

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 16, 2024

U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

We write to bring your attention to the ongoing atrocities and other human rights abuses being perpetrated by the Chinese government. We urge you to raise a list of specific prominent cases when the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Working Group of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) meets to review China's human rights record on January 23, 2024; a copy of a list of political prisoners provided to the Administration in advance of the Asia-Pacific Cooperation Leaders' Meeting in San Francisco is [attached](#) for ease of reference.

In particular we wish to highlight the following cases:

Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region ("XUAR")

We welcomed the determination issued by the U.S. State Department in January 2021 that the Chinese government has committed genocide and crimes against humanity against the predominantly Muslim Uyghurs and other members of ethnic and religious minority groups in the XUAR. As you know, the widespread and systematic abuses against Muslims and others living in the XUAR include arbitrary detention, torture, and other ill-treatment, including allegations of forced organ harvesting similar to that reported by other religious and ethnic minorities.

The families of the following individuals – who represent only a small percentage of Uyghur individuals who have lost their freedom due to their work and identity – have not heard from them since they were taken into custody.

Rahile Dawut, a Uyghur cultural studies scholar, was sentenced on an unknown date believed to be between December 2018 and early 2019 to life imprisonment on the charge of "separatism."

Dr. Gulshan Abbas was sentenced to 20 years of imprisonment in 2019 merely for her sister Rushan Abbas' activism in the United States.

Ilham Tohti, a Uyghur professor, was sentenced to life imprisonment in 2014 on the charge of "separatism."

Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, after the draconian National Security Law (NSL) came into force in 2020, dozens of activists have been criminalized and imprisoned for their advocacy. A severe crackdown on human rights defenders and restrictions on freedom of expression has continued.

Human rights lawyer **Chow Hang-tung** is currently imprisoned under charges including "unlawful assembly" and "inciting subversion." The charges are premised on her peaceful speech and activities relating to the commemoration of the 1989 Tiananmen crackdown.

Newspaper publisher, entrepreneur and democracy advocate **Jimmy Lai** is currently being tried for violations under the National Security Law. He faces life imprisonment. Since his detention and the closure of the pro-democracy newspaper Apple Daily that he founded, the Hong Kong government has systematically dismantled press freedom and closed almost all independent news outlets. The senior editors of the now-defunct Stand News, **Chung Pui-kuen** and **Patrick Lam**, are likewise facing criminal charges of sedition for the exercise of free speech.

Rights Defenders

In mainland China, activists **Sophia Huang Xueqin** and **Wang Jianbing** are accused of “inciting subversion of state power.” Each face prison sentences of up to five years for, respectively, being involved in campaigns to provide support and assistance to survivors of sexual assault and harassment, and providing legal support for people with disabilities and workers with occupational diseases.

Human rights lawyer **Gao Zhisheng** was taken into custody in August 2017 after writing a book about the torture and harassment he experienced in detention. He has not been seen or heard from since. His U.S.-based family and loved ones have never stopped fearing for his life given the repeated mistreatment he has endured over the past 17 years.

Tibet

In Tibetan areas, authorities continue to restrict, and seek to control, the religious practices of Tibetans, conduct massive police surveillance programs and collect personal biometric data of millions of people, and reduce educational instruction in Tibetan languages, including in a network of colonial boarding schools that house a majority of Tibetan school-age children.

Drubpa Kyab (or **Gangkye Drubpa Kyab**) is a Tibetan intellectual who was detained in March 2021 and sentenced in September 2022 to a 14-year prison term for “inciting separatism.” He is one of at least six prominent Tibetans detained around the same time and sentenced in September 2022, and suffered severe injuries from torture when previously detained in 2016.

Rongbo Gangkar is a Tibetan writer and translator who was detained in early 2021 for calling for a celebration of the Dalai Lama’s birthday, and whose whereabouts and condition remain unknown.

American Citizens and Lawful Permanent Residents

There are several American Citizens and Lawful Permanent Residents who are wrongfully detained in China.

Kai Li is an American citizen and Long Island resident and has been wrongfully detained since 2016 on fabricated espionage charges. He was visiting Shanghai for a ceremony to mark the one-year anniversary of his mother’s death. Others include pastor **David Lin**, detained in 2006 on pretextual charges and scheduled to be released in 2030, and **Mark Swidan**, whose imprisonment has been deemed “arbitrary” by the U.N. Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

Transnational Repression

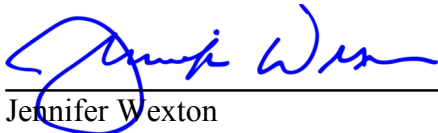
The Chinese government has engaged in a campaign of transnational repression to harass diaspora communities and regime critics living around the world, specifically targeting democracy and rights advocates, Uyghurs, Hong Kongers, Tibetans, and others from groups that have been suppressed domestically. This deters reporting about human rights violations in the PRC suffered by family members and friends living in China. PRC agents – including those linked to the Ministry of State Security and provincial or local police forces – have engaged in forced rendition of asylum seekers, street assaults, digital surveillance, online harassment, and the coercion and intimidation of the family and friends of dissidents and political prisoners in the United States and other countries around the world.

One of China's obligations as a current member of the UN HRC is to “uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights and fully cooperate with the Council.” Its re-election to the Council in October 2023 for another three-year term cannot serve as a free pass to avoid oversight.

The U.S. government must hold the Chinese government accountable and ask it to end its ongoing gross human rights violations towards its own people and respect its human rights obligations.

We urge you to raise the above-mentioned individuals by name in the United States’ submission to the UPR Working Group and work with allies to raise additional cases of individuals arbitrarily and unjustly detained in the PRC. By pressing the Chinese government during the upcoming UPR process to release these individuals, the State Department will demonstrate that the U.S. government not only stands firm in its commitment to universal human rights, but also stands in solidarity with the numerous victims, and families of victims, of the Chinese government’s ongoing abuses.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Wexton
Member of Congress



Christopher H. Smith
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Jim Tokuda
Member of Congress



Nick LaLota
Member of Congress



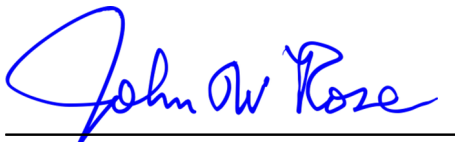
Young Kim
Member of Congress



Dina Titus
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



John Rose
Member of Congress



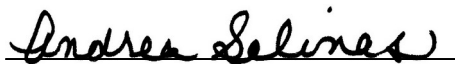
Nicole Malliotakis
Member of Congress



Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress



Eric Swalwell
Member of Congress



Andrea Salinas
Member of Congress



Zach Nunn
Member of Congress