

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 1, 2020

President Donald Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to express our concern about the Chinese government's increasingly draconian restrictions on press freedom and the freedom of expression. On this World Press Freedom Day, we ask you to advocate for the release of unjustly imprisoned journalists, bloggers, and free speech advocates and publicly call on the Chinese government and Communist Party to end controls and permit the free flow of uncensored news and information. The many restrictions currently in effect limit not only what the world knows about China, but what the Chinese people know about their own government and its policies.

There are more journalists and bloggers detained in China than anywhere else in the world. We ask that you and administration officials raise the following cases in discussions with General Secretary Xi Jinping and other senior Chinese officials:

- **Ilham Tohti**: In January 2014, Chinese authorities detained Uyghur scholar Ilham Tohti, and a court in Urumqi, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, sentenced him to eight months and later to life imprisonment for “separatism.” Authorities have tortured him in detention and restricted visits from family members. Chinese officials shut down his popular website, Uyghur Online, which promoted understanding and dialogue between Uyghurs and Han Chinese, and sentenced seven of his university students to multi-year prison terms for their involvement with the website: Perhat Halmurat, Shohret Nijat, Abduqeyum Ablimit, Mutellip Imin, Atikem Rozi, Akbar Imin, and Luo Yuwei.
- **Huang Qi**: Authorities in Sichuan province detained human rights advocate and citizen journalist Huang Qi on November 28, 2016. Despite having acute kidney disease and cardiovascular ailments, Huang Qi received a 12-year prison sentence in July 2019 after being charged with “intentionally leaking state secrets” and “illegally providing state secrets overseas.” Huang served prior prison sentences in connection with his advocacy for the families of victims of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre and investigative reports on the fallout from the 2008 Sichuan earthquake.
- **Lü Gongsong**: Chinese freelance journalist Lü Gongsong was detained in July 2014 for reportedly publishing online essays condemning Chinese government corruption and advocating for democratization. In August 2016, a judge sentenced him to 11 years in prison for “subversion of state power,” a charge often used against citizens who publicly criticize the Communist Party. In 2017, despite suffering from diabetes and gallbladder necrosis, his request for medical parole was denied. Many other journalists, bloggers, and writers continue to be detained or disappeared for publicly reporting on or writing about government abuse of power, including Chen Jieren, Lu Yuyu, Liu Feiyue, Xu Zhiyong, Chen Qiushi, and Fang Bin.

- **Lobsang Jamyang:** Tibetan writer Lobsang Jamyang was detained and held incommunicado for more than a year before a court sentenced him on May 9, 2016 to 7 years and 6 months in prison for “leaking state secrets” and “engaging in separatist activities”. Before being incarcerated, Jamyang frequently wrote (sometimes under his pen name, Lomig, or Lomik) for Tibetan-language websites and blogs about government restrictions on free expression. Other Tibetan champions of free speech and Tibetan culture, such as Tashi Wangchug and Konchog Tsephel, are also serving multi-year prison sentences in connection with their criticism of and reporting on Chinese government policies in ethnic Tibetan regions.
- **Gulmira Imin:** On July 14, 2009, authorities in Urumqi detained Gulmira Imin, a Uyghur website administrator and government employee, in connection with a posting on the Uyghur-language website Salkin calling for Uyghurs to demonstrate on July 5, 2009. She was sentenced to life imprisonment on charges of “splittism, leaking state secrets, and organizing an illegal demonstration.” Authorities reportedly denied Imin access to pre-trial legal counsel, tortured her while in detention, and coerced her into signing a legal document before sentencing.
- **Gui Minhai:** Hong Kong-based publisher and Swedish citizen Gui Minhai was abducted from Thailand in 2015 and forced to give a televised confession to having fled China a decade prior while serving a suspended sentence. He was secretly tried and convicted in early 2020 of “illegally providing intelligence abroad” and given a 10-year prison sentence. Chinese authorities have refused Swedish consular officials’ requests to visit Gui in detention, insisting without evidence that he surrendered his Swedish citizenship in 2018. Gui was one of five Hong Kong booksellers detained or illegally abducted to China during 2015.

The individuals included here are only a representative few of the many more detained in violation of international human rights norms guaranteeing freedom of speech and the press.

In addition to raising representative prisoner cases, we request that you continue to employ all available diplomatic options to reinstate the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Washington Post* journalists expelled from China on March 17, 2020. The free flow of uncensored news and information must be a prerequisite of U.S.-China relations moving forward. Press freedom, in print and online, is essential for thwarting global pandemics, stopping forced labor-made goods from entering the U.S. market, and providing reliable economic data for investors and businesses.

Thank you for your consideration of our requests.

Sincerely,



James P. McGovern
Chair
Congressional-Executive Commission on China



Marco Rubio
Cochair
Congressional-Executive Commission on China