



Hearing on

Tiananmen at 35: The Ongoing Struggle for Human Rights and Democracy in China

Tuesday, June 4, 2024 – 10:30 a.m.

Statement Submitted for the Record

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Commissioner, Congressional-Executive Commission on China

Good morning. I join my colleagues in welcoming everyone to today's hearing on the 35th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre in China.

Thirty-five years ago, Chinese authorities ordered their military to forcibly remove protesters who had occupied Tiananmen Square for weeks, calling for economic and political reform.

Estimates of how many people were wounded and killed when the tanks rolled in range from the hundreds to a few thousand; the exact numbers are still unknown.

What we do know is that the violence unleashed that day meant that hardliners in the Chinese government had gained the upper hand over reformists, with consequences that are still being felt today.

Through 2020, an annual vigil for the victims of Tiananmen Square was held in Victoria Park in Hong Kong. In fact, Hong Kong was the only Chinese city in which commemorations were allowed, a result of the "one country, two systems" arrangement.

But in 2021 Victoria Park was empty because the national security law imposed by Beijing in 2020 made public mention of the massacre a jailable offense.

The new Article 23 law passed in Hong Kong in March doubles down on this. Six people were [arrested](#) a few days ago for “inciting hatred” against Beijing by posting messages about a “sensitive date” – the June 4th Tiananmen Square anniversary.

In fact, for years the PRC has used every tactic it can to erase the memory of Tiananmen, from restricting internet searches and removing books to physical repression.

So we are here today to commemorate that which cannot be commemorated in China.

We are here to remember and pay tribute to those who were killed on June 4, 1989, and those who were wounded, and those who were imprisoned for their participation.

We are also here to remember the demands of the protesters 35 years ago, their ideas, their hope, and their courage.

We are here because memory is both the preservation of the past, and a source of power and inspiration for the future.

As one of our witnesses will tell us today, even though the Tiananmen protests and massacre remain a source of trauma for the Chinese people, they have simultaneously become a tremendous source of inspiration, healing, and hope.

Another witness will tell us “we inherited the spirit of resistance from the Tiananmen generation.”

Memory and memorializing can and should be an empowering process. We are here today to contribute to that process, in honor of the Tank Man and all the protesters in Tiananmen Square on that fateful day, June 4, 1989.

Thank you.