarian organization of society, the suppression of freedom and liberties, the re-education camps for the minorities, and the war against religion are all signs of weakness, not of strength. They have their roots in blackest, unfathomable despair. The more desperate the Chinese become, the more strongly entrenched will totalitarianism appear to be. The further they push on the totalitarian road, the greater will be their despair. As soon as they are offered an alternative—but no sooner—the whole totalitarian magic will vanish like a nightmare.

Nothing the totalitarians can do to fortify their power will be the slightest protection against the sweep of a new order which will again give the masses a positive creed instead of a gospel of pure negation; which will again affirm the validity of life and of society instead of preaching senseless sacrifice; which will again give man dignity and value instead of denying his very existence. Not even the totalitarian education which seizes the youngest infants, and which has been regarded generally as the greatest danger to civilization, will alter the situation in the least. ” The youth of Chinese may be regimented for a positive idea and order. They can only be kept regimented for the negative and for the sake of organization as long as there is no alternative. Children can be educated to think exclusively in one direction, but they cannot successfully be educated not to think at all.

This is the current situation in China, and this is our mission. We hope that through continuous efforts abroad, we can show all Chinese people a new choice, an option and possibility for a democratic and free lifestyle that can endow us with positive beliefs and values, affirm the legitimacy of our lives and public society, and let them feel the dignity and value of humanity.

The competition and confrontation between the U.S. and China should not be a racial or national confrontation, nor an ideological one. Instead, it should be a confrontation between a lifestyle of democracy and freedom and authoritarianism. Using Blinken's China policy as a reference, we believe that the U.S. should cooperate with the Chinese people at the global level and compete with the party nature of the CCP, the CCP's foreign propaganda ideology, and confront the CCP's actions, the police and surveillance state, and authoritarian ideology.

We hope that the U.S. Congress and government will incorporate a perspective that upholds basic human rights and maintains peace when formulating policies. It is advisable to refer to America's experience in dismantling totalitarianism in the 20th century when developing current policies towards China and policies concerning the Chinese diaspora within the U.S. Effective communication with overseas Chinese and the mainland population is essential. President Reagan used Soviet jokes to highlight

the Soviet people's struggle and consulted numerous knowledgeable scholars about the USSR in the formulation of policies towards it. These policies played a crucial role in the later transformation and dissolution of the Soviet Union.

We need to work with the pro-democracy Chinese organizations and expatriate Chinese communities. Through their efforts, establish connections with people inside the firewall, showing them the lifestyle of democracy and freedom, and encouraging them to further pursue human rights within the wall. They have already done much work voluntarily abroad, here I aim to systematically organize these efforts based on my connection.

Specifically, we should achieve this goal through a positioning change and three stages:

A positioning change: The United States is a trade partner of China on the premise that the American people are partners in human rights with the Chinese people.

The United States should no longer recognize the controlled areas of the People's Republic of China, including Hong Kong, as a free market. The foundation of a free market is the autonomous decision-making of market entities. However, the level of freedoms essential for the survival of free markets in Hong Kong and mainland China, personal freedom, freedom of speech, thought, expression, academic freedom, freedom of communication, freedom of information dissemination, and judicial independence, are at their lowest level since the reform and opening up policy. The overall societal freedom is crazily regressing back to the Cultural Revolution era, thus the micro-foundations of a free market no longer exist in China. When the Party leads everything in the market, the signals from market entities are severely concealed and distorted by the will of the Party. Any so-called "free trade" with Beijing supports the war machine of the dictatorship, shifting contradictions, and providing resources, which is a disguised form of appeasement. Using free trade as a cover may alleviate inflation and wealth disparity with cheap goods in the short term, but it allows China's low human rights advantage products to flood the market. It is both short-sighted and akin to drinking poison to quench thirst.

China should only consider restoring its status as a market economy after it elevates its human rights standards to meet the requirements of the "International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

This is a clear signal that, through U.S. trade policy and joint actions with allies, a clear message is sent to Chinese people at home and abroad, Americans, and the entire world are paying attention to the human rights abuses they experience daily. Attention is given to overtime work, unfair labour practices, unpaid wages, unfinished buildings, disappearing freedoms in academia, speech, communication, media, rights protection, children's education rights, deteriorating rule of law, and mental health in China. with the increased strength of China, the human rights saturation of the Chinese shall be

improved as well. Americans shall consider the survival circumstance of the Chinese as superior instead of their business profit.

Based on this, in order to promote the improvement of human rights in China and strengthen ties with the Chinese people, combating the authoritarian propaganda and control of the autocratic government, we should act in three stages:

These three stages are: Shaping a safe environment for overseas Chinese, cultivating professional talents and organizations, and promoting human rights reforms in China. This is also the best way, from a macro perspective, to address the collective political trauma of the Chinese people, and to promote anti-war and resistance forces in China.

