



The Long Arm of China: Global Efforts to Silence Critics from Tiananmen to Today

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Excerpts of Remarks
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One year ago, U.S. Army Major Xiong Yan was barred from visiting his dying mother in China. Major Yan is blacklisted, denied access to China because he was a student leader of the democracy protests of 1989. Major Yan's mother passed away last year, her son never had the chance to say goodbye.

The Communist leaders in Beijing use the blacklist—along with intimidation, repression, and the lure of the Chinese market—to stifle discussion of the violent suppression of the Tiananmen protests and their violent suppression.

Academics such as Perry Link and Andrew Nathan are also blacklisted for writing about Tiananmen. U.S. corporations, eager to gain access to the China's markets, also engage in censorship about Tiananmen. Last year the California based LinkedIn began blocking Tiananmen-related articles posted inside China or by members hosted on its Chinese site.

The methods used by Beijing to enforce a code of silence have gone global. The heavy hand of the Chinese government has expanded beyond its borders to intimidate and stifle critical discussion of the Chinese government's human rights record and repressive policies.

Before I talk more broadly about our hearing today, let me first say a few words about the Tiananmen massacre.

The CECC has solemnly commemorated the Tiananmen massacre on and around June 4 each year. The Congress does this because of the lives lost and persons permanently injured in the massacre. We do so because of the profound impact the event has had on U.S.-China relations and because so many former student leaders have made important contributions to the global understanding of China. We mark June 4th each year because the Chinese people are unable to mark this event themselves.

This year the Congress is not in session on June 4th, but Senator Rubio and I will be sending a letter to President Xi Jinping asking him to allow uncensored, public discussion of the democracy protests of 1989; to end efforts to retaliate against those who participated in the

protests, and to release all those still detained for holding commemorations about the Tiananmen protests and their violent suppression.

We will urge President Xi to allow discussion of China's past history. We believe transparency is in the best interest of U.S.-China relations and will improve global perceptions of China.

President Xi, however, seems to have a different conception of what is in China's interest. As is well-documented already by this Commission, his government is engaged in an extraordinary assault on civil society and advocates for human rights.

China is not only interested in containing the spread of "Western values and ideas" within China, but is actively engaged in trying to roll back democracy and human rights norms globally.

In fact it would be fitting to have an empty chair at the witness table today representing every dissident fearful of sharing their story, every writer whose work has been censored or edited by Chinese authorities without their knowledge and every journalist whose critical reporting has been blocked or tempered—not just in China, but in the West.

China's recent efforts to blunt scrutiny of its rights record and criticism of government policies include:

1) Pushing Thailand and Cambodia to forcibly repatriate Uyghur refugees and Chinese asylum seekers.

2) Disappearing and allegedly abducting five Hong Kong booksellers, including the father of one of our witnesses today.

3) Supporting clandestine efforts to discredit the Dalai Lama through a Communist Party-supported rival Buddhist sect;

4) Harassing and detaining the family members of foreign journalists and human rights advocates. Two of our witnesses today will attest to such harassment.

5) Threatening the operations of non-governmental organizations engaged in work in China through the newly passed Overseas NGO Management Law and other means. Dr. Teng Biao will talk about the cancelation of his book project by the American Bar Association.

We asked the ABA to testify today, but the ABA President Paulette Brown and the ABA's CEO Jack Rives were not available to testify on this day. The ABA sent a letter to the Commission last month, responding to an inquiry by the Commission about the details surrounding the ABA's rescinding of Teng Biao's book project. They want that letter to serve as their testimony.

A copy of the Commission letter to the ABA and the ABA's response will be added to the record without objection.

The long reach of China extends beyond its borders to Thailand, South Korea, Malaysia, India, Kenya, at the U.N., and in the U.S.

These efforts present real strategic implications for the U.S. and the international community. The abductions of the booksellers challenge the one-country, two systems model in Hong Kong. China's efforts to bend international human rights norms present a clear challenge to the U.N and the Human Rights Council efforts to hold China accountable. China's efforts to enforce a code of silence globally through its economic and diplomatic clout directly challenges the Obama Administration's "Asia Pivot" and U.S. human rights diplomacy.

The President and his Administration have only a few more chances to raise human rights concerns with China—the Strategic and Economic Dialogue in two weeks and the G-20 meeting in September.

The Congress and this Commission will press the Administration to do more to advance human rights in China. President Obama must "shine a light" on human rights problems in China, because nothing good happens in the dark.

But we must also look ahead, use our Commission hearings, our Annual Report, and other publications to make a compelling case for the next Administration about the centrality of human rights to U.S. interests in Asia.

It is increasingly clear that there is direct link between China's domestic human rights problems and the security and prosperity of the United States. The health of the U.S. economy and environment, the safety of our food and drug supplies, the security of our investments and personal information in cyberspace, and the stability of the Pacific region will depend on China complying with international law, allowing the free flow of news and information, complying with its WTO obligations, and protecting the basic rights of Chinese citizens, including the fundamental freedoms of religion, expression, assembly, and association.

Losing sight of these facts leads to bad policy, bad diplomacy, and the needless juxtaposition of values and interests. It also sends the wrong message to those in China standing courageously for greater freedoms, human rights, and the rule of law. The human rights lawyers, the free press advocates, and those fighting for labor rights, religious freedom, and democracy are the best hope for China's future. And, they are the best hope for a more stable and prosperous U.S.-China relationship.

We turn to our witnesses today. To hear their stories and their recommendations about U.S. human rights diplomacy in China.