

## POLITICAL PRISONER DATABASE

*Recommendations*

When composing correspondence advocating on behalf of a political or religious prisoner, or preparing for official travel to China, Members of Congress and Administration officials are encouraged to:

- Check the Political Prisoner Database (PPD) (<http://ppdcecc.gov>) for reliable, up-to-date information on a prisoner or groups of prisoners. Consult a prisoner's database record for more detailed information about the prisoner's case, including his or her alleged crime, specific human rights that officials have violated, stage in the legal process, and location of detention or imprisonment, if known.
- Advise official and private delegations traveling to China to present Chinese officials with lists of political and religious prisoners compiled from database records.
- Urge U.S. state and local officials and private citizens involved in sister-state and sister-city relationships with China to explore the database, and to advocate for the release of political and religious prisoners in China.

## A POWERFUL RESOURCE FOR ADVOCACY

The Commission's 2017 Annual Report provides information about Chinese political and religious prisoners<sup>5</sup> in the context of specific human rights and rule of law abuses. Many of the abuses result from the Chinese Communist Party's and government's application of policies and laws. The Commission relies on the Political Prisoner Database (PPD), a publicly available online database maintained by the Commission, for its own advocacy and research work, including the preparation of the Annual Report, and routinely uses the database to prepare summaries of information about political and religious prisoners for Members of Congress and Administration officials. The Commission invites the public to read about issue-specific Chinese political imprisonment in sections of this Annual Report, and to access and make use of the PPD at <http://ppdcecc.gov>. (Information about the PPD is available at <http://www.cecc.gov/resources/political-prisoner-database>.)

The PPD received approximately 393,000 online requests for prisoner information during the 12-month period ending July 31, 2017—an increase of approximately 282 percent over the 139,300 requests reported in the Commission's 2016 Annual Report for the 12-month period ending July 31, 2016.<sup>6</sup> During the 12-month period ending in July 2017, the United States remained the country of origin for the largest share of requests for information, with approximately 50.4 percent of such requests. During the Commission's 2017 reporting year, France was in the second position, with approximately 2.7 percent of such requests, followed by India (2.4 percent), China (2.3 percent), Ukraine (2.1 percent), Brazil (2.1 percent), Japan (1.9 percent), the United Kingdom (1.8 percent), Taiwan (1.7 percent), and Romania (1.7 percent).

Internet Protocol addresses that do not provide information about the name of the registrant or the type of domain were the

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source of the largest share of online requests for information during the Commission's 2017 reporting year, accounting for approximately 44.9 percent of the 393,000 requests for information in the 12-month period ending in July 2017. The approximate number of requests from other sources are as follows: Domains ending in .net were second, with 23.2 percent of requests for PPD information. Domains ending in .com were third, with 7.5 percent of online requests for information, followed by U.S. Government (.gov) domains with 4.6 percent, then by domains for Brazil (.br) with 1.9 percent, for the European Union (.eu) with 1.4 percent, for Italy (.it), for Germany (.de), and for Japan (.jp) with 1.1 percent each, and for India (.in) with 1.0 percent. Educational (.edu) domains accounted for 0.2 percent of requests for information, and domains ending in .org for less than 0.1 percent of requests. Domains for China (.cn) accounted for 0.1 percent of such requests.

### POLITICAL PRISONERS

The PPD seeks to provide users with prisoner information that is reliable and up-to-date. Commission staff members work to maintain and update political prisoner records based on the staff member's area of expertise. The staff seek to provide objective analysis of information about individual prisoners, and about events and trends that drive political and religious imprisonment in China.

As of August 1, 2017, the PPD contained information on 8,850 cases of political or religious imprisonment in China. Of those, 1,422 are cases of political and religious prisoners currently known or believed to be detained or imprisoned, and 7,428 are cases of prisoners who are known or believed to have been released, who were executed, who died while imprisoned or soon after release, or who escaped. The Commission notes that there are considerably more than 1,422 cases of current political and religious imprisonment in China. The Commission staff work on an ongoing basis to add cases of political and religious imprisonment to the PPD.

The Dui Hua Foundation, based in San Francisco, and the former Tibet Information Network, based in London, shared their extensive experience and data on political and religious prisoners in China with the Commission to help establish the database. The Dui Hua Foundation continues to do so. The Commission also relies on its own staff research for prisoner information, as well as on information provided by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), other groups that specialize in promoting human rights and opposing political and religious imprisonment, and other public sources of information.

### MORE POWERFUL DATABASE TECHNOLOGY

The PPD has served since its launch in November 2004 as a unique and powerful resource for the U.S. Congress and Administration, other governments, NGOs, educational institutions, and individuals who research political and religious imprisonment in China, or who advocate on behalf of such prisoners. The July 2010 PPD upgrade significantly leveraged the capacity of the Commission's information and technology resources to support such research, reporting, and advocacy.

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In 2015, the Commission enhanced the functionality to the PPD to empower the Commission, the U.S. Congress and Administration, other governments, NGOs, and individuals to strengthen reporting on political and religious imprisonment in China and advocacy undertaken on behalf of Chinese political prisoners.

- The PPD full text search and the basic search both provide an option to return only records that either include or do not include an image of the prisoner.
- PPD record short summaries accommodate more text as well as greater capacity to link to external websites.

The PPD aims to provide a technology with sufficient power to handle the scope and complexity of political imprisonment in China. The most important feature of the PPD is that it is structured as a genuine database and uses a powerful query engine. Each prisoner's record describes the type of human rights violation by Chinese authorities that led to his or her detention. These types include violations of the right to peaceful assembly, freedom of religion, freedom of association, and freedom of expression, including the freedom to advocate peaceful social or political change and to criticize government policy or government officials.

The design of the PPD allows anyone with access to the Internet to query the database and download prisoner data without providing personal information to the Commission, and without the PPD downloading any software or Web cookies to a user's computer. Users have the option to create a user account, which allows them to save, edit, and reuse queries, but the PPD does not require a user to provide any personal information to set up such an account. The PPD does not download software or a Web cookie to a user's computer as the result of setting up such an account. Saved queries are not stored on a user's computer. A user-specified ID (which can be a nickname) and password are the only information required to set up a user account.

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### Notes to Section I—Political Prisoner Database

<sup>5</sup>The Commission treats as a political prisoner an individual detained or imprisoned for exercising his or her human rights under international law, such as peaceful assembly, freedom of religion, freedom of association, free expression, including the freedom to advocate peaceful social or political change, and to criticize government policy or government officials. (This list is illustrative, not exhaustive.) In most cases, prisoners in the PPD were detained or imprisoned for attempting to exercise rights guaranteed to them by China's Constitution and law, or by international law, or both. Chinese security, prosecution, and judicial officials sometimes seek to distract attention from the political or religious nature of imprisonment by convicting a de facto political or religious prisoner under the pretext of having committed a generic crime. In such cases, defendants typically deny guilt but officials may attempt to coerce confessions using torture and other forms of abuse, and standards of evidence are poor. If authorities permit a defendant to entrust someone to provide him or her legal counsel and defense, as the PRC Criminal Procedure Law guarantees in Article 32, officials may deny the counsel adequate access to the defendant, restrict or deny the counsel's access to evidence, and not provide the counsel adequate time to prepare a defense.

<sup>6</sup>CECC, 2016 Annual Report, 6 October 16, 56.