

**STATEMENT OF U.S. SENATOR, BYRON DORGAN**  
**CHAIRMAN, CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA**

HEARING ON

**“NOBEL LAUREATE LIU XIAOBO AND THE FUTURE OF POLITICAL REFORM IN CHINA”**

NOVEMBER 9, 2010

We have called this hearing today following the Norwegian Nobel Committee’s award last month of the Nobel Peace Prize to imprisoned Chinese writer and democracy advocate, Liu Xiaobo. In announcing its award, the Nobel Committee recognized Mr. Liu’s “long and non-violent struggle for fundamental human rights in China.”

I hope you all have picked up a copy of the large collection of articles published by this Commission, available at the door, along with a copy of the Commission’s recently released 2010 Annual Report, which covers Mr. Liu’s case in detail. As you will see, this Commission has followed and publicized Mr. Liu’s case for several years.

The Chinese government now is punishing Mr. Liu in part for his role in Charter 08, a document calling for human rights and political reform in China. He currently is serving an eleven-year sentence in a Chinese prison on the charge of “inciting subversion of state power.”

This Commission, which is charged *by law* to monitor the Chinese government’s “progress toward the development of institutions of democratic governance,” today will assess debates over political reform in China, to ask what Liu Xiaobo’s writings and advocacy mean for China, and what impact, if any, his receiving the Nobel Peace Prize may have on democracy and human rights in China.

These questions have become highly important now not only as a result of the actions of the Nobel Committee. China’s Premier Wen Jiabao himself recently was quoted as saying,

“If there is no guarantee of reform of the political system, then results obtained from the reform of the economic system may be lost....”

When China's leaders make such references to "reform of the political system," what exactly do they mean? As China prepares for major leadership changes in 2012, it is crucial that we make every effort to understand exactly what the prospects for political reform are in China today?

As we prepare to do that, I want to take a moment to say a few words about who Liu Xiaobo is.

Liu was born in 1955. He grew up in Changchun, an industrial city in China’s northeast. As a young man, he wanted to study literature, and moved to Beijing. He earned a Ph.D. degree in comparative literature, became a professor, and devoted his days to teaching and writing.

By 1989, he had the good fortune to travel abroad as a visiting scholar. When demonstrations began to grow that year in Tiananmen Square, he was visiting Columbia University. But he cut

short his stay in New York, and returned home to China, joining students in Beijing's Tiananmen Square in a hunger strike. Then, on the night of June 4, a scholar whom the students had grown to trust persuaded a group of students to withdraw from the Square and save their lives. That scholar was Liu Xiaobo.

Authorities then labeled him a subversive and sentenced him to 18 months in prison. On his release, he could neither publish nor teach. He recently described his plight in these words:

“Simply for expressing divergent political views and taking part in a peaceful and democratic movement, a teacher lost his podium, a writer lost the right to publish, and an intellectual lost the chance to speak publicly.”

On his release in 1991, he continued to write, and again, he was placed under house arrest in 1995, then sent to a labor camp, where he was detained until 1999.

In December 2008, after supporting a call for political reform known as Charter 08, he was detained again, later formally arrested and then sentenced to 11 years in prison.

Charter 08 is a call for such things as a “guarantee of human rights,” “separation of powers,” “an independent judiciary,” “rural-urban equality,” “freedom to assemble,” “freedom to form groups,” “freedom of expression,” “freedom of religion,” “civic education,” “protection of private property,” “financial and tax reform,” “social security,” and “protection of the environment.”

And so the Chinese government now tells us that these are the things—the aspirations—for which people in China may be sent to prison. And so, we must ask ourselves, what does this mean for China, and what does this mean for the United States in our dealings with China?

In a recent interview with CNN, Premier Wen Jiabao stated that

“Freedom of speech is indispensable. . . . The people's wishes for, and needs for, democracy and freedom are irresistible.”

My hope is that the Chinese government and Chinese officials will understand that they can not talk about these principles and then continue to imprison someone like Mr. Liu, and still expect the rest of the world to believe in what they say.