

Witness: Jiayin (Lisa) Peng, daughter of Peng Ming

Hearing: "Their Daughters Appeal to Beijing: 'Let Our Fathers Go!'"

Committee: House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations

Location: Room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building

DATE: Thursday, December 5, 2013

TIME: 11:00 a.m.

Testimony before Subcommittee on Africa, Health and Global Human Rights of the House Foreign Affairs Committee

By Jiayin (Lisa) Peng

Dear Honorable Chairman and distinguished members of Congress:

I am Lisa Peng, daughter of political dissident Mr. Peng Ming. I would like to thank you for reaffirming the universal values of freedom, democracy, and justice for my father, and other political dissidents like him. I know that my father would be very grateful for your efforts to revive his mission.

My father Mr. Peng Ming is an environmentalist, an economist, and a human rights activist. He is the author of *The Fourth Landmark*, a book on China's economic and political growth that was sponsored by the Ford Foundation. He was also the founder and president of China Development Union, an organization which sponsored think tanks that gave his fellow Chinese citizens the opportunity to discuss highly censored topics like freedom, democracy, and justice. As a result of his political activism, in 1999, my father was sentenced to eighteen months of "reeducation through labor" camp. At the time, I was two years old. Upon his release, my father was faced with the possibility of a second arrest, and so my family fled from political persecution in China to the United States as UN refugees in 2001. But eighteen months of labor camp did not stop my father from continuing to stand up for human rights. In 2004, when I was eight years old, my father went to Thailand to establish a safe haven for persecuted refugees. There, he was lured by eight Chinese secret police to the border of Thailand and Burma, where he was kidnapped at gunpoint and brought back to China, the country that had persecuted him in 1999, the country that now sentenced him to life in prison.

The United Nations Working Group for Arbitrary Detention has determined that the

deprivation of my father's liberty is arbitrary and is in contravention of articles 19 and 20 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Furthermore, my father is a U.S.-based dissident with UN refugee status who escaped political persecution in China. Therefore, his kidnap is in violation of the principle of non-refoulement, which forbids the return of a victim of persecution to their persecutor. My father has also been arbitrarily deprived of his right to due process, as he was denied access to a lawyer and to a jury of his peers.

Although my father has been denied the exercise of his right to freedom of expression, he continues to exercise physically and mentally. Despite nearly ten years in prison suffering heart attacks, arthritis, malnutrition, and kidney stones with no medical care, my father still persists and remains hopeful. It is this hope that my father has instilled in me despite the thousands of miles that have separated him from nearly a decade of my life, a decade during which I have been privileged to receive an American education and learn about freedom, democracy, and justice, but a decade during which my father has remained imprisoned for fighting to secure those very same values. As an American citizen, I cannot merely stand by and tacitly approve as these fundamental freedoms are undermined. It is Congress's unwavering dedication to upholding those values and unrelenting efforts to free prisoners of conscience that give me hope for the future, for the possibility of telling my father in person how much we have all cared about his health and his dream for China's future. I hope that my father will first and foremost be given proper medical attention and visitation rights, and ultimately I seek his release. I join with my fellow sisters here today to request Vice President Biden to ask Chinese leaders to release our fathers, and to request an Oval Office meeting with President Obama to share our stories. I know that my dream to be reunited with my father and my father's dream for his country can come true with your support, persistence, and affirmation of the universal and fundamental values of our country: freedom, democracy, and justice.

Thank you.