

## July 30, 2008: Members of Congress, USCIRF Commissioners Address Human Rights and Religious Freedom Concerns in China Beyond the Games

PRESS RELEASE

TRANSCRIPT

EVENT PHOTO GALLERY

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WASHINGTON—Six Members of Congress and widely respected human rights advocates joined their voices with United States Commission on International Religious Freedom on Wednesday, July 30, in a bipartisan expression of grave concern over the state of religious freedom and human rights in China on the eve of the Beijing Olympics.

“Hopes that the Olympic Games would dramatically improve human rights conditions in China have not been realized,” said Commission Chair Felice D. Gaer said at a press conference. “Instead, the situation has grown increasingly dire, particularly for many of China’s religious adherents.”

Rep. James P. McGovern (D-MA), Co-Chair of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, warned that “we can only fear what will happen when the torch is extinguished and the cameras disappear.” His colleague in the Caucus leadership, Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ), also registered alarm: “Tragically but predictably, the Olympics has been the occasion of a massive crackdown designed to silence and put beyond reach all those Chinese whose views differ from the government line.”

Reps. Zach Wamp (R-TN), Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA), Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX), and Lynn Woolsey (D-CA) also spoke at the press conference. “I urge the government of China to address the many concerns that surround allegations of human rights violations to conserve the integrity and symbolic importance of the Olympics,” Jackson Lee said.

By a vote of 419 to one, the House of Representatives on Wednesday adopted a resolution calling on the Chinese government to end human rights violations including repression of ethnic Tibetans and Uighurs, and to end support for the governments of Sudan and Burma. The resolution encourages President Bush to prominently raise human rights concerns during his trip to China for the opening ceremony of the Summer Games.

The Commission has also called on the president to speak publicly during his trip about the pressing need for China to guarantee universal human rights, including the freedom of thought, conscience, and religion, and to uphold the rule of law.

"We think such a message would reflect our country's firm commitment to protecting religious freedom and other human rights, and that it can be done best through a speech broadcast live on Chinese media," Gaer said. "Through such a speech, President Bush could convey his convictions directly to China's people as well as its leaders."

Commission Vice Chair Michael Cromartie spoke about the government crackdown on protests in Tibet this past spring, emphasizing how the Chinese government's policies of repression and control have backfired. "Tibetans want religious freedom without restrictions. They want to choose their own religious leaders without interference. They want to be free to venerate the Dalai Lama without fear of arrest," Cromartie said.

Commissioner Nina Shea discussed the Chinese government's severe restrictions on religious freedom for Uighur Muslims, while another Commissioner, Imam Talal Eid, spoke of the government's persecution of independent Christian groups and practitioners of the Falun Gong spiritual movement.

The Commissioners also stressed the need for China to withdraw its support for two of the world's greatest violators of religious freedom and other human rights: North Korea and Sudan.

Chinese rights advocates Harry Wu, Yiang Janli, and Wei Jingsheng, Uighur rights advocate Rebiya Kadeer, and Todd Stein of the International Campaign for Tibet all addressed the press conference.

"The issues of human rights and religious freedom in China are not Olympic issues, nor Tibetan issues, nor Christian issues, nor Uighur issues, nor Falun Gong issues, nor are they strictly internal issues as the Chinese government would have you believe," Yiang Janli said. "These issues are connected to the fundamental matter of freedom and democratization which are inseparable from the strategic interests of the United States."

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## FULL TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE

Rep. McGovern: Thank you for being here. I think we are going to begin.

Hillary Clinton says it takes a village; I think it takes a bigger room. I apologize for the tight quarters here for everybody. I'm Congressman Jim McGovern from Massachusetts. And as Co-Chair of the Human Rights Caucus, let me welcome all of you to today's joint press conference with the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom. There may be other members of Congress who will join us, but it is an honor to be here with Felice Gaer, the current Chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, her fellow Commissioners, and the many human rights groups and individual human rights defenders who have joined us this morning. Last Thursday, Congressmen Frank Wolf, Chris Smith, and I sent a letter to President Bush, asking him to meet with several Chinese dissidents and human rights leaders before he left for Beijing. And we very much appreciate that he did so yesterday. Many of those human rights defenders were witnesses at a Congressional Human Rights Caucus briefing last week, and some of them are here today with us.

When the 2008 Summer Olympics were awarded to China, the rationale — perhaps the excuse — was that the Games would help open up political space and greater freedom inside China. Instead, it appears that the opposite is happening, and we can only fear what will happen when the torch is extinguished and the cameras disappear.

For the past several months, individuals and groups that monitor human rights in China have been raising more and more alarms about political space shutting down: arbitrary arrests and detentions; detentions increasing; and repressive restrictions and tactics being used to shut down the ability of Chinese citizens and others to associate, speak, write, advocate, worship or report. As we speak this morning, human rights groups report that over a quarter of a million people are languishing in so-called Chinese reeducation labor camps, where they have been detained without charge or trial. Torture by law enforcement personnel is endemic, often resulting in death. Religious persecution has led to the arrest, imprisonment, and repression of thousands of Christians, Tibetan Buddhists, Uighur Muslims and Falun Gong practitioners. Political dissidents, advocates of reform, human rights defenders, labor organizers, environmental advocates and people using the Internet are also targets of repression. And we all witnessed how quickly the small opening to allow foreign reporters to cover the story inside China leading up the Olympics closed down when civil unrest broke out in Tibet. Just yesterday, Human Rights Watch reported that activist Nee Yu Lan will face trial on August 4, just four days before the start of the Olympics, for having the temerity to stand up for the rights of victims who were forcibly evicted from their homes. These homes were demolished because of Beijing's Olympic makeover. She was arrested in mid-April, beaten until unconscious, and imprisoned on charges of "obstructing a public official," which carries a sentence of three years in prison.

