

Statement
Congresswoman Marcy Kaptur
February 7, 2002

Mr. Chairmen, I am pleased that the Congressional-Executive Commission on China finally is meeting. This hearing has been a long time coming.

First, I would like to thank the witnesses for appearing before our Commission. Your unique perspectives on the grave human rights situation in China draw attention not only to the oppressed on the mainland, but to all struggling people who face of cruelty and brutality at the hands of repressive regimes. Your cause is noble.

While some Members of Congress opposed the unconditional granting of most favored nation status to China, no one could object to a body investigating the disregard for human rights in that nation. For those nominated to serve on this Commission, we face many challenges - the first being the maintenance of Congress' commitment to this vital matter. Already, we have seen almost two years since the passage of H.R. 4444. That is an unacceptable waste of time. During this period, the rate of persecutions in China among those struggling for human, religious, and labor rights has arguably increased at an alarming pace. Our hearings should be regular, open and timely.

Since 2000, organizations like Human Rights Watch and The National Labor Committee (NLC) have done yeomen's work in highlighting the ongoing abuse of people in China. "Toys of Misery," a recent report by NLC, documents the shocking and flagrant exploitation of internationally recognized human and worker rights. I urge Members of the Commission to examine closely the groundbreaking report on toy manufacturers at www.nlcnet.org. Included are first-hand accounts of 16-hour workdays at starvation wages of 17 cents per hour. Many employees work in factories with little or no ventilation, safety protections, or sanitary break areas. Workdays often consist of 100-plus degree heat while handling toxic glues, paints and solvents. The end product - toys - end up in McDonald's Happy Meals, on the shelves at the local Wal-Mart, and, eventually, in our families' homes. Unfortunately, all too often, reports like this are lost in the churning media cycle. Our responsibility is to never forget the women, men, and children struggling to survive another day in these brutal conditions. Globalization may have logic, but it has no ethic.

As I have stated many times, trade does not bring freedom nor economic security for the rank and file. Only a nation's patient commitment to legal and social justice that dignifies the individual will uplift living conditions. I encourage President Bush to place human worker rights among his top discussion points during his upcoming trip to the People's Republic of China. Better yet, why not include Members of the Commission as part of his delegation? If the President's sincere commitment to freedom is to be shared throughout the world, he must be diligent in all international dialogues. The best way to stem the flow of violence and terrorism is through a free people.

Rights of association, freedom of the press, and, surely, freedom of religion should never be abridged. Both chambers and the Administration have acknowledged the positive role faith can play in the development of a healthy and productive society. Those brave few who push for these rights in China and Tibet find an almost impossible feat ahead. In its 2001 Annual Report, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) released the following summary:

"In the last year, the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC or China) has expanded its crackdown on unregistered religious communities and tightened its control on official religious organizations. The government has intensified its campaign against the Falun Gong movement and its followers. It

apparently has also been involved in the confiscation and destruction of up to 3,000 unregistered religious buildings and sites in southeastern China. Government control over the official Protestant and Catholic churches has increased. It continues to interfere in the training and selection of religious leaders and clergy. At the same time, the government continues to maintain tight control over Uighur Muslims and Tibetan Buddhists. Finally, cases of torture by government officials reportedly are on the rise."

According to reports from the State Department and USCIRF, some members of the officially sanctioned Chinese Catholic church do not recognize the legitimacy of bishops appointed by the Vatican. America's trade and foreign policy should stand to reaffirm our support for religious freedom at home and abroad.

The success of this Commission rests solely on our shoulders. The hopes of billions of people pivot on the world's voices for freedom.