



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

**CECC Hearing on “Population Control in
China: State-Sponsored Violence Against
Women and Children”
Thursday, April 30, 2015**

As prepared for delivery.

I'd like to begin by thanking Chairman Smith for his unwavering leadership on this issue.

Nearly thirty-five years ago, the communist regime in China enacted its “One-Child Policy,” one of the most disastrous and immoral social policies in human history. It was the communist regime’s ill-conceived “solution” to help curb population growth and boost economic development.

The One-Child Policy banned most Chinese couples from having more than one child. When couples conceived a second child, the Chinese government forced them to eliminate him or her, by any means necessary- including forced abortions. However, because of cultural norms that place a premium on boys, the policy’s victims also included first-conceived children simply because they happened to be girls. In addition, Chinese women who gave birth to baby girls were indirectly victims of this policy because many ended up being shunned by their husbands, families, and society.

For over three decades, China’s One-Child Policy, combined with the preference for sons, has condemned an unknown number of Chinese girls – who the policy helped deem unwanted or “surplus” – to abortion, infanticide, and abandonment. The result is a radically skewed sex ratio, and—by the Chinese government’s own estimates—30 million more men than women by 2020. No one knows for sure what such a large surplus of males will mean for Chinese society, but many experts have predicted, among other consequences, an increase in human trafficking for the purposes of prostitution and forced marriages. Many of China’s neighbors can attest to this reality.

China’s One-Child Policy demands the attention of American policymakers not only because it is a grotesque violation of basic human rights, but also because there will be a growing number of involuntary bachelors and the likely impact this group may have on internal social unrest and broader regional stability.

The One-Child Policy has also contributed to a large number of unregistered children in China. *The Economist* has done an excellent job of documenting in several reports in recent years, noting that today there are about 13 million Chinese who lack household registration certificates, many of them because they were born in violation of the One-Child Policy. While it is technically illegal to withhold registration from “out-of-plan” children, in practice, many local family planning officials refuse to register these children as a way to force parents to pay large fines. In other cases, parents who know they will be unable to pay family planning fines do not even try to have their so-called “illegal” children registered. Not having this certificate means they can’t go to school, get a job, get married or receive state benefits. They have no access to China’s already flawed legal system. They can’t even escape this misery by buying plane or train tickets so they can relocate. Over time, failing to register children at birth leaves them vulnerable to human trafficking and exploitation.

Just over a year ago, the Chinese government relaxed this disastrous policy. However, innocent Chinese parents are still forced to endure abortions and sterilizations in the parts of the country that are still subject to it. The shift in policy was not an admission that the government had perpetrated a horrific human rights abuse against its own people. Rather, it was based on the recognition that China now faces serious demographic decline in the coming decades if the status quo remains intact.

I am actively trying to address both the problem of unregistered children and China’s sex-ratio imbalance through legislation I’ve introduced called the Girls Count Act.

The Girls Count Act would direct current U.S. foreign assistance to support the rights of women and girls in developing countries by working to establish birth registries in their countries. While China already has a birth registration system, the Girls Count Act includes provisions to coordinate with the private sector and civil society organizations to advocate for the registration of all children. Of course, the best way to ensure that all Chinese children are registered is to remove the fines and other punishments for “out-of-plan” children; however, until this happens, encouraging local NGOs to work with parents to register their children and, if necessary, to take legal action against local governments who refuse to register children, would be a positive step.

In addition to the focus on registration, the Girls Count Act would support programs to help increase property rights, social security, home ownership, land tenure security, and inheritance rights for all citizens, and women in particular. Women in China often face difficulty protecting their property rights. In urban settings women may face pressure to keep their names off the deed of their home in order to allow their husbands to save face, while in rural areas women lose their land rights when they marry outside of their home villages. Yet as one of our witnesses today, Professor Hudson, will discuss, supporting property rights for women is crucial for raising the status of women and girls within the family and society as a whole. By working to raise the status of women, we can get at one root cause of the gender imbalances in China and elsewhere—the preference for sons. This Act is but one way we can address the societal consequences of China’s disastrous One-Child Policy.

Perhaps most regrettably, time and again this Administration has failed to prioritize human rights in its dealings with the Chinese government--at times going so far as to convey both indirectly, and directly, that these issues can be pushed to the sidelines in our bilateral relations. The Obama Administration has contributed millions of U.S. taxpayer dollars to the United Nations Population Fund, an agency which has been complicit in China's One-Child policy. It is time for American foreign policy to reflect American values. The U.S. must continue to advocate for the complete elimination of the One-Child policy and the rights of all Chinese citizens, including the unborn, to live up to their God-given potential.