Internationally, China continues to support some of the most brutal regimes in the world. It props up the genocidal regime in Sudan, and Burma's brutal military regime. And later today I will release a bi-partisan letter to President Bush from Members of Congress, protesting China's violation of the arms embargo against Sudan. We are asking the president to raise this issue with President Hu, and to seek a stronger embargo if China continues to send arms and equipment to Sudan that are used against the defenseless people of Darfur.

We are here this morning to continue to voice our concerns about China's repression and appalling human rights record. Later today the United States House of Representatives will augment our message by passing House Resolution 1370, which condemns China's human rights abuses and its continuing support of Sudan and Burma. We are here to call upon President Bush and all the other international leaders who will gather in Beijing for the opening of the Olympics not to be silent on human rights while in China, to ask for the release of Nee Yu Lan and the thousands of others imprisoned, beaten and tortured for no other reason than for standing up for the rights of their fellow citizens and for exercising their most basic rights as human beings to faith, thought, speech and community.

Now I'm always disturbed by what often appears to be America's selective outrage over human rights. If a country is too big, its trade and commercial markets too important, its military bases a key security asset, then we sometimes mute our criticism. But by not being consistent and clear, we diminish the cause of human rights. There are real people who are real victims who are suffering; and if we don't speak up for them, who will? We are all here this morning to be clear and to be consistent. China has a significant history of human rights abuse, and in the months leading up to the Olympics, the situation is getting worse and not better. We are all here this morning to remind the Chinese government that we will not go away, we will not be quiet, we will not forget the thousands of individuals suffering inside of China when the Olympic spotlight is turned off. We will be here, we will be vigilant, and we will remain active in support of human rights in China. And at this time I'd like to turn the microphone over to a leader on the issue of human rights, not only in China but around the world, Congressman Chris Smith from New Jersey.

Rep. Smith: Thank you very much. I want to thank my good friend and colleague for his good work on this issue and on human rights in general, and looking around at this assembled group, and thank all you from the press for being here — Harry Wu, Wei Zheng Sheng, some of the finest and greatest leaders of human rights, who have paid dearly with their own lives, having spent so many decades in the lao-gai as a direct result of their advocacy for human rights — thank you for their continued leadership.

Leo Xing Min, vice president of the Beijing Olympic Committee, famously asserted several years back, "By allowing Beijing to host the Olympic Games, you will help with the development of human rights." At the time the argument seemed plausible, although many of us weren't buying it, but in the long run up to the Olympics the reality has been numbingly disappointing. The pre-Olympic crackdown on political dissidents and religious believers, and the crushing of cyber-dissidents, is now at full throttle. In recent months the Chinese government is filling its jails, house arresting, surveilling and warning all known dissidents. These men and women are persecuted simply because they have sought to exercise their fundamental freedoms guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and, ironically, by the Chinese Constitution itself.

Tragically but predictably, the Olympics have been the occasion of a massive crackdown designed to silence and put beyond reach all those Chinese whose views differ from the government line. For so many Tibetans, many of them Buddhist monks and nuns, for members of the Falun Gong, Chinese Christians, Uighur Muslims, democracy and labor activists and others, this has been a terrible summer because of the Olympics. The fact is the Standing Committee of the International Olympic Committee, which chose to hold this Olympics in Beijing, has made a very serious mistake. I

remember when Wei Xing Sheng was let out briefly in order to obtain Olympics 2000. I met with him; I was in China, in Beijing during a very brief time before he was rearrested and then beaten to within a thread of death. They thought by letting the father of democracy walk out of prison, that that would garner them Olympics 2000. When they didn't get it, he went right back into prison.

They use political prisoners at times as tokens to try to curry favor in the west, but even that is not happening in this run-up. In fact, any one of the number of the Chinese government's gravest human rights violations should have been a deal-stopper for the International Olympics Committee.

Take one of the issues which I have raised repeatedly—and I hope more people will begin to raise it—and that's the one-child-per-couple policy, the issue of coerced population control, which has been the gravest violation of women's rights in the history of humankind. The one-child-per-couple policy has been in effect since 1979. We now have in China anywhere from 50 to 100 missing girls as a direct consequence of the one-child-per-couple policy and as a direct consequence of the sex selection abortions that are rampant in the PRC. Regrettably, that has led to a growing problem of, and a magnet for, human trafficking. And we are seeing that that is increasingly becoming a problem in China as a direct result of that policy. The lost girls of China, as we call them, we need to speak out.

When you watch, if anyone in this room does, the opening ceremonies of the Olympics, when you see all the choreography, and everyone working in unison, and all the smiling faces, remember that women, and the young people that you see there, are the lucky ones —the survivors of the one-child-per-couple policy. They probably, in almost every instance, don't even have a brother or sister, because of this barbaric policy.

Finally, three weeks ago Frank Wolf and I visited Beijing in order to gauge the human rights situation in the final weeks before the Olympics. The Chinese police threatened eight human rights lawyers whom we planned to meet for dinner in a public restaurant and placed several of them under house arrest. Our meetings never occurred, though we did meet with senior house pastor Zheng Min Sichuan, for which he was placed under house arrest (in his case it was his seventeenth time).

Frank Wolf and I also met with Ambassador Lee Zhou Xing, chairman of the NPC's foreign affairs committee. Our exchange was frank and focused primarily on human rights, including the Chinese government's complicity in the Darfur genocide. We present him with a list of 734 prisoners of conscience, and we respectfully appealed to him—as we do again today—to let those people go. Many of the prisoners on that list have been imprisoned for years. Yet together they are a cross-section of those groups of Chinese society which suffer —and I want to say this again—not in spite of, but now because of, the Olympics.

Our hope is that the resolution that was mentioned a moment ago will hopefully be another prod, another request to this government to let those people who have committed no crimes, who simply agitated for peace, freedom, democracy and respect for fundamental human rights, to allow those individuals to get out of prison and live their lives as they would see fit.

This press conference is part of an on-going effort; it is totally bi-partisan. You hear a lot about the partisanship in Washington. Not on this issue. We are joined at the hip in trying to promote freedom and democracy in China. Thank you.

