



**Statement of U.S. Senator Marco Rubio,
Cochairman of the Congressional-
Executive Commission on China (CECC)**

**CECC Hearing on “Dissidents Who Have
Suffered for Human Rights in China: A
Look Back and Look Forward”
Wednesday, December 7, 2016**

As prepared for delivery.

Thank you Chairman Smith and thank you to all of the witnesses gathered here today—this is an impressive group of men and women who have important stories to share about their own personal suffering and that of their family members and associates at the hands of the Chinese government and Communist Party. Their experiences must not be viewed in isolation, rather they are representative of untold numbers of other Chinese, Tibetans and Uyghurs who daily face repression. Today I joined Rep. Smith in sending a letter to the Chinese Ambassador to raise our concern and seek additional information about a spate of detentions involving prominent Chinese human rights advocates, as well American citizen Sandy Phan-Gillis who has been arbitrarily detained for twenty-one months now—I submit a copy of that correspondence for the Record.

Before going any further, I’d like to take a moment at this hearing, the last CECC hearing of the 114th Congress, to recognize Chairman Smith for his capable and principled leadership of the Commission. He is an unrelenting advocate for human rights and rule of law in China and around the globe and I look forward to continuing to partner with him in the new Congress—because as today’s testimony will no doubt make clear, the mandate and mission of this Commission is as vital as ever.

The Commission’s recently released Annual Report painted an undeniably bleak picture regarding the deterioration of human rights and the rule of law in China, with especially grave consequences for civil society, religious believers, human rights lawyers, and labor activists. Since the Report’s release in October 2016, those abuses have continued apace in the last two months.

As the Report documents and as new stories from the last several weeks underscore, Beijing has become increasingly brazen in exerting its extraterritorial reach. This was especially true in the outrageous abductions of the Hong Kong booksellers last year—including Swedish national Gui Minhai who is still being held by Chinese authorities at an undisclosed location—and now more recently in China’s unprecedented intervention in Hong Kong’s legal system in the cases surrounding two democratically elected politicians who won seats in the Legislative Council on platforms calling for democratic

self-determination for Hong Kong. The ripple effects of this ruling are not fully known yet as the Hong Kong government has now taken additional steps targeting opposition lawmakers. This is gravely concerning and something which the Commission, and the Congress, will be watching closely in the coming year especially as it relates to the Hong Kong Policy Act.

Returning to the focus of today's hearing, we are at a critical juncture in U.S.-China relations, and there is much wisdom to be gleaned, for the incoming administration, from dissident voices.

December will mark fifteen years since China gained entry to the World Trade Organization. It is past time to take stock of our approach and recognize that despite what proponents at the time believed would happen, China has in fact used the international rules-based system to fuel vast economic growth, while further restricting freedom and increasing repression. Quite simply, many of the principles which have undergirded U.S.-China relations during Democrat and Republican administrations alike in recent decades have not yielded the desired outcomes.

A perennial critique from those who care about human rights issues has been that the U.S. foreign policy apparatus risks ghettoizing human rights concerns, only giving them the prominence they merit during infrequent, and often ineffective, human rights dialogues and then relegating these issues to the sidelines in high-level bilateral engagement.

The Obama administration struggled to integrate human rights issues at the highest levels sending unmistakable signals early on, as was famously reported during then Secretary Clinton's inaugural trip to China in 2009 that human rights issues, quote, "can't interfere with the global economic crisis, the global climate change crisis and the security crisis." Words have consequences, midlevel appointees at the State Department and elsewhere take them to heart. As such, it will be critical, during the early days of the new administration, for the Secretary and other senior diplomats to put down markers on these issues which are of central import not only to the Chinese people, but to U.S. national interests. For as history has shown us, where rule of law fails to take root, where human rights abuses are committed with impunity, where international obligations are violated, the U.S. should not expect to find a responsible global stakeholder.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on this important topic. Today's hearing was scheduled to coincide with the commemoration of Human Rights Day this weekend, and also with the sixth anniversary of the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Chinese dissident and writer Liu Xiaobo—an honor he has not been able to rightfully claim given that still today he languishes unjustly in prison, serving an eleven-year sentence handed down for his essays criticizing the Chinese government.

The U.S. must commit anew to standing with China's reformers and dissidents, embracing their aspirations and consistently pressing the Chinese Government and

Communist Party to respect basic human rights and uphold the rule of law. I look forward to today's testimony and policy recommendations.