

Hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs to be held by the Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations in Room 2255 of the Rayburn House Office Building

DATE: Tuesday, October 29, 2013

TIME: 2:30 p.m.

SUBJECT: Guo Feixiong and Freedom of Expression in China

WITNESSES: Ms. Zhang Qing Wife of Guo Feixiong

Ms. Yang Tianjiao Daughter of Guo Feixiong

Pastor Bob Fu Founder and President ChinaAid Association

Mr. Chen Guangcheng

CHAIRMEN: Christopher H. Smith (R-NJ)

**The Chinese Government is Severely Suppressing Dissident Leaders. The Environment for Freedom of Speech Continues to Worsen.**

Pastor Bob Fu, president of China Aid Association.

Since the beginning of this year, the environment for freedom of speech in China has rapidly worsened. The Chinese Communist authorities have launched a campaign across China to strictly purge opinions voiced on the Internet. Meanwhile, the official propaganda of the Chinese Communists severely criticizes democratic constitutional trains of thought. Besides, the Communist government also severely suppresses the new civil movement. According to incomplete statistics, from the protest incident of INFZM.com of Nanfang Daily until now, over 100 people across China have been arrested for expressing themselves or for peaceful petitioning.

Mr. Guo Feixiong was secretly arrested under such a circumstance. Guo Feixiong is a prominent dissident and a rights defender in China. In the past 10 years, he has been illegally detained and arrested many times. On November 12, 2007, he was sentenced to five years by the Chinese Communists. During his detention, he was tortured and mistreated many times. The direct reason for Guo Feixiong's arrest this August is his participation in the peaceful protest by INFZM.com of Nanfang Daily at the beginning of this year. He delivered a speech to the crowd calling on the government officials to make public the value of their properties and calling for freedom of speech and freedom of press. His lawyer's requests to meet with Guo Feixiong were rejected six times by the Public Security agency.

**Let me elaborate on three aspects that prove that the human rights status in China continues to worsen and the space for freedom of speech is further condensed.**

**1. The Chinese Communist government is reorganizing and strictly controlling the Internet.**

There has been a huge increase in the number of cyberpolice officers in China. The Golden Shield Project and the Great Firewall of China strictly shield overseas websites that the Chinese Communists think are sensitive, and they filter a large amount of information. The socializing tools of the Chinese citizens such as email, Microblog, QQ, Skype, Wechat, etc., have been under surveillance. Many netizens have been summoned or detained just because they talked about civil society, gatherings in the same city, constitutionalism and democracy in their QQ chatting lounges or emails. The Chinese government has trained two million web moderators to delete posted messages and to “guide public opinion.” Such a system of selective and unilateral indoctrination of information is a typical means by which an autocratic society monopolizes information and controls people’s mind.

In the past four months, the Chinese Communists have arrested some influential people in their exclusive operation called “reorganizing and cracking down on web rumors,” such as Xue Biquan (net name: Xue Manzi) who has 12 million fans, Qin Zhihui (net name: Qin Huohuo), Yang Xiuyu (net name: Lisanchaisi), Zhou Lubao, Fu Xuesheng, Dong Liangjie (important environmentalists), and Dong Rubin (net name: Bianmin). The purpose of this operation by the Chinese Communists is to warn and punish those influential public intellectuals so that the ordinary netizens will not dare to voice their opinions on political and social issues that the Chinese Communists think are sensitive.

For this purpose, the Supreme People’s Court and the Supreme People’s Procuratorate in China jointly issued “Interpretation on Several Questions on the Applicable Law on Criminal Cases of Utilizing the Internet for Slandering.” The judicial interpretation clearly stipulates: “Those who utilize the Internet to slander other people and whose slandering information has over 5,000 hits or whose information has been transferred for over 500 times would fit in the case of ‘serious circumstance that constitutes the crime of slandering’ as stipulated in Clause 1 of Article 246 of the Criminal Law of the People’s Republic of China. The publication of this regulation has caused hundreds of millions of netizens to fear freely expressing themselves. There are no ways for the Chinese people to get true and complete information and to truly express their own opinions and publish their comments on public issues that concern them.

**2. The Chinese Communists severely suppress people who freely express themselves and peacefully fight for civil rights.**

A group of public intellectuals with a sense of social responsibility and citizens who are fighting for basic human rights are being cracked down on by the Chinese Communist government.

Several dozens of these citizens have been arrested and will face sentencing for calling on the government officials to make public the value of their properties, for calling for the implementation of constitutional democracy and free elections and for fighting for equality in the right to receive education.

Dr. Xu Zhiyong, an instructor at Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications and the former head of Open Constitution Initiative, was placed on criminal detention on July 16, 2013, on the charge of “gathering a mob to disrupt the order of a public place” because he called for the establishment of a civil society and equality in the right to education. On August 23, he was officially arrested. Mr. Wang Gongquan, a famous investor in China who is enthusiastic in public good and who called for actions of new citizens and equality in the right to education was placed on criminal detention on the same charge as Xu Zhiyong. He was officially arrested last week.