Rep. McGovern: It is now my pleasure to introduce another consistent advocate for human rights: Congressman Zach Wamp.

Rep. Wamp: Thank you. Well, we are sort of in cramped quarters. I appreciate you all coming to cramped quarters. I can tell you that after doing two press events outdoors this morning and being soaking wet, you'd rather be in here than out there.

Let me say on this issue that NBC has a very crafty ad campaign with the pole vaulter pole vaulting over the Great Wall of China to set up the Olympics. And I've got to tell you what hurts me about that is that, in many ways, the Wall is there. The wall that they show the pole vaulter pole vaulting over and the history that they talk about, that never before have we been allowed in really masks the realities, and the problems, and the challenges, and that's unfortunate. Scripture even tells us at some point that people won't be able to discern good versus evil. And it's because everything in the name of "feeling good" will cause you not to look at the realities underneath the surface, and that's the danger of the Olympics.

Throughout history the Olympics have been a way to bring the brotherhood of man together around common principles. And for a moment we are together, the world community. But the danger here is that, in doing that there, you completely mask the realities that are not common to all men and women. The realities are that freedom and individual liberty are a gift from God to each of us, and they aren't being recognized by the host country of the Olympics, which is designed to bring the world together around these common principles. It's not only ironic; it's incredibly unfortunate.

I talked to the President of the United States face to face about this issue, because I did not want him to go and validate, by his presence, what is happening in China. And there are a lot of legitimate concerns about human rights and freedoms that are fundamental not just to the United States of America, but to all the freedom-loving countries around the world—it runs counter. And I was in Shanghai in January. I got to tell you that the response we got about environmental degradation alone should be a concern to the world. While we are talking about global warming and our country meeting its responsibility, their attitude in China towards environmental responsibility is "you had your industrial revolution; we're entitled to ours."

At what cost to the world, I ask, when you're nearly one-fourth of the world's population, will your industrial revolution take place? And they are pedaling as fast as they can to clean up the air in time for the Olympics, but it's just a flash in the pan compared to the realities of China on the ground today. So, beyond human rights and individual freedom and the rule of law and the things we hold dear, China is a major problem for the world on the environment. Yet we are validating—unintentionally—all of what goes on in China by going on and participating.

And I want our athletes to participate. They've trained, so in no way did I ever support a boycott, but I support all of the United States' elected leaders and representatives to go there with the attitude that we are not going to sit by idly, believing in these things from our very core, and act like everything is OK, because it's not. The trends are terrible; executions are unacceptable; alien nation, imprisonment for standing up for what you believe is not acceptable to the vast majority of nations around the world. This is not the United States speaking by ourselves; this is a lot of people in the world knowing that what's happening in China is unacceptable. And we really have to point this out as we head into a historically favorable time called the Olympics. And that's why I think this is so unfortunate that the signals are sent that "everything is ok," when in fact everything is far from OK in China. And the wall is actually still there when it comes to individual liberties and human rights; the wall is still there. So we are not pole vaulting over it. It is still there.

Rep. McGovern: I want to thank you, Zach. I want to emphasize one point that Congressman Chris Smith made about the fact that this is a bipartisan issue. The three members of congress that just spoke represent kind of the ideological spectrum in the United States House of Representatives, from left to right. And there are a lot of issues, in fact there are many issues, where it is difficult to find common ground. But when it comes to human rights in China, we are one—there is common ground. Democrats, Republicans, liberals and conservatives, we are one on this issue.

At this time I'd like to introduce another great champion of human rights, Felice Gaer, who is the current Chair of the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, and she will speak, as well as some of her fellow Commissioners.

Commissioner Gaer: Thank you, Congressman McGovern, for your leadership, and thank you to Congressman Smith and Womp for their participation. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, a bipartisan federal agency, continues to monitor and report on religious freedom and human rights in China.

With so little time to go before the opening of the Summer Games, it is incumbent on those of us who do monitor to take stock and put forward our ideas of how we can encourage an end to the Chinese government's severe violations.

Hopes that the Olympics Games would dramatically improve human rights conditions in China have not been realized. And I repeat that: Olympic hopes for human rights have not been realized. Instead, the situation has grown increasingly dire, particularly for many of China's religious adherents.

The Chinese government is so intent on maintaining control over allegedly problematic religious communities that the lawyers who take up the cases of the persecuted religious leaders, and the journalists who report on the situation themselves, have been harassed, beaten and, in some cases, jailed as well.

Repressive measures targeting religious communities have a long history in China, but new measures, put in place to

maintain so-called "social harmony"; during the Olympics, raise the prospect that China will continue to step up repression during and after the Games.

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom has asked President Bush to speak publicly during his trip—during his trip—about the pressing need for China to guarantee universal human rights, in freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief, and to uphold the rule of law in China.

We think such a message from our president would reflect our country's firm commitment, and our people's firm commitment, to protecting religious freedom and other human rights, and that this can best be done through a speech broadcast live on Chinese media. Through such a speech President Bush could convey his convictions directly to China's people, as well as its leaders.

I'm going to briefly speak about the lawyers and other human rights defenders who raised issues deemed to be "politically sensitive." They have endured increasing harassment over the last year. Lawyers who take up the cases of unregistered Protestants, Falun Gong and Tibetan Buddhists are particularly targeted. Chinese authorities have charged them with offenses such as inciting subversion, damaging public property, and fraud.

They are subject to surveillance; to rejection of legal licenses; to detention, interrogations; some to beatings by government officials and unidentified assailants, or thugs, who are unaccountable.

Last September, human rights lawyer Li Heping was abducted by unidentified individuals, beaten, and shocked with cattle prods for six hours. He was told to stop his human rights work and leave Beijing. Nevertheless, he continues his advocacy work under threats and harassment today.

Defense lawyer and activist Gao Zhisheng remains under tight police surveillance throughout the year. He was convicted in December 2006 for so-called "inciting subversion." Four times during the past year he was abducted, held incommunicado, and tortured in unknown locations, before being returned to house arrest in Beijing.

