



**Statement of U.S. Senator Marco Rubio,
Cochairman of the Congressional-
Executive Commission on China (CECC)**

**CECC Hearing on “The Long Arm of
China: Global Efforts to Silence Critics
from Tiananmen to Today”
Tuesday, May 24, 2016**

As prepared for delivery.

Next week marks the 27th anniversary of the student-led popular protests in Tiananmen Square. Spurred by the death of a prominent reformer, thousands gathered in April 1989 seeking greater political freedom. Their numbers swelled as the days passed, not only in Beijing but in cities and universities across the nation. Eventually more than a million people, including journalists, workers, government employees and police, joined their ranks making it the largest political protest in the history of communist China.

Late in the evening of June 3, the Army opened fire on peaceful protesters. The bloodshed continued into June 4. To this day the precise number of resulting casualties is unknown and more than a quarter-century later there has been no progress toward a public accounting of the events of that week.

Instead, twenty-seven years later the Chinese government is increasingly brazen in its repression...no longer limiting its reach to China's territorial boundaries, but instead seeking to stifle discussion of its deplorable human rights record both at home *and abroad*. Consider the following:

Dissidents regularly report that their family members who remain in China are harassed, detained and even imprisoned in retaliation for their truth-telling about the regime's abuses.

News reports abound of Uyghur Muslim and Chinese asylum-seekers being forcibly repatriated from neighboring South Asian countries under pressure from the Chinese government.

Journalists and academics alike are threatened with visa revocations, thereby allowing self-censorship to take root in what should be the very bastions of free expression and inquiry.

Even educational institutions based in the United States are not immune as more have welcomed the establishment of Confucius Institutes. While seemingly benign at face

value, the financial support that accompanies these centers for Chinese language and cultural education come with definite strings attached. Sensitive topics, including Taiwan and Tibet, are excluded from the curriculum, and invitations for the Dalai Lama to speak at prominent universities are mysteriously withdrawn.

In 2014, the American Association of University Professors issued a statement calling on colleagues across the United States and Canada to reconsider their partnerships with these centers, stating that, “Confucius Institutes function as an arm of the Chinese state and are allowed to ignore academic freedom.”

In April 2016, the Indian government blocked several rights advocates and activists from attending an Interfaith/Interethnic Conference in Dharamsala, India reportedly due to Chinese government pressure to rescind their visas.

Last month, a news story broke alleging that the American Bar Association (ABA) had cancelled a proposed book project with prominent Chinese human rights lawyer Teng Biao, who we will hear from today. Multiple news sources reported that the project was canceled because of fears that the initiative would offend the Chinese government. The ABA denied these reports, claiming that the staff person in question who had interfaced with Teng Biao had been misinformed. Yet questions remain not only about the specifics of the book project but more broadly about the ability of groups like the ABA to continue working in China without compromising its principles.

And of course, any discussion of the “long arm” of Beijing must include recent troubling developments in Hong Kong, specifically the disappearances and alleged abductions of five Hong Kong booksellers, which have rightly raised alarm bells among Hong Kong activists, human rights organizations and foreign governments. The Commission will have the distinct privilege today to hear from Angela Gui, the daughter of missing bookseller Gui Minhai, a naturalized Swedish citizen who disappeared in October 2015 from Pattaya, Thailand. In the recent State Department Hong Kong Policy Act report to Congress, the Department rightly noted that, “These cases have raised serious concerns in Hong Kong and represent what appears to be the most significant breach of the ‘one country, two systems’ policy since 1997.”

In a sad testament to the timeliness and importance of today’s hearing topic, some of the witnesses the Commission approached with an invitation to testify declined based on very legitimate fears about what would happen to members of their family who remain in China. This is an inexcusable reality.

For too long, China has gotten a free pass. The Obama Administration’s final U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue is just days away in Beijing. Will these issues be prioritized? Will every participating U.S. government agency be charged with bringing human rights to the forefront with their Chinese counterparts? Will there be consequences for China’s bold and aggressive disregard for human rights and extraterritorial reach? In March, the United States spearheaded a collective statement at the U.N. Human Rights Council voicing serious concern about a number of issues to include the “unexplained recent disappearances and apparent coerced returns” of

Chinese citizens and foreigners to China. The upcoming S&ED will be a litmus test for this Administration—the statement was commendable, but will words translate into action?