

Statement of Chen Guangcheng

December 7, 2016

Greetings to the Chair people, to all the human rights Congressional representatives, ladies and gentlemen: Hello!

In China, people know me as, “the barefoot lawyer:” despite having no formal training as a lawyer, I did the work of a lawyer, bringing officials to court and asking that the party respect China’s own Constitution and laws. As a result, I endured 7 years of kidnappings, house arrest, secret detention sites, and imprisonment. After I was let out of prison, my family and I were put under illegal house arrest under conditions even worse than prison, including torture, until I finally escaped.

My own experience tells me that one should not hold out any hope or possibility in the Communist Party. This is a fascist regime that destroys the essential goodness of humanity.

The Communist Party has been persecuting its own people for years. Last year it began the infamous 709 crackdown, persecuting human rights defenders and lawyers, torturing people and implicating family members by association. Some attorneys and activists in detention have been forced to make confess guilt in the state-controlled media, and have subsequently been sentenced to prison. But some, like Li Heping, Li Chunfu, Wang Quanzhang and other attorneys refuse to admit guilt, and hence continue to be held illegally. Two weeks ago, Attorney Xie Yang was tortured by prison police, and Attorney Jiang Tianyong has been disappeared. Activists Huang Qi and Liu Feiyue have been taken by public security. Countless netizens have been blocked online, and their speech censored.

Under Party control, the Chinese people have long lived in a state of suffering and fear. It should be clear that Communist authoritarian control is the enemy of humanity: we must put a stop to its destruction of humanity’s civilized values.

On the other hand, America is a great nation that truly stands out in its commitment to universal values. There is simply no way to compare the US and China on this front. Hence, America must be a model for human rights, and a leader in the global push to democracy. The American system has the strongest immunity (against corruption), and the greatest capability for correcting its mistakes. Democracy, freedom, and human rights are America’s founding principles. After many injurious years of appeasement and self-belittling, the time has come for the US to reinvigorate its core values and to protect universal human rights.

I would like to make the following recommendations to the incoming administration and Congress regarding human rights:

1. Correct the mistaken policy of separating trade from human rights. Human rights are like clean water, clean food, and clean air: they are an indispensable part of life, and cannot be separated from anything we do. *The essence of the policy of separating trade and human rights is to focus solely on making money, without care to justice or ethics. In addition, the reality is that a country with strong human rights and rule of law is a better business partner for American companies.*

2. In its position as a global leader, should express a position of clear support for the universal values of freedom, democracy, and human rights. When a dictatorial regime uses force to suppress its people, should act decisively to stop it. In addition, we should reconsider NATO's function, to transform NATO from hedgehog quill to heroic sword.

[NATO is now an organization primarily concerned with its own member nations and their security. The US should recognize that authoritarian regimes pose an existential threat to democracies everywhere. The US, for example, is already experiencing infiltration into many areas of civic and government life, including its media, academia, government offices, and electoral process by the largest dictatorships in the world. If this continues unabated, the US will find its democratic institutions substantially weakened. By supporting democratic movements through clear statements, the US and NATO will put a check to violent repression of innocent people and reclaim the importance of universal rights for all.]

3. Prevent human rights abusing officials from entering the United States. Investigate and where illegality is found, freeze the US assets of Communist Party officials.

4. Prevent the Communist Party from infiltrating US academia, media, and other institutions.

5. Demand that the Chinese Communist Party respect the UN International Treaty on Human Rights. Change the policy of speaking with the CCP on issues of human rights behind closed doors - otherwise we will continue the useless conversations we have now.

6. Ensure reciprocity of visas for journalists, and prevent the CCP from using visas to punish journalists who expose the crimes of the party.

[At the moment, the US allows roughly 800 journalists from China into the US, the majority of whom are from party media outlets, but China only allows 100 US journalists into China]

7. Invest in tools to get past internet blocking mechanisms, to assist those who seek freedom in getting past the Great Firewall [Internet Berlin Wall]. Establish direct

communication with the Chinese people, instead of just with the party.

8. Establish international, collaborative mechanisms to prevent the Chinese Communist Party from persecuting its own people internally, and from breaking down international procedures externally.

Great nations have great responsibility. In Chinese there is an ancient saying: "Bring out the best and eliminate the worst under heaven." This should be the principle to follow. As long as we join together, we can banish dictatorships, and make the world a better place.

Written by the 709 lawyers wives

The 709 Mass Arrest of Chinese Lawyers

As of today, one year and five months have passed since the mass arrest of lawyers orchestrated by the Chinese Communist Party since July 9, 2015 — an event now known as “the 709 incident.”

Over 300 lawyers, human rights defenders, and legal assistants were summoned or arrested in the security mobilization, with over 20 individuals then subjected to criminal prosecution. Sentencing of the first batch was wrapped up in early August this year, in a series of anti-Western show trials, with Hu Shigen (胡石根), Zhou Shifeng (周世锋), Zhai Yanmin (翟岩民), and Gou Hongguo (勾洪国) being criminally sentenced on charges of “subversion of state power.”

Li Heping (李和平), Wang Quanzhang (王全璋), Xie Yang (谢阳), Xie Yanyi (谢燕益), Li Chunfu (李春富), Wu Gan (吴淦), and other lawyers and human rights defenders are still in detention, and have been held in excess of the statutory limit. To this day there has still been no court date set, and recent reports from China indicate that Xie Yang, Li Heping, and other lawyers are being subjected to severe torture.

In the latest development, Jiang Tianyong (江天勇), another prominent human rights lawyer who has been campaigning for the release of the lawyers arrested last year, was himself disappeared on November 21. It's widely suspected that he has also been detained by Communist Party security forces.

In this last one year and five months, the arrested lawyers and rights defenders have been defended by officially-appointed counsel, depriving them of the right to have their families choose their own lawyers. In effect, this strips them of the right to defense. Wives of these lawyers then banded together to mount a continuous, lawful protest, demanding that their husbands be accorded the right to defense counsel. And yet the legitimate demands of the wives only led to Communist Party security officials following, harassing, monitoring, temporarily detaining, threatening, and beating them.

The 709 mass arrest of lawyers demonstrates that the Chinese Communist Party's claim of peaceful rise is nothing more than the further entrenchment and strengthening of totalitarianism, and runs in stark contradiction to the regime's own much-vaunted goal of building a country based on the rule of law. The Party instead uses ideas like the “China dream” and similar national-revival slogans to reinforce its political legitimacy, while deploying its formidable economic might to back a violent and forceful purge of domestic dissidents and the development of a powerful military.

If the international community doesn't wake up, it will soon see with its own eyes the rise of a Nazi-like neo-totalitarian state in Asia, one that will imperil the political security of both Asia and the world.

As demonstrated by the 709 lawyers, more and more Chinese people are waking up to their own civil rights, and they need more legal professionals to protect their property rights, personal freedom, and political rights. The strengthening of the community of rights defense lawyers in China will help the development of civil society, gradually expand the boundaries of freedom under the Party's high-pressure rule, and offer hope for continual improvements in the transparency of the Chinese political system and society.

There is no question that lawyers in China, as ably represented by those arrested during the 709 incident, are a crucial force that will determine whether China will make a successful political transition, and whether it will finally become a country based on universal principles of human rights.

For all these reasons, the international community should proactively expand its interactions with this force in China's civil society, work together to safeguard the personal freedom and right to practice of lawyers in China, and encourage the healthy development of civil society. This will fundamentally benefit the international balance of power and global security.

December 5, 2016