Beijing-based lawyers Teng Biao and Jiang Tianyong were refused renewals of their law licenses when they signed an open letter with 16 other lawyers offering free legal counsel to Tibetans arrested in connection with the unrest there last spring. Jiang's license was renewed at the end of June, but according to Amnesty International, Teng Biao's has not been renewed.

These stories are not isolated cases, but they're increasingly familiar ones. It is difficult to see further improvements in religious freedom in China until the government's power is checked by the rule of law.

We are joined today by three fellow Commissioners. They will briefly address the conditions for various religious communities and rights activists in China, and some of the recommendations the Commission has made to deal with them. The three other commissioners are Michael Cromartie, a Vice Chair of the commission, who will speak about Tibet and North Koreans who are in China; Commissioner Talal Eid, who will speak on Protestant and Catholic unregistered communities, and spiritual movements; and Commissioner Nina Shea, who will speak on Uighur Muslims, and Chinese foreign policy in regards to Sudan. So, I first turn the floor over to Michael Cromartie.

Commissioner Cromartie: The unrest that erupted in Tibetan areas this past spring demonstrated once again how China's policies of repression and control have backfired. Tibetans want religious freedom without restrictions. They want to choose their own religious leaders without interference. They want to be free to venerate the Dalai Lama without fear of arrest.

The Chinese government acknowledges that more than 100 Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns are being held in prison right now. The Dalai Lama's chosen Panchen Lama was detained at age 6, and has been in government custody, out of view of any potential independent observers, ever since. He turned 19 in May.

Hundreds of Tibetans continue to be detained following the spring demonstrations. It is unclear how many are being held for peaceful protests of Chinese control of Tibetan religious practice.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom continues to urge a full accounting for those detained and the immediate release of those whose peaceful religious freedom advocacy is protected by international law.

The Commission calls on the U.S. government to urge Beijing to take other concrete steps to ease religious freedom restrictions on Tibetan Buddhism, including putting an end to so-called "patriotic education" programs for Tibetan monks and Tibetan nuns.

Now I'd like to call on my colleague Nina Shea, who will address our concerns about the repression of Uighur Muslims.

Commissioner Shea: Good morning. The Chinese authorities continue to use the "war on terror" to justify hard repression of Uighur Muslims, including severe violations of the freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

Non-violent expressions of Uighur cultural identity are criminalized. China uses its economic and military leverage to pressure neighboring countries to forcibly return Uighurs to China—where they face execution on vague charges including "illegal religious activity."

The government limits access to mosques, restricting the participation of women, children, Communist Party members, and government employees in religious activities. Officials restrict the teaching of Islam to minors, and private religious instruction is treated as a criminal offense. All imams in Xinjiang are required to undergo political training seminars and need to submit weekly sermons to government officials.

The family of Uighur activist Rebiya Kadeer, who is with us here today, continues to face severe repression. Three of her sons have been arrested. Her son Ablikim was tried secretly and sentenced to nine years in prison on charges of "instigating secessionist activities." Official Chinese sources report that his offense was requesting that Yahoo's Uighur-language Webmaster post articles on its Web site.

The Commission has asked President Bush to seek the immediate release of members of Rebiya Kadeer's family and an end to harassment of peaceful Uighur Muslim adherents.

I'd also like to say a word about China's foreign policy with respect to Sudan. The Commission has asked President Bush to urge the Chinese government, as the Sudanese government's major oil partner and arms supplier, to use its considerable leverage to end genocide and protect religious freedom in Sudan, where horrific human rights violations are occurring.

And I want to remind everyone that millions have been killed in both southern Sudan and Darfur under this current government, and millions more made refugees, either within the country or outside the country, and much of this has been done with the indispensable support of the Chinese government.

It is incumbent that the China live up to its obligations under the UN Charter, Articles 55 and 56, requiring it to uphold basic human rights. And under the Universal Declaration for Human Rights.

It's incumbent upon our international community, including our president, to communicate to China during the Olympics, as Felice Gaer said. President Bush made it, in my view, an important step in that direction when he met with Chinese freedom activists such as many of those of whom are in our room today — there's Harry Wu and Ms. Kadeer and Wei Zhen Shang — and it's an important step in the right direction and it's important that he continue in China. Thank you. And I'll give the podium to fellow Commissioner Imam Talal Eid.

Eid: Good morning. Peace. Independent Christian groups and Falun Gong practitioners are among those most harshly persecuted in China. Tens of millions of people experience severe restrictions on the free practice of religion. Thousands have been detained over the past year and an untold number are serving prison sentences for practicing their religion outside state-sanctioned institutions.

Over the past year, almost 700 Protestants were arrested in the past year with 38 received sentences of over one year in prison. Underground Protestant house church meetings were frequently disrupted by the police and the church sometimes destroyed. Recently, the Chinese government has issued orders to expel "house churches" from rental properties.

The situation is particularly severe in Shandong Province, where several of the Olympic venues are located. Shandong officials have instituted a province-wide crackdown, arresting hundreds of Protestants in the past year on charges of "illegal cult activity";

During the year, over 100 Falun Gong practitioners were reported to have died in detention or shortly after release as a result of torture, denial of food or medical treatment, and other forms of abuse. Through their public statements, Chinese government officials have shown that they see the Falun Gong as the most persistent internal threat that could disrupt the Beijing Olympics.

Members of China's unofficial Catholic Church continue to face repression. At least 30 bishops and priests remain in jail, including Bishop Su Zhimin, who "disappeared" 15 years ago. Last year, Catholic Bishop Hang Dingxiang died in custody under suspicious circumstances.

The Commission has called on President Bush to seek the release of more than 30 "underground" Catholic bishops and priests, and meet with leaders of an unregistered group or congregation.

My colleague Commissioner Gaer will discuss the repression of human rights advocates and the Commission's concerns regarding China's violation of the rights of North Korean refugees and the need for China to use its leverage over Sudan.

