



**Statement of U.S. Representative Christopher Smith,  
Chairman of the Congressional-Executive  
Commission on China (CECC)**

**CECC Hearing on “Two Years Later: The Ongoing  
Detentions of Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Liu Xiaobo  
and His Wife Liu Xia”**

**December 12, 2012, Washington, DC**

Two years after the independent Nobel Committee awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to Chinese intellectual and democracy advocate Liu Xiaobo, little has changed. Liu Xiaobo remains isolated in prison. He remains thousands of miles away from his wife, Liu Xia, whom authorities have now held under house arrest for 26 months. Chinese authorities continue to defend their imprisonment of Liu Xiaobo and continue to deny Liu Xia's de facto house arrest. Despite global calls to release the Nobel Peace Prize laureate and his wife, Chinese authorities remain resolute in their will to silence them.

It has now been a year since we last convened a hearing to discuss this outrageous and senseless violation of the Lius' rights—a year later, we ask the same questions and express the same concerns.

Liu Xiaobo's ordeal is well-known. In December 2010, The Nobel Committee awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to Liu Xiaobo “for his long and non-violent struggle for fundamental human rights in China.” A year earlier, Chinese authorities sentenced him to 11 years in prison for “inciting subversion of state power,” the longest known sentence for that crime, simply because he exercised his internationally recognized right to free expression. Liu's conviction, according to court documents, was based on Charter 08 and six essays he wrote. Mr. Liu's trial, conviction, and sentence, once again demonstrated the Chinese government's failure to uphold its international human rights obligations and its failure to abide by procedural norms and safeguards that meet international standards.

Liu Xiaobo co-wrote and signed Charter 08—a treatise urging political and legal reforms based on constitutional principles. Charter 08 states that freedom, equality, and human rights are universal values of humankind and that democracy and constitutional government are the fundamental framework for protecting these values. In response to this public call for rights and reform, officials blocked access to and censored all mentions of Charter 08. They questioned, summoned, or otherwise harassed hundreds of Chinese citizens for contributing to or signing the document.

Today, we have little news about Liu's current condition. Liu remains in prison—there is little doubt that the Chinese continue to treat him unmercifully.

We do, sadly, have some news. While we previously knew that authorities continued to hold Liu's wife under a de facto form of house arrest—with little contact with the outside world—we have recently learned more about her unbearable circumstances and detention. Last week, two Associated Press journalists were able to briefly interview Liu Xia, while the guards that keep watch over her were away for a midday break. Upon opening the door, the journalists found a woman shocked by the rare opportunity to communicate with those outside her prison.

She wept as she decried the injustice and absurdity of her detention. She told them of her poor health and of the outrageous abuses she has suffered. Her ongoing plight has been referred to by some as the “most severe retaliation by a government given to a Nobel winner's family.”

Liu Xia remains detained in violation of Chinese law—a victim of the government's contempt and paranoia. Angered by Liu's award and his global support, Chinese authorities have unjustly detained this innocent woman.

The targeting of wives and children, of grandparents and associates, however, remains a common practice for the Chinese government. A few weeks ago, the nephew of Chen Guangcheng, the blind activist who escaped to the United States earlier this year, was sentenced to 39 months imprisonment after defending himself from thugs who attacked his family. As with Liu's case, the trial was marred by procedural irregularities and violations. In recent months, the wife and child of Mongolian activist Hada have been confined to their home illegally and blocked from communicating with others. Today, we will hear moving, first-hand accounts of how families suffer when courageous individuals speak out against the Chinese government.

This, of course, is not a new tactic by Chinese authorities. In recent years we have heard how Chinese officials and those operating under their authority have interrogated children or harassed acquaintances. Chinese guards have shouted expletives at school-age sons and daughters and enforced economic reprisals against relatives and loved ones.

Liu Xia is not alone—but, she remains a symbol of these often overlooked collateral victims.

Why target family members and friends? The Chinese government fears the free thinkers they love and support. It acts in ways to silence those free thinkers who promote the best ideals and seek the greatest good for China. In China, free thinkers represent a threat to the government's “stability”—while representing new hopes for the Chinese people.

This threat of reform is China's greatest concern. Recently, after the sentencing of Chinese official Bo Xilai's wife for intentional homicide, leading human rights and China experts suggested that she might receive a medical pardon after nine years. Nine years for murder—as compared to eleven for Liu Xiabo's calls for freedom. This is the China we are dealing with—one in which pre-meditated murder is viewed with less concern than calls for non-violent political reform... A China in which Chinese officials are sentenced to reclusive, plush prisons, while the wives and children and parents of rights

advocates are doomed to a Kafkaesque existence—languishing in domestic prisons without opportunities for appeals or pardons.

A year after our last hearing on the subject, little has changed. Mr. Liu remains in prison and Mrs. Liu under an extralegal form of house arrest. Our resolve, however, has changed—in fact, it has grown stronger. Today, we are more concerned about the current conditions for Liu Xiaobo and Liu Xia. And, we are more outraged at the lack of humanity demonstrated by those perpetrating these crimes--from the thugs guarding Liu Xia's door to the newly-appointed leadership in Beijing. Today, our resolve--and the resolve of free-minded people—is, without question, stronger.

A year ago, we called on China to immediately and unconditionally release Liu Xiaobo and Liu. Today, we similarly demand that China end this “absurdity” for these noble citizens—and for all who remain detained in China for their political beliefs. We have not forgotten Liu Xiaobo and his wife. We commit to seeking their release from confinement and detention. We will not forget them next year, or the year thereafter—regardless of the circumstances. We will continue to demand they be freed and continue to demand that all Chinese citizens enjoy the fundamental freedoms protected under international law.

It is with this resolve and concern that we are joined today by a panel of experts on these cases and on China more broadly. I would like to thank them for their advocacy on behalf of Mr. Liu and Mrs. Liu and for sharing their insights into recent developments here today.