

Reviewing President Xi's State Visit
Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Wednesday, October 07, 2015, 12:15 p.m.
Statement of Mr. Chen Guangcheng

Greetings to the Chair, Congresspeople, and all friends who take and interest in human rights.

Human rights are intricately connected with us all, and should be a central point in the relationship between China and the United States. Recently Xi Jinping visited the United States. Given China's atrocious human rights situation, people who pay attention to these things would expect that human rights would have a place in the discussions between Obama and Xi. Not only has persecution of so many people - including human rights defenders, human rights lawyers, democracy activists, religious believers, and petitioners - continued unabated at the hands of the Chinese Communist Party; it has actually increased in intensity. From July 9th of this year to today, over 300 have been victimized in the recent government crackdown. The violent family planning policy continues. Destruction of homes, confiscation of land, threats and harassment; the capture and detention of those who dare to speak out: all these continue to occur. It is even the case that in the process of petitioning, petitioners are blatantly killed. Just this September, a homeowner by the name of Zhang Jimin from Pingyi County in Shandong Province, was burned alive in his own home by the government in an attempt to force an eviction.

America is a global leader in human rights, a model for democracy and a symbol of freedom. As such, defending universal values should be an important responsibility for the United States, globally speaking. Of course, in Xi's recent visit to the United States, we don't know what Obama raised in terms of practical human rights issues, and we can't know whether such questions were raised in genuine concern for human rights or just simply as part of the job. But we did see that when Xi was hosted at the White House, Obama put up a screen of white cloth to keep Xi from seeing protestors.

In light of the fact that in recent years so many nations seem pleased at China's lack of concern for the wellbeing of its own people all the while showering money across the globe; and that so many nations focus on short-term interests while ignoring the horrendous human rights situation in China, I recommend the following:

1. The American president as well as congressional representatives need to pay close attention to human rights. They need to speak out openly to discuss human rights, and to speak with the media in detail about human rights issues. The American people need to understand the reality of the human rights situation in China, and by speaking openly and often about human rights US leaders will influence people's understanding. This will also affect the way Chinese leaders understand the US government's commitment to human rights.
2. Demand that China release all prisoners of conscience. The detention of people like Gao Zhisheng, Xu Zhiyong, Liu Ping, Li Heping, and Gao Yu is unacceptable.
3. Enact policy to prevent officials who are guilty of human rights violations from entering the United States, and freeze their financial assets located in the US.
4. Support the development of technology to get past the Great Firewall of China, and work to build democracy worldwide.