Commissioner Gaer: I'm going to ask Commissioner Cromartie to take this issue.

Commissioner Cromartie: During a trip to South Korea this past June, commissioners met with North Korean women who had been trafficked to China as brides, laborers, and as prostitutes. Sadly, and shockingly, all of them told us that they would go through that ordeal again to have freedom for themselves and their children.

Now this is a horrific choice these women were forced to make, because China views all North Koreans as economic migrants and repatriates them to North Korea if they are caught.

Approximately 50,000 North Koreans are reportedly hiding in China, living under constant fear of deportation. Each month hundreds of North Koreans are believed to have been forcibly repatriated to North Korea without being given access to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in China.

The Commission delegation learned that Chinese authorities in the border region were tightening security ahead of the Olympics. They fear that renewed famine conditions in North Korea will spur new migrations to China.

The Commission has issued two reports on North Korea. Both provide compelling evidence that North Koreans repatriated from China are mistreated: they're tortured; they're imprisoned; and they may face execution for the political offense of their religious belief or affiliation. So, it is time China fully protected North Korean asylum-seekers and lives up to its international obligations to protect refugees.

Commissioner Gaer: The Commission has brought some of the photos of some of the prisoners, some of the disappeared persons that we've been advocating on behalf of. They have not been seen—finding them, talking to them, getting some independent source to meet with them and verify their condition in China is essential during the time of the Olympics, and we have expressed the hope that the president will make progress on this issue while he is there. The Commission wants to turn the floor back over to Congressman McGovern. Thank you.

Rep. McGovern: First, I just want to thank Felice and I want to thank members of the Commission for their presentations and for their incredible work. And if I could just emphasize a point that Felice made, that is our hope that when President Bush is in China that he will be specific, and give specific names, because people's lives are at stake. It is important that he do more than just private diplomacy; it is important that they be public statements, that there'll be public acknowledgment of the plight of so many people in China who are being oppressed. It is a way not only to send a message to China—it is a way to save lives.

Now we have a few more brief presentations, but they are very, very important, and I again apologize for the tight quarters here, but we have a distinguished group of individuals who will make some brief presentations.

First I'd like to introduce Dr. Yang Jianli, who is a Tiananmen Square survivor, a courageous individual, and we are honored to have him here. I invite him up to the podium.

Dr. Yang: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to distinguished members, and also the great free press of the United States of America. My name is Yang Jianli. I have personally experienced the harsh brutality of the Chinese government for five years &ndash; one of which I spent all by myself. I feel particularly suited to address the human rights situation in my homeland.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for being clear and consistent when it comes to the issues of human rights. The issues of human rights and religious freedom in China are not Olympics issues; nor are they Tibetan issues; nor Christian issues; nor Uighur issues; nor Falun Gong issues; nor are they strictly internal issues, as the Chinese government would have us believe.

These issues transcend the Olympics Games and the territorial borders. These issues are connected to the fundamental matter of freedom and democratization, which are inseparable to the strategic interests of the United States. History tells us world leaders cannot rely on governments who do not rely on their own people. As evidenced by China's policies in Sudan and Burma, repression at home invariably leads to export of instability and discord abroad.

Therefore, human rights are not just a humanitarian issue, but issues that affect the security of the international community. As such, support for continued integration of China into the world community should be connected to a unified human rights policy that leads to economic and political cooperation with China to specific, sustained, and measurable improvement in the freedoms and the rights for all people living in the People's Republic of China.

I applaud Congressman Berman for his sponsorship of the bill HR 1370 calling for specific actions by the Chinese government to demonstrate its follow-through on commitment to improve the human rights situation in China. Passage of this resolution is an important move to more development and implementation of a unified human rights policy which strategically links cooperation with China to measurable and sustained improvement in the extension of freedom and liberty to all the people of China. Thank you, thank you all.

Rep. McGovern: It is now my honor to introduce Rebiya Kadeer, with the Uighur American Association.

Kadeer (w/translator): Thank you. My name is Rebiya Kadeer, and I'm Uighur. Actually, I wanted to let all you guys know what we are suffering in our motherland. We are suffering very badly, like from human rights, and our political stuff, and from something else, sorry (&hellip;), and from culture. Because the time is really limited, so thank you for all the people's, like, telling you what the people are suffering in our motherland. So, just wanted to let you know our Uighur people are being caught in our Motherland before the Olympic Games. Thank you guys, because her (Kadeer's) translator is sick today.

Rep. McGovern: I'd like to introduce Wei Jingsheng with the Wei Jingsheng Foundation. We are honored to have

you here. Thank you so much.

Mr. Jingsheng (w/translator): Yesterday we were in the White House, and I told President Bush that he had made a huge mistake to go to Olympics in Beijing this time. This is another mistake just made recently, it was made just a couple months ago. I do know that in the past few months the Bush Administration did try to negotiate with the Chinese government in an effort to push for some progress in the human rights area.

Unfortunately, such an effort did not make too much progress. Even up till yesterday, the Chinese government has been really tough and would not retreat one step. Not only is there no improvement in human rights in China, as a matter of fact, nowadays in China the human rights goes backwards. And their attitude to President Bush was very strong and impolite.

Why is there such an outcome? I think the most important reason is because everyone was under the wrong presumption. Many Americans have good will and are hoping to have a good reason with the Chinese government, and that they would have mercy and they would make human rights progress. However, the effort by the Bush Administration exactly proves such a thought is wrong. Chinese government's attitude is sort of like a hooligan's. If you retreat one step, they will step forward two steps. So, I really praise the effort by the US Congress. We must push the Chinese government. Only by pushing hard, they will do little for us. And if we still hold our hope &ndash; kind hopes &ndash; to the Chinese government, then we will be foiled, and maybe even lost our face like the Bush Administration. I thank you, and I thank you all.

Rep. McGovern: It is now my honor to introduce another important activist for the cause of human rights &ndash; Harry Wu &ndash; who represents the Lao Gai Research Foundation. Thank you for being here.

