

POLITICAL PRISONER DATABASE

Recommendations

When composing correspondence advocating on behalf of a political or religious prisoner, or preparing for official travel to China, Members of Congress and Administration officials are encouraged to:

- Check the Political Prisoner Database (PPD) (<http://ppdcecc.gov>) for reliable, up-to-date information on a prisoner or groups of prisoners. Consult a prisoner's database record for more detailed information about the prisoner's case, including his or her alleged crime, specific human rights that officials have violated, stage in the legal process, and location of detention or imprisonment, if known.
- Advise official and private delegations traveling to China to present Chinese officials with lists of political and religious prisoners compiled from database records.
- Urge U.S. state and local officials and private citizens involved in sister-state and sister-city relationships with China to explore the database, and to advocate for the release of political and religious prisoners in China.

A POWERFUL RESOURCE FOR ADVOCACY

The Commission's 2014 Annual Report provides information about Chinese political and religious prisoners¹ in the context of specific human rights and rule of law abuses. Many of the abuses result from the Chinese Communist Party's and government's application of policies and laws. The Commission relies on the Political Prisoner Database (PPD), a publicly available online database maintained by the Commission, for its own advocacy and research work, including the preparation of the Annual Report, and routinely uses the database to prepare summaries of information about political and religious prisoners for Members of Congress and Administration officials. The Commission invites the public to read about issue-specific Chinese political imprisonment in sections of this Annual Report, and to access and make use of the upgraded PPD at <http://ppdcecc.gov>. (Information about the PPD is available at <http://www.cecc.gov/resources/political-prisoner-database>.)

The PPD received approximately 86,100 online requests for prisoner information during the 12-month period ending August 31, 2014—an increase of approximately 2 percent over the 84,500 requests during the 12-month period ending August 31, 2013. During the 12-month period ending in August 2014, the United States was the country of origin of the largest share of requests for information, with approximately 29.7 percent of such requests—a decrease from the 31.9 percent reported for the United States in the Commission's 2013 Annual Report. China was second with approximately 22.7 percent (a decrease compared to 29.2 percent in the 2013 reporting period), followed by Japan with 20.3 percent (compared to 19.1 percent in the 2013 reporting period), Ukraine (3.7 percent), France (2.2 percent), India (2.1 percent), Germany (1.8 percent), Poland (1.2 percent), the Russian Federation (1.1 percent), and the United Kingdom (1.0 percent).

Approximately 38.4 percent of the approximately 86,100 requests for PPD information were from numerical Internet addresses that do not provide information about the name of the registrant or the type of domain. That figure represents an 18.4 percent decrease from the 56.8 percent reported for such addresses during the period ending in August 2013 and may correlate with the proportional increase reported below for the China (.cn) domain.

Approximately 19.5 percent of the online requests for PPD information during the 12-month period ending in August 2014 originated from domains in China (.cn)—an increase from 0.2 percent during the period ending in August 2013. Worldwide commercial (.com) Internet domains were second with approximately 16.7 percent (compared to 15.5 percent in the 2013 reporting period), followed by worldwide network (.net) domains with approximately 8.9 percent (similar to the 2013 reporting period), U.S. Government (.gov) domains with 5.0 percent (compared to 6.7 percent in the 2013 reporting period), 1.1 percent from domains in Germany (.de), 0.9 percent from domains in Poland (.pl), 0.9 percent from domains in Ukraine (.ua), 0.8 percent from domains in France (.fr), 0.7 percent from domains in Brazil (.br), and 0.5 percent from worldwide nonprofit organization (.org) domains. Online requests for PPD information from U.S. educational domains fell to 0.2 percent from 1.3 percent in the 2013 reporting period.

POLITICAL PRISONERS

The PPD seeks to provide users with prisoner information that is reliable and up to date. Commission staff members work to maintain and update political prisoner records based on the staff member's area of expertise. The staff seek to provide objective analysis of information about individual prisoners, and about events and trends that drive political and religious imprisonment in China.

As of September 1, 2014, the PPD contained information on 7,689 cases of political or religious imprisonment in China. Of those, 1,240 are cases of political and religious prisoners currently known or believed to be detained or imprisoned, and 6,449 are cases of prisoners who are known or believed to have been released or executed, who died while imprisoned or soon after release, or who escaped. The Commission notes that there are considerably more than 1,240 cases of current political and religious imprisonment in China. The Commission staff works on an ongoing basis to add cases of political and religious imprisonment to the PPD.

The Dui Hua Foundation, based in San Francisco, and the former Tibet Information Network, based in London, shared their extensive experience and data on political and religious prisoners in China with the Commission to help establish the PPD. The Dui Hua Foundation continues to do so. The Commission also relies on its own staff research for prisoner information, as well as on information provided by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), other groups that specialize in promoting human rights and opposing political and religious imprisonment, and other public sources of information.

MORE POWERFUL DATABASE TECHNOLOGY

Since its launch in November 2004, the PPD has served as a unique and powerful resource for the U.S. Congress and Administration, other governments, NGOs, educational institutions, and individuals who research political and religious imprisonment in China, or who advocate on behalf of such prisoners. The July 2010 PPD upgrade significantly leveraged the capacity of the Commission's information and technology resources to support such research, reporting, and advocacy.

The PPD aims to provide a technology with sufficient power to handle the scope and complexity of political imprisonment in China. The most important feature of the PPD is that it is structured as a genuine database and uses a powerful query engine. Each prisoner's record describes the type of human rights violation by Chinese authorities that led to his or her detention. These types include violations of the right to peaceful assembly, freedom of religion, freedom of association, and free expression, including the freedom to advocate peaceful social or political change and to criticize government policy or government officials.

The design of the PPD allows anyone with access to the Internet to query the database and download prisoner data without providing personal information to the Commission, and without the PPD downloading any software or Web cookies to a user's computer. Users have the option to create a user account, which allows them to save, edit, and reuse queries, but the PPD does not require a user to provide any personal information to set up such an account. The PPD does not download software or a Web cookie to a user's computer as the result of setting up such an account. Saved queries are not stored on a user's computer. A user-specified ID (which can be a nickname) and password are the only information required to set up a user account.

Notes to Section I—Political Prisoner Database

¹The Commission treats as a political prisoner an individual detained or imprisoned for exercising his or her human rights under international law, such as peaceful assembly, freedom of religion, freedom of association, free expression, including the freedom to advocate peaceful social or political change, and to criticize government policy or government officials. (This list is illustrative, not exhaustive.) In most cases, prisoners in the PPD were detained or imprisoned for attempting to exercise rights guaranteed to them by China's Constitution and law, or by international law, or both. Chinese security, prosecution, and judicial officials sometimes seek to distract attention from the political or religious nature of imprisonment by convicting a de facto political or religious prisoner under the pretext of having committed a generic crime. In such cases defendants typically deny guilt but officials may attempt to coerce confessions using torture and other forms of abuse, and standards of evidence are poor. If authorities permit a defendant to entrust someone to provide him or her legal counsel and defense, as China's Criminal Procedure Law guarantees in Article 32, officials may deny the counsel adequate access to the defendant, restrict or deny the counsel's access to evidence, and not provide the counsel adequate time to prepare a defense.