In March, Yuan Dong, Zhang Baocheng, Hou Xin, Ma Xinli and other citizens totaling 10 people drew a banner in Xidan, Beijing asking the government officials to make public the value of their properties. They were placed under criminal detention. After that, several dozens of citizens from Guangzhou in the south through Harbin in the north have been arrested for going into the streets calling for the government officials to make public the value of their properties. On April 17, Mr. Zhao Changqing, a prominent Christian dissident, was arrested in Beijing. He was arrested only because he peacefully unfolded a banner in a street in Beijing demanding that the government officials make public the value of their properties. Ding Jiayi, a rights defense attorney, was arrested with the same charge.

At the end of April, Liu Ping, Wei Zhongping, and Li Sihua of Xinyu City, Jiangxi Province were arrested for publicly calling for free elections. The case was tried in court yesterday. The dissident Zhang Lin was arrested on July 28 for publicly protesting against the local government for depriving his daughter of her right to attend schools. This is the fifth time he has been arrested. On August 10, Li Huaping, a web writer in Shanghai, was arrested for calling for the citizens in the same city to gather together. On September 3, Yao Cheng, a rights defender in Anhui, was arrested by the police for fighting for Zhang Lin’s 10-year-old daughter’s right to attend schools. According to incomplete statistics, in half a year, over 100 people across China have been arrested for freely expressing themselves or for peacefully gathering together to protest.

We see from this that since Mr. Xi Jinping took power, the Chinese government has become more severe in suppressing the rights defenders, restricting the freedom of speech and in controlling the society.

### **3. The status of human rights continues to worsen and the rule of law has suffered a retrogression.**

Due to the growth of the Internet, the number of netizens in China is already nearly 600 million. There is no way that the Chinese Communists can completely block information and control public opinions as they used to do in the past. On the one hand, the corruption of the Chinese Communist officials has reached a high point rarely seen in history and the conflicts between the officials and the general public are becoming more and more intense. On the other hand, the general public has experienced an awakening in their consciousness of civil rights and human rights. The great masses all call on the Chinese Communists to launch political reforms, implement democratic constitutionalism as soon as possible and protect basic human rights from being violated.

To keep social stability and consolidate its own power, the Chinese Communists disregard various increasingly-aggravating social crises, ignore the appeal of hundreds of millions of people, and disregard the pressure from the international community. They resort to high-handed policies in dealing with the great masses. Doubtlessly, more than ever before, China has become a police state. Governments at various levels totally disregard the law and depend on violent means to solve various social conflicts. The disasters of human rights happen frequently and the rule of law has obviously suffered a retrogression.

Every day in China, there are thousands of incidents of forced demolition of houses and every year dozens of millions of people's properties are violated. As a result, there are dozens of millions of petitioners. However, the great majority of these petitioners who try to seek justice and rule of law from the higher authorities are brutally treated by the governments at various levels. Since the beginning of this year, forced demolition has caused the death of dozens of people. The citizens are violently deprived of their right of properties and other legal rights. By October, the Shanghai petitioner Feng Zhenghu has been under arbitrary detention and illegal surveillance at his residence for nearly 800 days.

The Chinese Communist government continues to severely suppress the house churches and persecute the Christians there. In April of this year, Han Hai and six other Christians from Pingdingshan City of Henan Province were sentenced from three years to seven and a half years of imprisonment by the local court on the crime of being a cult while the real reason is just because they studied the Bible on a Sunday. On June 17, 2013, Xiaodian District Court of Taiyuan in the trial of first instance sentenced Ren Lacheng, a Christian from Enyu Bookstore, to five years in prison and sentenced Li Wenxi to two years in prison on the charge of "illegal business operation."

On August 31, 2013, Liang Zhongxin, a Christian and a Sunday school teacher in a house church in Shaya County, Xinjiang, and three other people were placed under a 15-day administrative detention and were fined 1,000 yuan for giving Bible lessons to some middle school students. On July 25, 2013, a court in Inner Mongolia sentenced Christian Hu Gong to nine years in prison and sentenced Wen Weihong and Liu Aiying to eight years in prison on the same charge. According to incomplete statistics, within half a year, about a hundred house churches in over 10 provinces in China have suffered persecution. The gatherings at these house churches were raided, church properties were confiscated, religious books and other items were destroyed, believers were illegally detained and threatened, and pastors were detained.

What has aroused the most concern is the incident in which Peking University dismissed associate professor Xia Yeliang, which shows the position of the Chinese government in strictly controlling the freedom of speech. Xia Yeliang promoted China's reform towards democratic constitutionalism on the Internet. Because of this, the school came under a great pressure from the authorities and had to dismiss him. There is ample evidence that shows there is a tendency that Xi Jinping's administration is trying to control the ideology as it was done during Mao Zedong's reign.

It's sad for us to see that the status of human rights and rule of law in China is seriously disconcerting. Without human dignity or basic human rights, the modernization of China is worthless. On the contrary, when China is headed toward the opposite direction of universal values, this doubtlessly poses a greater and greater threat to America and to the civilized world. America has a proud tradition of supporting freedom and justice. In the face of the Chinese Communist government that willfully tramples on the human dignity and opposes the universal values, America should loudly show its position to the Chinese Communist government, instead of doing nothing to restrain it.