Mr. Wu: Yesterday, we got into the room and we met President Bush, and he asked that, &ldquo;what is the problem of China.&rdquo; And I said, &ldquo;human rights.&rdquo; Yes, human rights. So President Bush acknowledged that the human rights problem is a major problem of the communist regime. So I want to emphasize one more thing right here: China is a communist regime. Communist regime is not simply a regime, and we deal with them; we make business with them; we sign contracts with them, with a communist regime. But other communist regimes, for example Cuba. Does Fidel Castro have an invitation in my house? No. But Chinese leader is right here, OK?

So what is the human rights issue?

Number Two, Congressman Chris Smith emphasized, is population control. Every woman in China&mdash;you don't have a permit, you cannot pregnant&mdash;it's illegal pregnancy. After one child, forget it, there is no alternative for the second child. Forced abortion, forced sterilization is the major force. That policy has been in China for 30 years. How many people they kill? Maybe 300 &ndash; 400 million people.

Number Three, do you know how many people they executed every year in China since 1949? You don't have the number! We have a number by the government that says (from) 1983 &ndash; 1984 in 11 months they killed 24,000. 24,000 in 11 months. Some expert from China said probably 8,000 &ndash; 10,000. Number One in the world. Following that policy, China has another national policy: removing organs from the death row prisoner for transplant. So, China in 2006 became the number 2 country in the world for organ transplants; number 1 is United States. America has 15,000 organ transplants, but none of them come from prisoners, and China has 13,000 organ transplants, but, majorly, 95 percent are from death row prisoners. Do you want to have a kidney, a heart? You go there and you can get it, but there is no information of the donor. And recently Chinese developed this policy.

In Atlanta there is a company signing a \$25 million dollar contract with Chinese so that all these &hellip;. And many of them were death row prisoners.

When you talk about Internet freedom, China recently became almost the number 1 country in the world. But do you know that China today has an Internet police department? They have about 200,000 &ndash; 300,000 policemen. Their only job: Internet. Every individual or Internet café was controlled. So China almost become number 1 country in the world &ndash; almost passing the United States &ndash; but the Internet is entirely controlled, because of the Internet police. There are a lot of people who are arrested just because they say something that disagrees with the government.

Since 1979, the Chinese government has given lots of people so-called &ldquo;rehabilitation.&rdquo; I got rehabilitation. I was released in 1979 in February. I was released. But do you remember the march the next month, they arrest Wei Jingsheng. So they released old prisoners and put a new prisoner there. The Lao Gai system remains in China. Lao Gai is incompatible with freedom, with democracy.

As a communist regime, you know, there is no religious freedom. It is very interesting: The first 30 years in China there is entirely no religion: all the churches, all the temples become government property. No one is publicly active as religious. Whatever Buddhist, whatever Uighur, whatever Christian, and since 1980, the church and the temples are rebuilding. Who spends the money? The Communists. The Chinese set up a new Church system, new temple systems, so-called &ldquo;patriotic.&rdquo; Today they nominate the Catholic bishop; they nominate priests &ndash; maybe one day they will nominate another Pope, another Vatican! Very highly possible. This is so-called religious freedom today in China. And to a minority, an Uighur, a Tibetan is under pressure. We don't know what's going to happen. But they are really seriously fighting. Thank you.

Rep. McGovern: I'd like to introduce Todd Stein for the International Campaign for Tibet.

Mr. Stein: Thank you Congressmen and Commissioners. A lot has already been said about the plight of Tibetan Buddhists, especially since the March uprising and certainly in the run-up to the Olympics here, so I will basically just summarize that as the president heads off to celebrate the opening ceremonies, one-fourth of the territory of the People's Republic of China remains locked off to the international community. Tibet has been closed off since March, and inside the Cultural Revolution is alive and well. I just wanted to point out one recent report that was posted in the Tibetan language on an information site in Tibet about new rules for monasteries in Kardze Prefecture, which is in upper Sichuan Province. And we're going to have , the International Campaign for Tibet is going to have a report for this on our website later today.

But it is just more affirmation of the very stringent rules about the controlling of monks and nuns, regulations &mdash;very chilling&mdash;and the circumstances where they could be jailed, or punished, or kicked out of monasteries, imprisoned just for practicing their beliefs and forced to denounce the Dalai Lama. Anyway, it&rsquo;s just another example of the repression that the Tibetan Buddhists are going under.

Rep. McGovern: Now I&rsquo;m honored to say that we&rsquo;ve just been joined by my colleague from California, Congressman Dana Rohrabacher.

Rep. Rohrabacher: Thank you very much. It&rsquo;s a pleasure for me to be here and join you, and this is obviously a bipartisan effort for us as members of congress, but also as citizens of this society, to join together to ensure that a great disservice is not done to humankind in these upcoming Olympics. We cannot permit a false image to be created, a façade that covers the worst human rights abuses that have been going on in the world to be created by these Olympics. The Olympics is supposed to be about the higher aspirations of humankind; it&rsquo;s supposed to be something about uplifting the human soul and the standards that we have in dealing with one another, so that people can compete honestly, and with good will.

Instead, the Olympics Committee decided to hold this year&rsquo;s Olympics in a nation that is ruled by a regime that is the worst human rights abuser in the world, and is behind so many other regimes, whether it&rsquo;s in Africa, or it is in Burma, or elsewhere, the Beijing regime is behind &mdash;the power behind&mdash;those dictatorial regimes and the human rights abuses that go on in that country. So it&rsquo;s up to us to see that those people, those individuals who hold power with an iron fist in Beijing, are not covered, and are not able to use the Olympics as some sort of disguise to the world to prevent us from understanding these criminals that are among us. And today, as I say, that is not a partisan thing -- it is something that crosses party lines, and it crosses all lines, because all of us, as human beings, need to work together with all these organizations. And Sheila Jackson Lee will join us as well again in emphasizing the importance in all of us working together in this. I want to thank you for the work you put into this.

