



## **Tiananmen at 30: Examining the Evolution of Repression in China**

**Congressional-Executive Commission on China**

**June 4, 2019**

*U.S. Representative Christopher Smith (R-NJ)  
Cochair, Lantos Human Rights Commission  
CECC Commissioner*

*As prepared for delivery*

Thank you, Representative McGovern and Senator Rubio, for convening this joint hearing of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China and the Lantos Human Rights Commission.

I have the privilege of serving on both Commissions and cannot think of more auspicious day on which to hold a joint hearing.

Thirty years ago the world watched as over a million Chinese gathered to peacefully demand political reform and human rights.

The hopes and promises of those heady days in 1989 ended needlessly with violence, tears, bloodshed, detention, and exile.

Tiananmen Square has come to symbolize the persistent and brutal lengths the Chinese Communist Party will go to remain in power.

Mothers lost sons, fathers lost daughters, and China lost an idealistic generation to the tanks that rolled down Tiananmen Square on June 4th, 1989.

We remember the Tiananmen massacre here in Congress each year because of its enduring impact on U.S.-China relations.

We remember it because an unknown number of people died, were arrested, and exiled for simply seeking universally recognized freedoms.

We remember this date each year because it is too important to forget and because it is too dangerous to commemorate in China.

The legacy is Tiananmen is seared in my memory after I visited Beijing Prison #1 in 1991. I will never forget the faces of those gaunt Tiananmen prisoners, their heads shaved, in tattered clothes, and bent over machines working grueling hours on clothing for the U.S. and other markets.

I will never forget that day. It fired my efforts, along with so many others in Congress—Frank Wolf and Speaker Pelosi among them—to fight against the fantasy that trade and investment would lead to political liberalization and human rights in China.

It still fires my efforts to shine a light on repression in Xi Jinping's China.

As documented so well by the CECC's Annual Report, the domestic screws on dissent have tightened considerably since Xi Jinping assumed the Presidency.

The scope of Mr. Xi's repression is immense with more arbitrary detentions, censorship, torture, and social control now than at any time since 1989.

President Xi and top Communist Party leaders regularly unleash bellicose attacks on “universal values,” “Western ideals,” and “revisionism of the Party's history.” They have pushed through new laws that legitimize political, religious, and ethnic repression; further curtail civil liberties and civil society and expand censorship of the Internet.

Rights lawyers and labor organizers are tortured and jailed; Hong Kong booksellers and Chinese activist disappear from Thailand; citizen journalists and religious leaders are arbitrarily detained; even the family members of overseas journalists—like the brave members of Radio Free Asia's Uyghur Service—are jailed to silence their critical reporting.

*Impunity and repression are the ties that bind the Tiananmen massacre and the internment of over a million Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims—in what can only be called concentration camps.*

The U.S. cannot be neutral when human rights are trampled with impunity or when crimes against humanity are being committed as we speak.

*Either you stand with the “Tank Man” or you stand with the tank.* There is no middle ground.

This is why the CECC has pressed the Administration hard to hold accountable those Chinese officials and businesses complicit in the most egregious human rights violations in China.

Strong rhetoric condemning crimes against humanity occurring in Xinjiang are not enough at this point. Those who abuse universal freedoms with impunity should not prosper from access to the United States and our economic or political freedoms. It is the least the U.S. can do to show leadership in a world where Chinese cash increasingly buys silence.

In the long run—we must rethink completely how our values and interests coincide when it comes to China. Senator Rubio and I have tried to do this over the last four years as CECC Chairs. I’m sure it will continue under the leadership of Representative McGovern.

We can no longer afford to separate human rights from our other interests.

The health of the U.S. economy and environment, the safety of our food and drug supplies, the security of our investments and personal information in cyberspace, and the stability of the Pacific region will depend on China complying with international law, allowing the free flow of news and information, and the developing an independent judiciary and civil society.

In other words, human rights and the rule of law matter. *The memory of Tiananmen matters.*

While the hopes of the Tiananmen Square demonstrators have not yet been realized, the demands for universal freedoms and political reform continue to inspire the Chinese people today.

I believe that someday China will be free. Someday, the people of China will be able to enjoy all of their God-given rights. And a nation of free Chinese men and women will honor and celebrate the heroes of Tiananmen Square and all those who sacrificed so much, and so long, for freedom.