**ORAL REMARKS OF**

**TENZIN DORJEE**

**BEFORE THE**

**CONGRESSIONAL—EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA**

**ON**

**TIBET “FROM ALL ANGLES”:**

**PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS, DEFENDING STRATEGIC ACCESS, AND**

**CHALLENGING CHINA’S EXPORT OF CENSORSHIP GLOBALLY**

**FEBRUARY 14, 2018**

**301 Russell Senate Office Building**

**10:00 am – 12 noon**

My thanks to the CECC and you, Senator Rubio and Representative Smith, for today’s hearing. I ask that my written testimony be submitted for the record.

I am Tenzin Dorjee, a USCIR Commissioner. I testify as a proud Tibetan American and Tibetan refugee. I am joyful to be here with Dhondup Wangchen, but saddened that he and his family had to flee Tibet to live in freedom.

This is so because the Chinese government seeks total domination by: forcing Tibetans to assimilate into the dominant Han culture, seeking to control Buddhism, and restricting the teaching of the Tibetan language. The government seeks to advance its “sinicization” of religion, infusing all aspects of faith into a socialist mold with “Chinese characteristics.”

Tibet now is a police state because of:

1. **The Chinese government implements oppressive restrictions in Tibet and Tibetan areas.**

These restrictions include: reeducation campaigns; extensive surveillance; and the intrusive presence of military and security forces. The government quickly suppresses any perceived religious dissent, and imprisons and tortures those viewed as threats.

While these policies are set in Beijing, Chen Quanguo perfected the surveillance state when he was Tibet’s Party Secretary. (He now is Xinjiang’s leader and is replicating there his securitization efforts.)

1. **The Chinese government believes the Dalai Lama threatens its control. Officials recognize his central importance to Tibetans.**

While the Dalai Lama seeks to achieve stability and co-existence between Tibetans and Chinese through the “Middle-Way,” the government accuses him of blasphemy and splittism, targeting anyone suspected of “separatist” activities and participating in the “Dalai clique.”

Beijing seeks to diminish the Dalai Lama’s international influence. For instance, after delivering a commencement address in 2017 at the University of California, San Diego, the Chinese Communist Party-controlled *Global Times* condemned the university for inviting him to speak and threatened to withhold visas.

Officially atheist, the Chinese government absurdly claims it can select the next Dalai Lama. Such a decision is reserved to the current Dalai Lama, Tibetan Buddhist leaders, and the Tibetan people. If there is another Dalai Lama, His Holiness has said that the next one will be born in freedom.

While the Dalai Lama hopes to return to Tibet, the Chinese government waits for his death outside China, viewing it as key to resolving Sino-Tibetan issues. However, the consequences of his death in exile will be unimaginable to Tibetans. Some may resort to violence and others to self-immolation.

1. **The Chinese government imposes intrusive restrictions on public and private religious practice.** These include: monitoring the training, assembly, selection, and education, of Tibetan Buddhist religious leaders; and prohibiting children from participating in religious holidays.

The government seeks to strike at Tibetan Buddhism’s heart by targeting Larung Gar, one of the largest Tibetan Buddhist institutes. The destruction and micromanagement there, and in Yachen Gar, exemplifies Beijing’s goal of eviscerating the teachings and study of Tibetan Buddhism so that it serves the Chinese Communist Party and government’s goals.

1. **The government imprisons, subjects to sham trials, and tortures prisoners of conscience to control Tibetan Buddhists.** These prisoners include:
* The Panchen Lama: The Chinese government disappeared him more than two decades ago and announced its own pick, whom most Tibetan Buddhists reject. We have almost no information about him. The government must provide videographic evidence of his whereabouts and well-being. I advocate for him in USCIRF’s Religious Prisoner of Conscience Project.
* The government detained Tashi Wangchuk in 2016 after he spoke to the *New York Times* on Tibetan language education and culture. He was indicted in January 2017 for “inciting separatism,” and tried in January 2018. No verdict was issued then: He could face up to 15 years in prison.

The Chinese government targeted him because it believes that Tibetan language acquisition impedes the sinicization of the education system and Tibetan assimilation into the majority culture.

* Choekyi, is a Tibetan monk imprisoned for his expressed fidelity to the Dalai Lama. He was arrested in 2015 and sentenced to four years in prison for conducting “separatist activities.” His health has deteriorated in prison: he is in critical condition after being tortured and forced to perform hard labor.
1. **At least 152 Tibetans have self-immolated since February 2009:**  Chinese authorities allege that self-immolators threaten stability and security by committing “terrorist acts in disguise,” and seek to prevent information being disseminated about them by: threatening family members with punishment, and detaining and torturing those suspected of involvement.

The Dalai Lama views self-immolations as “desperate acts by people seeking justice and freedom.” Many view self-immolations as one of the few available forms of protests given the securitization of Tibetan areas.

1. **The Long Arm of China:** The Chinese government has a long arm, and a heavy hand, in its quest to censor information and criticism about its actions in Tibet.

The Chinese government in 2017 warned countries like Botswana and India about the Dalai Lama’s planned appearances, and pressures the government of Nepal, where about 20,000 Tibetans live, many in former detention camps. They cannot attend school, and have difficulty finding work and getting documentation. The Nepalese government forcibly has returned some to China, and Chinese secret police organize patrols there.

The Chinese government’s actions pose serious concerns for democratic norms and institutions in the U.S. Along with pressuring the U. of C., it works closely with the Chinese Students and Scholars Association, to which a minority of Chinese students here belong, to pressure other universities. Some characterize the group as a “tool of the government’s foreign ministry.”

Chinese students with the CSAA harassed me in 2008 when I was a doctoral student at U. of C., Santa Barbara. About a hundred tried to disrupt a Tibet event. I was standing alone with a Tibetan flag when about thirty surrounded and screamed at me, calling me a “terrorist” and “bastard.” I stood my ground nonviolently.

I also want to touch on the 110 Confucius Institutes in U.S. colleges and universities and its 501 primary and secondary school classrooms. Its mandate is to promote cultural exchange through Chinese language and culture instruction. A Chinese state organ selects the teachers and materials, thereby allowing it to promote Beijing’s ideology and policy goals and soften its authoritarian image by helping shape public opinion.

Finally, as an academic, I am concerned about Chinese government’s attempts to censor information on topics including Tibet, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and human rights. The government also pressures foreign publishers, like Springer Nature and Cambridge University Press, to block content. Thankfully, Cambridge reversed course after a backlash, but Springer Nature did not.

I end today with recommendations. Along with designating China as a CPC for its violations of religious freedom, with specific sanctions associated with the designation, Congress should:

* Pass the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act of 2017. USCIRF thanks Senator Rubio for sponsoring this bill; and
* Send delegations to China, request to visit Tibet, and advocate for prisoners of conscience and their families.

The U.S. government should:

* Appoint a qualified individual to serve as the Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues at the State Department, as mandated by the 2002 Tibetan Policy Act; and
* Use targeted tools against officials and agencies for participating in or being responsible for human rights abuses, including the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act and the Global Magnitsky Act.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify today.