Rep. Jackson Lee: Thank you, thank you very much. I think you can tell that we are standing alongside brothers and sisters. Thank you Congressman McGovern. I&rsquo;m out of breath because I ran from a meeting with Secretary Negroponte. And thank you, Congressman Rohrabacher, and those who have been here.

I love the Chinese people, and I believe that all of us, as part of the world family, are in love with people, who simply want to control their own destiny. And as I look at this wonderful and historical cultural giant, who, when we visit, the leaders will remind us of how iconic, of how much their history has helped shape the world, I applaud them.

But I also know that the Chinese people are crying out for someone who will not be ashamed, who will not be intimidated, who will not be so much in awe with the wonder of the Olympics, to not reach down to the people who are bleeding, the people who are crying, the people who are hurt. And so I join with my colleagues today to insist that the President of the United States uses this opportunity to cry out for freedom, to make a unilateral declaration asking for the oppressed, for purposes of religious freedom, or religious beliefs; the oppressed, for the political beliefs, or their social beliefs; the oppressed, who cannot access the world&rsquo;s international Internet marketplace, if you will; the oppressed, who are forced to engage in a forced abortion; the oppressed, who don&rsquo;t feel that they can be heard, or speak; the oppressed, who are students, who are seeking to see the light. That would be the America that I&rsquo;ve come to know

and love. That is the America I believe in. That is the America that I am proud of, that understands that we cannot force our culture, our values, necessarily; but we can take the values of the human family, and every human being deserves that. And so, humbly, as I raise monies for a young man in my district to go to China to speak about HIV/AIDS, a young African-American male, a clean hip-hop artist, who is going to China to try to reach many of the young people on this issue, and I'm helping him go, because it's about people to people. But my heart is saddened by the calls and the cries that I hear, because I can't thank this commission enough, my good friend, Congressman McGovern, all the panelists that are here who are representing the individuals that are crying out.

And I want to close, because I'm joined with Congressman Rohrabacher, both of us sort of sit on two ends when it comes to China — and I see Congresswoman Woolsey, so let me finish. We sort of raise up the voices, collectively, from two different perspectives. But I just simply want us, as I leave this podium, as we sit in a cool and comfortable place, to be reminded of the throngs in China who are somewhere without the ability to see their family, somewhere, and to be reminded of the Tibetans, of whom I continue to meet with, the envoy, where the Dalai Lama is treated with such disrespect and condescension. So, my words are that humanity is key for me, it is king and queen, and I will fight to the end for our nation to stand for the value of humanity. Mr. President, use this opportunity not for a joyous and celebratory occasion to elevate those who oppress, but use it to take the values of the founding fathers, who fled oppression so that we might be free. Speak to the freedom of the Tibetan people and all the people of China. Thank you.

Rep. McGovern: It's now my pleasure to introduce another colleague: Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey from California.

Rep. Woolsey: You don't make it easy to get in here, folks. Well I thank you, this Commission, for your words, and for your concerns and cares. I was just on the floor speaking for Resolution 1309 — I believe that is what it was called — that we will be voting on today, asking the President of the United States to not miss this opportunity to speak out for the Chinese people, and to tell China that the United States stands for truth and liberty, and religious freedom, and non-censorship, and protection for workers; and if we're gonna buy all of China's stuff, then we should have some expectations of how these products are made, and who makes them, and who benefits.

And we have a long way to go. I feel like we have missed a huge opportunity with the China Olympics. I feel like they could have turned a corner, and it would have taken behind Germany and Great Britain, the United States could have gone along as one of the leaders to have the Chinese government know that the rest of the world did not participate and support in the way that they treat their people. Also, their environment — you go to China, [then] you cannot breathe. I mean, there's more of you here that know that than I do, but I've been there. Something has to happen there, and the idea that China will not negotiate with — in favor of Darfur is such a lack of responsibility on the world stage.

So we've not, I believe, done what we should do, to have China turn the corner towards religious freedom, workers' rights, and environmental protections around the very idea of the Olympics. Instead, I believe, we have sat and watched them take a step backward. Thank you very much.

Rep. McGovern: We have one final speaker (unless the entire Congress comes up here). Again, I think you're seeing a very diverse group of the United States House of Representatives come together as one — which I think is a very strong message to the government of China, that we do care very much about human rights. Finally, I'd like to introduce Terri Marsh from the Human Rights Law Foundation.

Ms. Marsh: Thank you, everybody, and I was told to be very brief, so I won't read the remarks that I prepared today. I would like to say that the Human Rights Law Foundation represents victims of torture and especially focuses on victims of torture in China. And ironically, perhaps, very relevant to the discussion today, we did win a favorable judgment against Liu Qi, the president of the Olympic Committee, for torture and cruel, inhumane degrading treatment against practitioners of Falun Gong, in the United States District Court of Northern California. And I think that says a lot.

What I was planning to say today was basically coming from all of you. I was going to be citing Amnesty International; I was going to be citing the International Commission on Religious Freedom, Reporters Without Borders, because you have provided us with the evidence to file the cases, as well as with the facts in support of the suppression of groups like Falun Gong. And I want to say that this is not about any one group; this is not about Falun Gong; this is not about Tibet; this is not just about the pro-democracy movement; it's not just about the lawyers. Though I must say that, as a lawyer who has worked directly with (inaudible) on a number of cases, I find that to be extremely difficult, extremely difficult to endure.

But it's not about any one group. It's about a pattern of oppression and suppression by a regime that does what it does that it can stay in power, and says what it does so that it can keep itself going and can continue to suppress and repress and oppress. And so, I just wanted to thank everybody here who has spoken. I feel like we are together on this, and I feel very good today. Thank you.

Rep. McGovern: Let me — thank you — let me thank all of those who have given presentations today. Let me in particular thank the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom for their presentations and for their work. And let me say that I would like to think that human rights knows no borders, and I believe — and I would like to believe — that the United States, if it stands for anything, needs to stand out loud and four-squared in human rights.

