



An Appeal for Public, Clear Opposition to China's Rights Record on Xi Jinping's Visit

We write to the US administration as a group of International US-based organizations advocating for human rights in China, Tibet, Southern Mongolia, East Turkestan, and other regions. For decades, we have provided successive US governments with a wide breadth of advocacy expertise and experience with respect to human rights in China. Today, during the Chinese President's visit to the Mar-a-lago resort, we call on US President Trump and his administration to share our concerns and recommendations, and to clearly and strongly communicate them.

Our group shares the common view that advocacy for human rights and freedom cannot be compromised in the face of increased challenges, but rather that it should be raised more emphatically in such circumstances. Any compromise in the expression of both advocacy for and solidarity with human rights defenders marks an erosion in American values and priorities rooted in democracy and freedom of expression.

We ask the US Government to take into account the following key areas of concern:

Intensified Religious Repression

Since July of 2016, the demolitions and evictions of thousands of monks and nuns at Larung Gar and Yachen Gar have laid bare an atrocious disregard for religious freedom in Tibet. The EU Parliament and various U.N. experts have condemned these acts. We urge the Trump administration to press China to immediately halt these demolitions and evictions.

Failed 'Rule of Law'

China has shown complete disregard for both international and its domestic laws. The case of jailed Tibetan political prisoner Tashi Wangchuk, who advocated legally for the protection of the Tibetan language is an example of China's policy of cultural repression, similar to the case of Shokjang, a writer serving a harsh sentence for expressing his views.

Countering China's Regressive Influence

As Xi Jinping looks to the end of his first term in office, we see a marked regression in all areas of civil society, and an unprecedented crackdown on NGOs through new policies restricting foreign support for Chinese civil society groups. Such restrictions clearly indicate a policy of limiting NGO activities to only those under the full control by the authorities. We are also concerned about policies that not only lack the input and participation of local communities but are clearly adverse to sustainable development with disastrous consequences for the culture and ways of life for impacted groups.

Freedom of Expression

Suppression of the right to freedom of expression in China remains an ongoing and critical concern. Recent crackdowns have taken place not only in Beijing, but in various inland and coastal provinces, the Autonomous Regions of Tibet, Xinjiang, and Inner Mongolia, and in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. In recent years, there have been numerous cases of writers held under vague national security provisions solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression, one of the highest numbers in the world, and the persecution has persisted.

Cases of those imprisoned for expressing dissenting views include those of Su Changlan and Chen Qitang, who each received the sentence of several years of imprisonment for expressing support for the 2014

pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong. Publisher Gui Minhai, a Swedish citizen, remains in incommunicado detention after being forcibly abducted from Thailand by Chinese state agents in October 2015. Recent cases such as these are in addition to long-standing cases of writers imprisoned for their work, including the imprisoned Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and writer Liu Xiaobo (whose wife, poet Liu Xia, has been subjected to unlawful house arrest since 2010 and who recently had to celebrate her 56th birthday under this condition) and the Uyghur academic Ilham Tohti and numerous others.

Chinese authorities' efforts to restrict its citizens to pre-approved ideas only even extends to children's books. In March, Chinese regulators reportedly delivered orders to publishers to limit the publication of children's books by foreign authors to only a few hundred titles.

These restrictions extend to Internet freedoms. The draconian Cyber-Security Law set to go into effect on June 1, 2017 will likely further restrict freedom of expression online and continue censorship of the Internet throughout the country, including the harassment of online writers and journalists, and imprisonment for the publication of critical reports and commentaries. In January, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology declared new requirements for preauthorization of Virtual Private Network (VPN) sales, indicating its intent to plug all exits from its 'Great Firewall' and control the information its citizens can access.

Despite the Chinese authorities' arbitrary arrest, extrajudicial detention and long term imprisonment, Southern Mongolian intellectuals and ordinary herders are standing up to defend their freedom of speech, press and assembly, and the rights to maintain their culture, language and way of life. Mr. Hada is still under a form of house after serving a 15-year imprisonment and an additional 4-year extrajudicial detention; Mr. Wenming is still in jail for expressing his support to Mongolian rural communities' actions to defend their land and rights; hundreds of herders are arrested, detained and sent to jail on daily basis for protesting against mining, land appropriation, pollution and environmental destruction.

Crackdowns on Civil Society

Restrictions imposed upon foreign NGOs—including groups dedicated to literary advancement, journalism, or protection of free expression—under the 2016 Law on the Management of Foreign Non-Governmental Organizations' (NGO) Activities Within Mainland China went into effect on January 1, 2017. This law provides the government new tools to silence foreign NGOs in the name of such vaguely-defined concepts as "social morality" and "unity and solidarity", and enables further repression of groups which work on human rights or civil rights within the country. The recent detention of Taiwanese rights activist Lee Ming-cheh is further evidence of China's hostile attitude towards NGOs and civil society.

Meanwhile, many prominent members of China's civil society—including activists, human rights lawyers, and writers—remain in jail as a result of the "709 Crackdown," a wave of arrests of hundreds of civil society members in July 2015.

We urge you to raise our concerns and recommendations, and publicly emphasize your commitment to the protection of fundamental rights in accordance with international human rights standards during and following the summit. We welcome future opportunities to engage with you and your administration to discuss these concerns further.

PEN America

Students for a Free Tibet International

Human Rights in China

Initiatives for China

Tibet Justice Center

Southern Mongolia Human Rights Information Centre

Uyghur American Association