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**Statement of Rep. James P. McGovern  
Co-chair, Congressional-Executive Commission on China**

**Hearing on  
China's Zero-COVID Policy and Authoritarian Public Health Control  
Tuesday, November 15, 2022, 10:00 a.m.**

**As delivered**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for convening this hearing on China's zero-COVID policy and its implications for human rights.

I join the Chair in welcoming the announcement that the Commission's 2022 annual report will be published tomorrow. I encourage everyone to read it on our website. It is, once again, a well-organized and well-sourced accounting of the Chinese government's failures to meet its obligations under international human rights law. The report is the product of countless hours of diligent work by our research staff. I cannot praise them enough for their hard work on this report and the effort they made to produce this excellent resource.

In addition to the tragedy of the 6.6 million deaths caused by the coronavirus globally, the pandemic has put strain on societies and communities everywhere. Each of us has had to change our behavior for the good of ourselves, our neighbors and our colleagues.

The pandemic also creates challenges for human rights. The COVID-19 Guidance issued by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights acknowledges that emergency

measures that may “restrict human rights should be proportionate to the evaluated risk, necessary and applied in a non-discriminatory way, [including] having a specific focus and duration, and taking the least intrusive approach possible to protect public health.”

It also asserts that “respect for human rights across the spectrum, including economic, social, cultural, and civil and political rights, will be fundamental to the success of the public health response and recovery from the pandemic.”

Through this lens we are here to assess China’s record.

We have seen the videos of personnel in hazmat suits spraying disinfectant in public spaces, and of crowds rushing out of factories or amusement parks to avoid being locked down.

We saw the images of the anti-Xi banner over the bridge in Beijing, and of lockdown protests in Lhasa.

But there are thousands, if not millions, of stories of hardship and dissent that we do not hear, in part because of the Chinese government’s censorship.

We welcome our expert witnesses to help us understand the experiences of people in China under the zero-COVID policy.

And we must know the names of the people who have suffered for reporting or speaking out about the government’s policy. These include:

- **Zhang Zhan** and **Fang Bin**, citizen journalists detained in early 2020 in connection with their efforts to document the COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan;

- **Xu Zhiyong**, a civil society advocate, arrested and tried for criticizing Xi Jinping's handling of the pandemic; and
- **Xu Zhangrun**, a professor who was fired and had his pension suspended for writing about the failures of the government's response.

Lastly, I note that the Chinese government's zero-COVID policy has created food shortages. OHCHR's COVID-19 Guidance notes that the pandemic has exacerbated food insecurity and urges governments to take urgent steps to meet the population's dietary needs. We have seen evidence that the lockdowns and draconian restrictions have limited access to food. The banner on the Beijing bridge read in part: "we want to eat."

China is a state party to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which means it formally recognizes the fundamental human right to be free of hunger. The Chinese government is obligated, as a matter of human rights, to ensure that its pandemic response does not push people into food insecurity.

Again, thank you, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to gaining a greater understanding of the situation from our witnesses, as well as recommendations for how the United States should respond.