

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 23, 2004

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WASHINGTON - The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) welcomes the news that the United States will introduce a resolution on China at the 2004 United Nations Commission on Human Rights in Geneva this month. The USCIRF also deplores China's decision in response to suspend all discussions with the United States on human rights issues.

“The Chinese government must encourage and protect the human rights affirmed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights if it seeks a credible voice in world affairs. There are outstanding issues of concern that must be addressed openly and with candor,” said Young. In announcing its decision to offer the resolution, State Department Spokesman Richard Boucher cited the need to encourage China to protect the “human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Chinese people.”

The State Department announcement follows the recent overwhelming passage by the U.S. House of Representatives of Resolution 530 urging the U.S. government to take the lead in

introducing and organizing multilateral support for a resolution at the 60th Session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights calling on China to end its human rights violations and meet international standards for human rights.

"China has chosen to see the resolution as a 'confrontation' and not as a chance to demonstrate its sincerity about implementing its human rights obligations," said USCIRF Chair Michael K. Young. "The Chinese government must end its human rights violations. In protecting human rights and religious freedom, China has taken a step backward in the last year. Promises made at the Human Rights Dialogue of 2002 have not been kept. Arrests and harassment of religious minorities continue. Guarantees of religious freedom within the law are not being consistently upheld. This is gravely disappointing, and even more so in view of the fact that the National People's Congress recently added the clause 'to respect and guarantee human rights' to the Chinese constitution."

The State Department also noted the United States' disappointment in the Chinese government's failure to meet prior commitments made to "expand cooperation on human rights in 2003." As part of the 2002 U.S.-China Bilateral Human Rights Dialogue, China promised to host a Commission trip to China. Two attempted trips were postponed because of unacceptable conditions placed on the Commission itinerary by the Chinese government. The Commission continues to seek a visit to China as part of its Congressional mandate to monitor international religious freedom conditions and make policy recommendations to the Congress and the Administration.

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom was created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 to monitor the status of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief abroad, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related international instruments, and to give independent policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and the Congress.

Dean Michael K. Young
- Felice D. Gaer

