

Statement Presented to the Congressional-Executive Committee on China

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Testimony of Timothy Cooper on the Kidnapping, Detention, Summary Trial and Sentencing of Dr. Wang Bingzhang

Distinguished representatives of the Congressional Executive Commission on China: My name is Timothy Cooper, and I am the executive director of Worldrights, a non-governmental organization dedicated to human rights advocacy worldwide. I have the honor today to speak to you about the shocking case of Dr. Wang Bingzhang, who was recently kidnapped, detained, summarily tried and sentenced to life in prison in China for crimes he did not commit. Unable to attend these hearings today, Dr. Wang's family, including his parents, brother, sisters and children, wish to convey their appreciation to this commission for its interest in Dr. Wang's dire and deeply troubling circumstances. For at this very hour, he languishes in solitary confinement in a Chinese prison cell, facing the prospect of living out the rest of his life in a 4 x 4 foot cell.

In many ways, Dr. Wang's story mirrors that of the thousands of other well-known and lesser well-known political prisoners, who have also confronted the brutal ire of the Chinese government for standing up for universal principles and world rights in the face of severe and sustained oppression, more frequently than not at the expense of their own freedoms, their own rights, and yes, even their own lives.

But in other ways, Dr. Wang's case is uniquely situated. The government's calculated treatment of Dr. Wang appears to mark a new nadir in the annals of political oppression in China. Indeed, it is Dr. Wang's family's contention that the deliberate and unconscionable actions taken against him by the Chinese government crossed an important moral and political divide that should raise a series of red flags in the West and around the world about the direction China's human rights policies may be headed.

It is for this reason that the US government—the world's champion for the human rights -- should not and must not turn a blind eye to the fate of Dr. Wang. Having himself stood tirelessly, if not heroically, for the civil and political rights of 1.2 billion of his own people in China for over twenty years as an exiled Chinese citizen and a permanent US resident, we believe that it is morally incumbent upon the United States—and in particular the United States Congress—to stand with Dr. Wang in his greatest hour of need.

In June 2002, Dr. Wang and his two companions, Yue Wu and Zhang Qi, flew to Vietnam to meet with mainland Chinese labor leaders in order to explore possible venues for cooperation between the overseas pro-democracy movement and the rising labor movement. The strategic concept was to marry the head of the democracy movement with the body politic of the fledgling labor movement. Such a powerful marriage of political convenience would undoubtedly strike unholy terror in the hearts of Chinese authorities. It is therefore understandable that the Chinese government would stop at nothing to try to thwart the development of such a potentially potent strategic alliance.

On June 27, 2002, Dr. Wang, Yue Wu and Zhang Qi were abducted from their hotel lobby by about ten men, posing as Vietnamese policemen, only a short time after meeting with a labor leader in the border town of Mongcai. According to Yue Wu and Zhang Qi, two of the men spoke with Chinese, not

Vietnamese, accents. Told that they were wanted for questioning at the police station, they were taken to an awaiting van. Soon they realized they were not being driven into town, but out-of-town.

They arrived at the Beilun River, where Dr. Wang was forcibly removed from the van and beaten because he refused to board a boat that stood waiting for them. Forcibly taken aboard, they were escorted across the river and into China. Once on shore, the leader of the group revealed a picture he had with him of Dr. Wang. With satisfaction, he compared the picture with Dr. Wang's face. He had found his man, all right.

Later, a new band of men arrived and took charge. This time they were *all* Chinese. Dr. Wang and the others were blindfolded and taken by car to a nearby hotel, where the "kidnappers" demanded a ten million dollar ransom. Naturally, Dr. Wang, Yue Wu and Zhang Qi carried no such sum. They provided their captors with family contact information, including all cell phone numbers. But no family members were ever contacted. No ransom was ever demanded.

After being detained in the hotel with papered windows for about a week, Dr. Wang and his companions were taken to a Buddhist temple near Fangchenggang, in remote Guangxi province. There their "kidnappers" abandoned them, still bound and without warning. Moments later, the Chinese police arrived—in the words of the Chinese authorities—"to rescue" them.

But Dr. Wang, Yue Wu and Zhang Qi found only continued detention. The three were kept in police custody until the following day when they were transferred to separate detention centers. There they were held incommunicado for over five months. All the while, the Chinese government denied any knowledge whatsoever of their whereabouts.

In December, the government finally announced that it was, indeed, holding Dr. Wang and his two companions. Dr. Wang was charged with "espionage" and terrorism." The others were set free. Yue Wu returned to Paris in December and Zhang Qi was placed under house arrest until her return to the US in March.

Meanwhile, Dr. Wang was summarily tried in a two hour, closed trial. His lawyer received the case only a week or so before the trial and stated that he had no experience in such cases. In February, Dr. Wang was sentenced to life in prison for his alleged crimes of "espionage" and "terrorism," though no evidence was ever offered by the Chinese government to support its outrageous allegations. All the while, Dr. Wang has maintained his innocence. His appeal was later rejected and Dr. Wang was taken into solitary confinement, where he has remained ever since.

In July 2003, however, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights issued Opinion No 10/2003, regarding the case of Dr. Wang, Yue Wu and Zhang Qi. In its written opinion, the UN's Working Group on Arbitrary Detention concluded that, among other things, the detention of Dr. Wang, Yue Wu and Zhang was arbitrary and a violation of international law. It noted that during Dr. Wang's first five months in detention, he "did not have knowledge of the charges, the right to legal counsel, or the right to judicial review of the arrest and detention: and that, after that date, he did not benefit from the right to the presumption of innocence, the right to adequate time and facilities for defence, the right to a fair trial before an independent and impartial tribunal, the right to a speedy trial and the right to cross-examine witnesses." Nor did the UN find any basis for China charges of "espionage" and "terrorism."

It concluded its opinion by calling on China to take "the necessary steps to remedy the situation of Wang Bingzhang and bring it into conformity with the standards and principles set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights." In other words, it called on China to free him.

Representatives of the Commission, Dr. Wang was trained as a lung surgeon. He earned his PhD at

McGill University in coronary-arterial research. Yet, he chose to devote the best years of his life to promoting human rights and democracy for the people of China, famously stating that "Medicine can only cure a few patients, but cannot cure the disease of a nation." Now—in ill health himself, suffering from depression, gastritis, varicose veins and Phlebitis, without the benefits of Western medicine, he faces the prospect of an interminable prison sentence in a 4 x 4 ft. cell for crimes that he did not—could not--commit.

But as much as he requires medical assistance, Dr. Wang also requires the generous assistance of the United States Congress. Dr. Wang's family respectfully requests that this Congress pass a joint resolution on his behalf, calling on the Government of the People's Republic of China to release him on medical grounds at the earliest possible date, and to abide by the legal opinion rendered by the United Nations in his arbitrary detention case. We believe such a resolution would reaffirm America's commitment to human rights in China and honor a man who has dedicated his life to the freedom and human rights of so many others.

Thank you.