

Testimony of Sylvin Myomin Zin
Wife of Min Zin, American Citizen Wrongfully Detained in China
House Foreign Affairs Committee Subcommittee on East Asia and the Pacific
September 16, 2026
2:00 p.m.

Chairwoman Kim, Ranking Member Bera, thank you for inviting me to testify before the Subcommittee regarding the wrongful detention of my husband, Min Zin, in China. I am grateful for the opportunity to highlight his case, but truth be told, I wish I did not need to be here today. I have never sought the spotlight. The last time I had to do any kind of public speaking was in high school. Although I used to be an engineer for the American tech industry, I am now a stay-at-home mother. But I will try my best to be the voice for my husband, knowing he would be proud that I am sitting before you all today on his behalf.

Our family's nightmare began on June 3rd, when my husband flew into Kunming, China from our current home in Chiang Mai, Thailand at the invitation of a local university to participate in an academic workshop. It was not his first time visiting China. He attended a high-profile academic conference in Shanghai last October without incident, so we had no reason to be anxious or unsettled by this trip.

However, when neither our family nor his office had heard from Min Zin for over six hours after he was scheduled to arrive, which is contrary to our established protocols, we became alarmed and began trying to reach him and his hosts. When calls and messages to his phone went unanswered, we reached out to the hotel where he was supposed to stay. He had not checked in. We reached out to Kunming airport security. They said all his fellow passengers had cleared immigration. He was the only one who had not. The professor who had invited Min Zin to the conference and was to pick him up at the airport said he waited for hours, but except for a brief text notifying that he had landed, the professor too was unable to reach Min Zin.

Colleagues at his office were able to track his phone, which went dark 67 kilometers southwest of Kunming airport. At this point, it was nearly 1:00am on June 4th and we reached out to American Citizen Services at the US Embassy in Beijing. They asked that we call the U.S. consulate in Guangzhou after Min Zin had been out of contact for 24 hours. When I called the Consulate, they took down basic information about Min Zin and said that it sometimes takes a couple of days to get information from Chinese authorities in cases like this. Family friends alerted US officials in Washington, who knew Min Zin or were familiar with his work on Burma's political situation.

At about 4:30pm the next day, I received a call from a Chinese number which I immediately answered. A voice with a heavy accent told me Min Zin was in custody and the Ministry of State Security in Yunnan was conducting a "compulsory preliminary investigation." When I tried to clarify what this meant, the line went dead. Panicked, I informed the consulate of the call. They immediately began putting inquiries in with the Chinese government. At about 10:00pm the following day, June 5th, the consulate received a short fax from the Chinese authorities stating Min Zin had been detained by the Ministry of State Security in Yunnan and was under investigation for "endangering national security."

We were stunned. My husband of 15 years, Min Zin is a University of California - Berkeley scholar and the executive director of the Institute for Strategy and Policy (ISP) - Myanmar, a think tank that conducts open-source research on the situation in Burma. His lifelong work is entirely dedicated to independent academic inquiry and using his skills and knowledge to advance understanding and improve policy outcomes.

My husband's sudden detention has upended our lives, leaving our fourteen-year-old daughter, Suu, deeply anxious and unsure about our future. When she learned of her father's detention, she asked me what would happen to him and to us. As heartbreaking as it was, I could not give her an exact answer. The best I could do was to reassure her that I would do everything in my power to protect her and bring him back home.

The past three months have been agonizing, and we feel Min Zin's absence daily. I had to drive our daughter alone to her first day of freshman year at high school, and he was absent from her recent school band performance. We missed being with him on his most recent birthday on September 9th. Despite his heavy travel schedule, our family has a strict rule to always be together for birthdays. Even during the pandemic, our daughter and I traveled to wave to him through the window of his quarantine hotel room when we could not see him in person. This was the first time in my daughter's life that our family was not together for a birthday.

We anxiously await his monthly consular visits, which reassure us he is alive and mentally strong, but otherwise often raises more questions than answers. Yesterday, US Consular officials were able to visit my husband for the fourth time since his detention. These visits are not conducted where he is being held, but at a hotel outside Kunming, so we have little information about the conditions under which he is being held. The Chinese authorities are extremely restrictive about what he is allowed to discuss with consular officers. They will not allow him to discuss anything about his case. Initially we were told he is interrogated every day for 4-6 hours, and is held in a very small cell where the lights remain on 24/7. He is only allowed outside when he is transported to and from consular visits, hooded and shackled. As a devout Buddhist, Min Zin meditates daily but the authorities regularly interrupt or arbitrarily limit his practice. During his last consular visit, he was told not to discuss anything about his interrogation or to ask about his colleagues - rules that are arbitrarily enforced and backed by threats to terminate the consular visit.

On August 20th, Secretary of State Marco Rubio officially designated Min Zin as wrongfully detained - a step that has reassured me and my daughter that our government is also fighting for his release. For myself, my daughter, and my husband's colleagues in the research community, it was also a deeply meaningful signal that the U.S. rejects China's attempts to portray this open-source research as a crime. We are so grateful to Secretary Rubio and President Trump for all they are doing and will do to ensure Min Zin comes home to us. I also want to personally thank Ambassador Purdue and his team in China and all the others in the U.S. government who have been fighting every day to bring our Min Zin home.

We are also grateful we were able to secure a Chinese lawyer for Min Zin. The authorities did not allow Min Zin to sign the power of attorney paperwork until his third consular visit - 68 days

into his detention - and they continue to deny Min Zin access to his lawyer. The Chinese authorities indicated the lawyer will not get access to Min Zin until after charges are filed.

I hope it will not come to that. Next week, President Trump will meet with Xi Jinping here in Washington, DC. I am deeply hopeful President Trump will raise my husband's case during the summit. I am confident in President Trump's abilities to swiftly secure the release of Min Zin and other wrongfully detained American citizens such as Dr. Youlin Chen. President Trump has made it clear that securing the release of Americans wrongfully detained abroad is one of his Administration's highest priorities. During his time in office, he has secured the release of more than 100 Americans detained or held hostage abroad. I know that Min Zin's release will soon add to that number and our families' nightmare will soon come to an end.

Thank you for inviting me here today and for all you have done to advocate for my husband's immediate and unconditional release. I look forward to your questions.