



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

**CECC Hearing on “Tiananmen at 25:
Enduring Influence on U.S.-China Relations
and China’s Political Development”**

May 20, 2014

As prepared for delivery.

Twenty-five years ago the world watched as millions of Chinese gathered, all across China, to peacefully demand political reform and democratic openness. The hopes and promises of those heady days ended with needless violence--tears, bloodshed, arrests and exile.

We must continue to honor the sacrifices endured by the pro-democracy movement, by advocates for independent labor unions, and those demanding fundamental human rights for all Chinese. Mothers lost sons, fathers lost daughters, and China lost an idealistic generation to the tanks that rolled down Tiananmen Square on June 4th, 1989.

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

We remember Tiananmen annually here in Congress because of its enduring impact on U.S.-China relations. We remember it also because an unknown number of people died, were arrested, and exiled for simply seeking universally-recognized freedoms. And we will continue to remember Tiananmen until the Chinese people are free to discuss openly the tragic events of June 3–4th, 1989, without censorship, harassment, or arrest. We in Congress remain committed to the people of China struggling peacefully for human rights and the rule of law.

The prospects for greater civil and political rights in China seems as remote today as it did the day after the tanks rolled through the Square. In 1989 the Chinese government used guns and tanks to suppress the people’s demands for

freedom and transparency. In 2014 they use arrests, discrimination, torture, and censorship to discourage those who seek basic freedoms and human rights.

The means may change, but the ends remain the same—crush dissent at all costs because it challenges the authority of the Communist Party.

This has been one of the worst years, in the recent memory, for the suppression of human rights activists and civil society. Xi Jinping's tenure as President, which started with so much promise of new beginnings, has proven that the old tactics of repression will be used liberally against dissent.

Top Communist Party leaders regularly unleash bellicose attacks on “universal values” and “Western ideals.” In the past year, over 220 people have been detained for their defense of human rights.

The more things change in China, the more they stay the same.

While the hopes of the Tiananmen Square demonstrators have not yet been realized, their demands for freedom of speech, basic human rights, political reforms and the end of government abuse and corruption, continue to inspire the Chinese people today. These are universal desires, not limited by culture or language or history.

There is an impressive and inspiring drive in Chinese civil society to keep fighting for freedom under very difficult and dangerous conditions. This drive is the most important asset in promoting human rights and democratization in the country. If democratic change comes to China, it will come from within, not because of outside pressure.

U.S. policy, in both the short and long-term, must be, and be seen to be, supportive of advocates for peaceful change; supportive of the champions of liberty, and of those Chinese civil society seeking to promote rights and freedoms for everyone, not only to pad the economic bottom-line.

Our strategic and moral interests coincide when we seek to promote human rights and democratic openness in China. A more democratic China, one that respects human rights, and is governed by the rule of law, is more likely

to be a productive and peaceful partner rather than strategic and hostile competitor.

This future should also be in China's interests, because the most prosperous and stable societies are those that protect religious freedom, the freedom of speech, and the rule of law.

We in Congress remain committed to the people of China struggling for universal freedoms and we urge the Chinese government to learn from the past and embrace the greater openness, democracy, and respect for human rights that its people called for 25 years ago, and continue to call for today.