



ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS
SENATOR DAN SULLIVAN, CHAIR
REPRESENTATIVE CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH, COCHAIR

May 7, 2026

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We commend your willingness to raise Jimmy Lai's case directly with Chinese Communist Party General Secretary Xi Jinping and your strong commitment to securing the release of unjustly detained Americans, including Nelson Wells, Jr. and Dawn Michelle Hunt in China. We believe your continued and direct leadership on these issues will achieve meaningful results.

Today, we write to express concern about political prisoners in China and to specifically highlight the growing threat to American interests arising from the Chinese Communist Party's use of hostage diplomacy, coercive exit bans, and transnational repression against U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents, and their family members. The CCP's repression does not stop at China's borders. It is designed to pressure people in the United States, chill speech and advocacy on U.S. soil, and demonstrate that the Party can impose costs on Americans and their loved ones with impunity.

Publicly and privately raising the names of individual victims at the highest levels will help protect American citizens and businesses in China and deny the CCP the ability to use human beings as bargaining chips. We therefore respectfully ask you to raise the following cases in all high-level engagements with General Secretary Xi:

- **Pastor Mingri "Ezra" Jin**—A Protestant pastor imprisoned for his religious leadership. His family in the United States has been threatened in an effort to stop them from raising his case with the White House and the Department of State.
- **Dr. Gulshan Abbas**—A Uyghur physician serving a 20-year sentence, detained in order to intimidate and silence her sister, who advocates here in the United States for Uyghur human rights. Her sister, brother, and daughter are all American citizens.
- **Ekpar Asat**—A Uyghur entrepreneur detained after participating in a State Department International Visitor Leadership Program during your first Administration. His sister will soon become an American citizen.
- **Gao Zhen**—A U.S. lawful permanent resident arrested over artwork created in the United States. His U.S.-citizen child has been barred from returning to his home in New York City.

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In each of these cases, the CCP is not only punishing an individual. It is sending a message both at home and abroad that it can control the lives of people in China and reach into American families and influence conduct in the United States. Raising these names directly with General Secretary Xi would help raise the cost of that behavior and demonstrate that the United States will defend its principles, and its citizens and residents against coercion.

We encourage you to direct the Department of State to establish and maintain a standing, regularly updated priority list of political prisoner and exit-ban cases for use in all senior-level diplomatic engagements with General Secretary Xi and other Chinese Communist Party leaders.

That list should include unjustly detained Americans, individuals subject to exit bans, and prisoners of conscience detained for exercising their internationally recognized human rights, including many whose immediate family members are American citizens or lawful permanent residents. We have enclosed a list of such cases for your consideration.

Raising political prisoner cases at the highest levels is a low-cost, high-return instrument that raises the price of repression, denies the CCP a cheap tool of leverage, and makes clear that the United States will address arbitrary detention and family intimidation in the normal course of bilateral relations. This practice has historically been an effective tool of U.S. diplomacy with China, including during your first Administration.

This is an important front in the strategic competition with the Chinese Communist Party. The CCP has made clear that it views democracy, religious liberty, free expression, and the rule of law as threats because they represent sources of authority outside Party control. Calling for the release of political prisoners, therefore, does more than defend individual victims. It exposes the repression, censorship, and other human rights abuses the Party imposes on people in China and undermines the CCP's claim that its autocratic system offers a superior model of political order and economic development.

We are grateful for your dedication to end unjust detentions and to advance U.S. interests—and would appreciate continued top-level engagement until all unjustly or arbitrarily detained prisoners are liberated, and they and their families are free from the fear, worry, and coercion imposed on them by the Chinese Communist Party.

Thank you for your attention.

Sincerely,



Senator Dan Sullivan
Chair



Senator Jeff Merkley
Ranking Member



Representative Christopher Smith
Co-chair



Representative James P. McGovern
Ranking Member

Addendum: Illustrative Case List for Presidential Engagement with CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping

This addendum is intended to support senior-level diplomacy. It is organized in two categories: unjustly detained Americans and political prisoners.

I. Americans unjustly detained

- **Nelson Wells, Jr.**—American citizen unjustly detained in the PRC for more than a decade after proceedings lacking due process; faces serious, inadequately treated medical concerns.
- **Dawn Michelle Hunt**—American citizen unjustly detained in the PRC for more than a decade after proceedings lacking due process; faces serious, inadequately treated medical concerns.

II. Political prisoners

- **Dr. Gulshan Abbas**—Uyghur physician serving a 20-year sentence after a secret trial; her sister is based in the United States, raising clear concerns of family-based retaliation.
- **Pastor Mingri “Ezra” Jin**—Protestant house church leader imprisoned in connection with his religious leadership; he is the father of three U.S. citizens.
- **Ekpar Asat**—Uyghur entrepreneur detained after participating in a U.S. State Department exchange program and later sentenced on politically motivated charges; he has family in the United States.
- **Gao Zhen**—Chinese artist detained in 2024 in connection with artwork critical of Mao Zedong; he has a U.S.-citizen child who is exit-banned from leaving China.
- **Gao Zhisheng**—Human rights lawyer and Christian activist who has been repeatedly imprisoned, tortured, and forcibly disappeared for defending religious believers and other persecuted groups; his wife and children live in the United States.
- **Ding Jiayi**—Human rights lawyer and leading figure in the New Citizens’ Movement, serving a 12-year sentence on subversion charges after the post-Xiamen crackdown; his wife and daughters live in the United States.
- **Ilham Tohti**—Uyghur economist and professor serving a life sentence following advocacy for Uyghur rights and interethnic dialogue; his daughter lives in the United States.
- **Zhou Deyong**—Falun Gong practitioner and senior geological engineer from Shandong serving an eight-year sentence; he has family in the United States.
- **Renagul Ghani**—Uyghur elementary school art teacher and painter reportedly serving a 17-year sentence; she has family in the United States who have been threatened for their advocacy for her release.
- **Konchog Choedrag**—Tibetan Buddhist monk and acting head of Hortsang Kirti Monastery, detained in December 2024; whereabouts and condition remain unknown.
- **Chow Hang-tung**—Hong Kong barrister and democracy advocate imprisoned for peaceful political activity and facing additional national security prosecution.

- **Fang Yirong**—Chinese activist detained after a solo protest calling for freedom and democratic reform; whereabouts reportedly unknown since August 2024.
- **Go Sherab Gyatso**—Tibetan Buddhist monk and scholar serving a prison term on separatism-related charges and reportedly denied adequate medical care.
- **Gwyneth Ho**—Hong Kong journalist and democracy activist imprisoned under the National Security Law.
- **Peng Lifa**—Sitong Bridge protester detained after his public call for political reform; whereabouts and legal status remain unclear.
- **Dorje Tashi**—Tibetan businessman serving a life sentence in a case widely criticized as politically motivated.
- **Xin Ruoyu**—Chinese Christian detained in connection with the creation of a religious app and reportedly transferred to an extralegal detention facility.
- **Xu Na**—Chinese artist and Falun Gong practitioner serving an eight-year sentence; previously imprisoned for her beliefs.
- **Wang Yi**—Protestant pastor, founder of Chengdu’s Early Rain Covenant Church, and former human rights attorney, imprisoned since December 2018 and serving a nine-year sentence tied to his religious leadership.
- **Zhang Zhan**—Chinese citizen journalist repeatedly detained for independent reporting, including on the COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan.
- **Dong Yuyu**—Veteran Chinese journalist, editor, and commentator serving a seven-year espionage sentence after being detained in Beijing in 2022 while meeting a Japanese diplomat.