

Statement By Bob Fu, ChinaAid Association, to the
Congressional-Executive Commission on China

December 6, 2011

Hearing:

“One Year After the Nobel Peace Prize Award to Liu Xiaobo:
Conditions for Political Prisoners and Prospects for Political Reform”

2-4 p.m.; 2172 Rayburn House Office Building

Esteemed members of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, government officials and guests,

The fact that human rights, the rule of law and religious freedom in China have all seriously deteriorated in 2011 is already well known to all. Therefore, this hearing on the anniversary of the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Liu Xiaobo is highly significant.

Based on incomplete statistics, we know that about 100 lawyers, rights activists and dissidents have been “disappeared,” tortured, imprisoned and even sentenced to prison terms in the first 11 months of this year. From February to July, more than 1,000 rights activists and dissidents across the country were “invited to drink tea and chat” with or were threatened by police or Domestic Security Protection agents. They included: eight lawyers appearing in a court in Heilongjiang province who were beaten up by police—one was a woman lawyer who was so badly beaten that she miscarried; human rights lawyers Gao Zhisheng, Fan Yafeng, Cheng Guangcheng, Teng Biao, Jiang Tianyong, Tang Jitian, Ms. Li Tiantian, Li Fangping, Li Xiongbing, Li Subin and Tang Jingling; and other activists, artists and writers, such as Ai Weiwei, Yu Jie, Ran Yunfei, Ding Mao, Wang Lihong, Zhu Yufu, Zhang Yongpan, Zhang Dajun, Ye Du and others .

Although most of the freedom of religion measures that “Charter 08” calls for are guaranteed in Article 36 of China’s own Constitution, in practice and in reality, implementation falls far short. Broad discrimination against and persecution of independent religious groups and people of faith have been increasing in the past 12 months. Just last week, we received reports that at least 11 Uyghur Muslims were detained and four were placed under criminal detention. What crime did they commit? They were accused of “engaging in illegal religious activities” because they were reading the Koran in their own homes. Since [April 10](#) this year, members of Beijing Shouwang Church have experienced weekly detention, harassment and abuse for 35 weeks in a row. The entire church leadership has been under house arrest, without freedom of movement, the entire time. Many believers have lost their jobs and been evicted from their rented apartments. Why? Again, it is because they have been accused of “engaging in illegal religious activities” – in their case, by worshipping in a public space. Never mind that they were forced to worship in an outdoor public area because the government forced the church out of its rented worship place and made it impossible for it to move into its own purchased facility.

Ever since the fall of Communism in the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, the Chinese Communist Party has acted as though mafia groups can be tolerated but not independent religious believers. The treatment of house church Christians, Falun Gong practitioners, Uyghur Muslims and Tibetan Buddhists has been far worse than other so-called “unstable social elements.” Torture and brainwashing with drugs have been used to achieve what the authorities call “transferring the mindset” of these believers.

As we all know, Liu Xiaobo’s “Charter 08” calls for many freedoms, of which freedom of religion is only one. However, we at ChinaAid firmly believe that freedom of religion is the first freedom, and that it cannot be separated from the other freedoms that Charter 08 calls for:

“9. Freedom to Form Groups. The right of citizens to form groups must be guaranteed. The current system for registering nongovernmental groups, which requires a group to be “approved,” should be replaced by a system in which a group simply registers itself. The formation of political parties should be governed by the constitution and the laws, which means that we must abolish the special privilege of one party to monopolize power and must guarantee principles of free and fair competition among political parties.

10. Freedom to Assemble. The constitution provides that peaceful assembly, demonstration, protest, and freedom of expression are fundamental rights of a citizen. The ruling party and the government must not be permitted to subject these to illegal interference or unconstitutional obstruction.

11. Freedom of Expression. We should make freedom of speech, freedom of the press, and academic freedom universal, thereby guaranteeing that citizens can be informed and can exercise their right of political supervision. These freedoms should be upheld by a Press Law that abolishes political restrictions on the press. The provision in the current Criminal Law that refers to “the crime of incitement to subvert state power” must be abolished. We should end the practice of viewing words as crimes.