Stage One: Creating a Safe Environment for Overseas Chinese:

1. Pay attention to the cross-border repression of dissidents, especially regarding personal safety. Strictly manage agents of the CCP in various countries. Restrict or even prohibit their activities directed by foreign governments.
2. Strengthen research on the history of Chinese political violence and trauma. Provide mental and psychological health experts and various trauma recovery groups for the Chinese community, including international students, to support their recovery from political violence and trauma.
3. Pay attention to building independent Chinese community organizations and networks, separate from the Communist Party. Assist intellectuals, opinion leaders, and middle-class elites coming from China in forming various associations independent of the Chinese Communist Party. And assist with training in various systems such as equality, anti-discrimination, non-violence, parliamentary rules, etc. And provide opportunities for exchange with other ethnic networks to explore how to establish related organizations.
4. Change the way of discussing issues related to China, based on human rights and using the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a standard to measure Chinese actions. In discussions about China, reduce debates about capitalism/communism, progress/conservatism, fairness/efficiency, the rise of the East and the decline of the West/civilizational conflicts, and superpower disputes. To avoid providing material for domestic authoritarian propaganda in China.

5. Implement reciprocal privacy policies for Chinese software such as WeChat. Require their overseas versions to be isolated from mainland versions, lifting data censorship, and requiring data to be stored locally.

Stage Two: Cultivating Professional Talents and Organizations:

1. Support the establishment of a Chinese human rights database. Counter the comprehensive control of news inside China, comprehensively statisticians, and sort all possible contributions from inside the Firewall. And according to the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights, these human rights violation events. Form a Chinese human rights database, create quantified annual human rights reports, and present the real human rights situation of the people in China. Through database categorisation and survey questionnaires, collect experiences of maintaining rights inside China, and write manuals and instructions for avoiding pitfalls in rights defence.
2. Form experts on specific rights issues both inside and outside China, provide various templates, documents, laws, publicity materials, and process flows and form overseas rights support groups. Make it convenient for rights defenders to cooperate anonymously across borders. Visualise the data according to the age of the people, the types of human rights infringements, locations, hot topics and others, forming a survival manual for inside the Firewall. Let everyone understand the real human rights situation of their living environment and its impact on them.
3. Absorb exiled Chinese elite scholars/Chinese policy interns with a background in China into federal government/Congressional staff/think tanks. Make U.S. China policy clearer, more accurate, and vividly conveyed to the Chinese people. Let the public realize the dangers of authoritarianism, and stay away from authoritarianism under nationalist slogans.
4. Establish bipartisan groups for Chinese human rights/community awareness/cultural integration. Help Chinese/international students quickly popularize and have channels to practice American values after entering

American society, changing the wrong concepts originally held in China, learning to respect freedom of speech, and political freedom.

5. Support various academic research and artistic creations on various human rights issues about China, including but not limited to publishing, film, podcasts, talk shows, literary works, stage plays, and creative design.
6. Pay attention to Chinese humanities scholars in exile, absorb them into various think tanks, or form various organizations. Form historical works and literary works based on human rights for Chinese people, revealing the impact of the lack of human rights on daily life. And form reading lists, collections, databases, etc., to facilitate reading by Chinese people, and understanding the importance of human rights.
7. Increase academic research on the human rights situation of Chinese people and the psychology and concepts of Chinese people. Enable the academic community to interpret and observe human rights issues from the perspective of Chinese people. Change the structure of the human rights report of the U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China, paying more attention to the human rights issues of ordinary people.

Promoting Human Rights Reforms in China:

1. Encourage overseas Chinese organizations to provide support for rights defenders in China. Summarize the experience of defending rights inside China and share.
2. Through overseas Chinese organizations, provide various literary works, real information, and databases to Chinese people inside the Great Firewall to help them understand the real situation.
3. According to database reports and industry research reports. Sanction all Chinese companies that use high-tech technology to participate in government

projects to violate the human rights of the Chinese people, including their executives/staff.

4. Link human rights to trade, cancel China's National Most-Favored-Nation (MFN) Trade and China's Permanent Normal Trade Relations (PNTR) Status, implement tariff penalties/import controls on organizations/companies that violate human rights, and limit American companies from obtaining products and software that violate human rights. Limit China's cost competition through low human rights advantages.
5. Warn or punish human rights violators, and carefully review their and their families' visas, and bank accounts.

These works require the efforts of the Tiananmen generation, the efforts of our new generation, and the efforts of many people in China. I can dedicate my life to this because, as a young person who has never experienced the Tiananmen Square incident, when first learning about the history of June 4th, the initial shock did not come from the Communist Party's ruthless bloody suppression, but from the realization that our country once had such a different social atmosphere. We were moved to tears by the images of the square and the saying 'To Tiananmen Square, it's my duty.' In our lowest and saddest moments, we realized that we are not alone. For someone like me, an exile who has never personally seen a glimmer of dawn in my homeland, that moment of June 4th represented a brightness of humanity that dispelled my prejudices about this land, reinforcing my belief that the people in this country deserve another possibility, that there is still hope for this land. More importantly, it made me realize that my country, once through everyone's efforts, almost broke free from the shadow of millennia of autocracy and dictatorship.

Therefore, I believe that my colleagues can do their jobs well, I trust that my predecessors of June 4th will cooperate effectively, I believe that my compatriots and allies can stand with us, and I also believe that you can make the right decisions. Ladies and gentlemen of the legislature, thank you for listening to my story. We are doing our jobs; now it's your turn.

After all, this future belongs to us, to them, and to you as well.