

December 8, 2003: China: Commission trip postponed again

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WASHINGTON - The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) is disappointed that a scheduled trip to China was postponed because of unacceptable conditions imposed on the Commission's visit by the Chinese government.

This is the second time this year that a trip has been canceled by the Chinese government over the issue of Commission access to Hong Kong. In July the Chinese government insisted that the Commission drop Hong Kong completely from its itinerary. This time, the Chinese government agreed to allow the Commission to "stopover" in Hong Kong, but insisted that Commissioners hold no meetings.

"Although we are encouraged by the demonstrated willingness of the Chinese side to schedule meetings for the Commissioners with relevant leaders on the Mainland," said USCIRF Chair Mike Young, "we are disappointed that the Hong Kong issue has again become a hindrance between our two countries, standing in the way of a productive interaction on religious freedom."

"The Commission has been put in an untenable position by the conditions placed on its visit to Hong Kong," said Young. "Accordingly, the Commission could not proceed with a trip until the larger issues can be worked out between our two governments."

"A successful Commission visit to China is in the interest of both our countries," said Young. "We hope the Commission can conduct meetings in China in the future on acceptable terms."