12. Freedom of Religion. We must guarantee freedom of religion and belief, and institute a separation of religion and state. There must be no governmental interference in peaceful religious activities. We should abolish any laws, regulations, or local rules that limit or suppress the religious freedom

The persecution that ChinaAid has documented in the first 11 months of 2011 occurred in 11 provinces, one municipality under direct central government jurisdiction and three autonomous regions – that is, in nearly half of China’s regions and cities. Nearly 30 house churches were persecuted, affecting more than 1,500 believers. The number of Christians arrested or detained exceeds 300. If we take into account the number of people from Shouwang Church who were detained by police in the 35 times the congregation has met for outdoor Sunday worship services, the number would be as high as 1,000. Dr. Fan Yafeng, the prominent Christian constitutional law scholar and pioneer in China’s legal rights defense movement has been under house arrest December 2010, with all forms of communication with him severed; Shouwang Church pastor

Jin Tianming and other church leaders have been held under house arrest for eight months; the Chinese House Church Alliance is under attack, with its vice president, Pastor Shi Enhao, being sentenced in July to two years of re-education-through labor; in Xinjiang, in China's far west, Uyghur house church leader Alimujiang is serving a 15-year sentence; while in Beijing, the chief representative of a video and film company, Ms. Jiang Yaxi, was criminally detained on Nov. 11 for distributing a government-approved Christian documentary. These are but a few of the cases ChinaAid has documented.

What we have seen in 2011 has been the continuation and escalation of the Chinese government's comprehensive suppression of independent religious groups and dissident groups since the September 2010 Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization and the awarding in October of the Nobel Peace Prize to Liu Xiaobo. The Hu Jintao government has since the 2008 Olympic Games reinstated some of the Communist Party's most extreme political ideologies, resulting in a serious and overall deterioration in human rights, the rule of law and religious freedom in China.

The October 29 adoption of an amendment to the Resident Identity Card Law provides additional legal basis for this deterioration. The Resident Identity Card Law was amended to say, "When citizens apply for, change or register their ID cards, they should be fingerprinted." This measure broadens the scope of the police's ability to investigate and expose citizens' private affairs. Furthermore, the amendments to Articles 38 and 39 of the Criminal Procedure Law say that, in the case of "crimes that endanger national security and terror crimes," subpoenas can be indefinitely extended and notification of family and relatives of an arrest or house arrest can be indefinitely delayed. This provides sufficient legal grounds for secret detentions and imprisonments.

The examples mentioned heretofore are just the tip of the iceberg. The persecution and suffering that the Chinese people have endured is impossible to measure in mere numbers. This year, even the families of those who work for ChinaAid have been harassed and threatened in China by the police on many occasions.

On the one-year anniversary of the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Liu Xiaobo, Liu is still serving time in prison for the very act for which he was awarded the Prize. Meanwhile, his wife, Liu Xia, is still under house arrest. This embarrassing fact not only is China's sorrow, it is also evidence of the failure of the power of world justice. The failure of international efforts to bring about justice is not necessarily because Communist China today is stronger and more powerful than Germany and Japan were during World War II or the Soviet Union was during the Cold War. Rather, it is because the international community—in particular the Western world—is no longer staunchly guarding and holding fast to the concepts of freedom, justice and human rights that it once did. The result is fear when noble sacrifice is necessary and retreat when a price must be paid. Added to which is the lure of money and personal interests. All of these factors corrupt the spirit and dissipate courage, spreading ever wider just like the current economic crisis.

In America, this great and free country, we have before us the shining examples of many great heroes: General George Washington, and, sitting on the other end of the Mall as though watching

us, is President Lincoln; and there's also black civil rights leader Martin Luther King as well as President Reagan, who faced up to the Soviet empire and never gave an inch nor ever considered doing so. The indomitable spirit and the commitment to freedom and human rights that they and many others who went before us held firm are like a bright torch shining throughout America's history.

Happily, in the generally disturbing circumstances of 2011, the sudden release in Sichuan province of Mr. Ding Mao was an encouraging development and the news spread quickly, giving hope to those of us who have become a bit weary in our fight for freedom and human rights in China. Many of you sitting here today perhaps remember seeing Mr. Ding's petite but strong wife, who came to the United States, a country she'd never been to before, to plea in Congress and in the Executive Building and to the media for the release of her innocent husband. This brave Chinese woman represents the thousands and tens of thousands of wives in China who refuse to bend to the power of an evil government, who stand shoulder-to-shoulder with their husbands, defending their families without hesitation---ever willing to make huge sacrifices for the sake of a future China where there is equality, freedom and human rights.

So, let us bravely stand with them, just as you and the consular officers in Sichuan stood with Ms. Feng Xia, and in so doing won the quick release of her husband.

The Lord is with us! May we draw encouragement from the words of Hebrews 10: 35-36:

“So do not throw away your confidence; it will be richly rewarded. You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised.”

Bob Fu China Aid Association
December 6, 2011