

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 10, 2012

The Honorable Barack H. Obama
The President
The White House
Washington DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

By every measure, the human rights situation continues to worsen in China: House church leaders are routinely arrested and detained; pro-democracy activists and writers are denied access to high-ranking Western visitors and placed under house arrest; peaceful protests in Tibet are met with brutal crackdowns; Internet blackouts and increased Chinese security forces. The list grows by the week.

For years the international community has been promised that with China's ascension to the World Trade Organization or with Beijing's hosting of the Olympics, we would see tangible reforms and a growing space for dissent as is befitting a nation of growing prominence on the world stage. These promises have been empty, and now these words ring hollow.

It is clear that our current approach to China is not working. Quiet diplomacy, whereby grave human rights and religious freedom abuses are reportedly discussed in private meetings but rarely, if ever, raised publicly, has not yielded results. Arguably it has only emboldened the oppressors.

We believe that the time-tested approach of President Ronald Reagan during the dark days of the Soviet Union, when he spoke out on behalf of specific dissidents by name, linking human rights to every other facet of U.S.-Soviet relations rather than sidelining it in the context of larger bilateral relations, is the most effective way forward and we urge you to adopt this approach in your upcoming meeting with Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping on February 14. Specifically, we ask that you raise the cases of six prominent Chinese citizens who have suffered greatly at the hands of their own government: Gao Zhisheng, Guo Quan, Chen Guangcheng, Liu Xianbin, Alimujiang Yimiti and Pastor Yang Rongli.

We also urge you and Vice President Biden to meet with Mrs. Li Jing (wife of Guo Quan) and Mrs. Geng He (wife of Gao Zhisheng) before your meeting with Xi Jinping in order to hear first-hand about the plight of these brave dissidents.

- Gao Zhisheng is an award-winning human rights lawyer who handled a number of high-profile cases, including the defense of persecuted Christians in Kashgar and in the

Xinjiang Autonomous Region and Falun Gong practitioners. He is believed to be currently incarcerated in Shaya County, Xianjiang where he is undergoing an “education period,” according to Chinese security agents. His abduction, arrest, detention and prosecution has been shrouded in mystery with Chinese authorities severely restricting access to him—so much so that he was periodically believed to have been tortured to death. His wife, daughter and son fled to the United States in January 2009 shortly before Gao was abducted by Chinese authorities.

- Guo Quan has been in prison since 2008, serving a 10-year sentence for calling for political reform. He was taken into custody after participating in a campaign to protect the rights of demobilized military officers and publishing a criticism of the government’s response to the Sichuan earthquake. Guo’s wife and son fled to the United States on January 23, 2012 and are appealing for international help to win Guo’s early release.
- Chen Guangcheng, a blind, self-taught lawyer, has been under house arrest since he finished serving his four-year prison term in late 2010. He was sentenced for exposing the 130,000 forced abortions and tubal ligations performed on women in the Linyi region in 2005. In 2011, he and his wife were severely beaten. Visitors, including U.S. actor Christian Bale who tried to visit him in December 2011, have been forcefully turned away.
- Liu Xianbin has been in prison since 2010 and is serving a 10-year sentence for criticizing the Chinese government in articles published on overseas Websites. He was an active participant in the 1989 Tiananmen Square movement. On September 13, 2011, his 14-year old daughter fled China and arrived in the U.S. alone.
- Alimujiang Yimiti is a Uyghur Christian from Xinjiang who has been serving a 15-year prison term since 2008 for his house church leadership among Uyghurs. On September 12, 2008, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention ruled that Alimujiang’s arrest and detention was arbitrary.
- Pastor Yang Rongli has been serving a 7 and a half year prison term and her husband has been serving a 3-year prison term since 2009 for leading the 50,000 member Linfen house church in Shanxi province.

These prisoners of conscience represent the thousands of men and women in China who courageously challenge the status quo at great cost and peril to themselves and their families. We urge you, in your Tuesday meeting, to raise their cases by name, press for their immediate and unconditional release and make it clear to the Chinese authorities that America will continue to do so, both privately and publicly, until and unless we see concrete steps forward on the part of the Chinese government.

There are countless cases you could raise, including imprisoned Nobel Laureate Liu Xiaobo as well as the sons of prominent Uyghur human rights activist Rebiya Kadeer who also languish behind bars. These are among the broader issues you could raise, including the escalating abuses

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suffered by the people of Tibet marked in part by the tragic wave of self-immolations or the continued restrictions on the Internet, free speech and free press.

As Xi Jinping prepares to presumably take the reins of power in China, and as the Chinese communist party tightens its grip during this time of transition, it must be made abundantly clear that a new day has dawned in U.S.-China relations: human rights, religious freedom and the quest for basic liberties will be at the very center of any conversation because they are, quite simply, non-negotiable.

Martin Luther King famously said, "in the end we will not remember the words of our enemies but the silence of our friends." America is a friend to the imprisoned human rights lawyer. America is friend to the young Tibetan nun. America is a friend to the tortured human rights activist. Let us not be silent in the face of their suffering.

We look forward to your response; as do so many in China who long for America to champion their plight.

Sincerely,



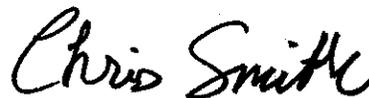
Frank R. Wolf
Member of Congress



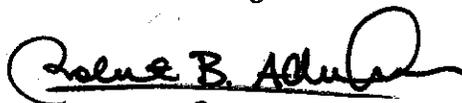
Joseph R. Pitts
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