And the President of the United States has an opportunity to demonstrate that to the rest of the world, to lead. And I think all of us who have participated with us today want to make it very clear that our interests and our passion for this issue does not go away when the Olympics are over. We are in this for the long haul; we are in this until the human rights abuses in China end once and for all. So thank you for being here, and if anyone has any questions, we're all here to take questions for as long as you want.

Question: Is there a plan of action for the Congress on this issue in the period after the Games?

Rep. McGovern: Well there is. You know, the Human Rights Caucus is going to continue to hold hearings and is going to continue to work with Howard Berman, Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, to make sure that this issue doesn't go away. I mentioned to you earlier that there is an effort also to press China on the fact we believe they are violating the arms embargo with regard to Sudan and Burma. And so, there will be more attention on that. But

we're also, you know, also going to talk about individual cases; and that's one of the things that I think is very important here. You know, we aren't talking about statistics; we're talking about human beings. These individuals haven't been heard from in a long time. You know, we need to mention names; we need to mention particular groups. The intensity that you are seeing here right now in the United States Congress with the resolution on the house floor today with this press conference &ndash; we had hearings in the Human Rights Caucus last week &ndash; the intensity is going to continue. And that's our plan: to keep the pressure up, to keep the pressure up, to keep the pressure up. We are not going away. That's the message.

Question: Is there any interest in this in the Senate, are you coordinating with folks there?

Rep. McGovern: We are coordinating with the Senate. I think Senator Brownback was trying to get here today. But I think that if he were here, he would say the same thing for the United States Senate.

Question: How would you like to see NBC cover these Games, as opposed to the way they covered &ndash; not just NBC &ndash; other Games?

Rep. McGovern: Let me just say to have some of the Commissioners, and maybe some of the others who have spoken, to come up and say&hellip; look now I'm in awe of the men and women who are participating in the Olympics. It's incredible, it's an incredible occasion. But you cannot turn a blind eye to the horrific atrocities that are occurring in the host country. And, you know, we cannot use the Olympics as a way to whitewash China's horrendous human rights record. We cannot use the Olympics as an excuse to turn away from the reality on the ground.

So, I want NBC to report not just the incredible feats and accomplishments of our athletes &ndash; I want them to tell the American people and the world about what is happening in China every day. It is intolerable. It is unconscionable. And I would like to believe that, as the world gets more of an education about the realities, that they will not stand for it, and they will demand that their governments take stronger actions.

Very quickly on the NBC issue. The sponsors of the Olympics have not satisfied anybody whose raised questions with them about human rights issues, and that includes NBC, which will be broadcasting the Games. In this context, what I would say is that some of you may be aware that there are alternate plans during the commercial breaks in the Olympics, and if you don't know that, you might want to look online at some of the NGO activity that's planned for that time &ndash; I think Dream for Darfur in particular and Mia Farrow have a whole alternative &ldquo;tune-out, tune-in&rdquo; during that time.

Commissioner Shea: Yes, I'm Nina Shea of the Commission on International Religious Freedom, and I would urge NBC to use a wide-angle lens and not a zoom lens on these Olympics. It may be the one television outlet that really could get a broader picture of the context of the Olympics. So, that's my view.

Question: I have a comment. I would like to remind all press people here that, if you go to China, the Chinese government is "rule by fear." They are conducting a policy of intimidation — they intimidate the Chinese people not to say the truth. So when you go there, you may have the freedom to move around, to ask the people that you meet by chance, but the measure of a free society is not whether you have freedom to ask. It is whether the people have the freedom to answer, to answer without fear. That is something that I want to remind everybody.

Rep. McGovern: And as I pointed out at the beginning, there has already been a crackdown on the foreign press by the Chinese government, and I suspect there will be further crackdowns, and I hope that they will be prominently featured in some of the news reports.

Rep. Woolsey: They can't cover up the fact that there's still not going to be any blue sky. There's no way they can sweep that under the rug, because it's too late now. And I hope that the Chinese people will be able to come out and talk about the real issues, also.

Rep. McGovern: Thank you very much. Further questions? And if you have a question, could you just tell us who you are?

Question: And I really feel grateful for all those who participate to find one way or another to support the human rights improvement in China, and finally for world peace. And here I'd just like to take the opportunity to raise a very serious issue which was recently reported by Reporters Without Borders. It's just because the European satellite operator just suppresses independent Chinese-language TV stations in order to satisfy the Beijing regime for the Olympic Games. And I hope that the U.S. Congress and the senators find ways and urge the U.S. government to help, how do you say, to stop because of the contract with [inaudible] to try to stop the contract before July 31. So I hope the U.S. government can really find ways to support only independent Chinese language and television to help the Chinese people to get free information, and also for the world, I think it would be such an example, for the whole world for freedom of information, for freedom of the media. Thank you very much for all your attention.

Rep. Smith: We've had a lot of new reporting on freedom of the media in the Amnesty report that's just come out and some of the other material from other NGOs. And you've heard the Commission's recommendation, which is that the president should make a speech — a live broadcast speech — while he's in China. Now, we wouldn't reject it if that was on Chinese media, or if it was on VOA, or if it was on a live call in on RFA, or anywhere else. But we'd like to see media freedom in every sense of the word.

Rep. McGovern: Other comments? We have about three minutes and then we have to wrap this up. We have to be out of the room. Yes?

Question: We will have clandestine monitors in-country leading up to and during the games. I know some other groups will. Will the Commission have anyone on the ground during the games reporting?

Commissioner Gaer: No, no. Thank you. Now what I want to do is thank the members of Congress that have been here. I want to thank people like Wei Jingshang and Harry Wu and Rebiya Kadeer who came and joined us, and spoke truth to the president yesterday. I want to thank those of you who are covering these stories and the media, and those of you who are active on these questions working with the Commission, or maybe learning about it for the first time. We are committed to this issue; we will continue monitoring it, we have materials outside for you. If you want more background, there's a lot of resources in this very room. Thank you all for everything, and we'll be assessing this over the days ahead. Thank you.