



**Statement of U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown,
Chairman of the Congressional-Executive
Commission on China (CECC)**

**CECC Hearing on “Understanding China’s
Crackdown on Rights Advocates: Personal
Accounts and Perspectives”**

April 8, 2014

On February 21, nine Members of this Commission—Democrats and Republicans from both the House and the Senate—sent a letter to Chinese President Xi Jinping, urging him to end the crackdown on rights advocates in China.

Among the cases we highlighted was that of Uyghur scholar Ilham Tohti, and his daughter joins us today. Mr. Tohti is a thoughtful and peaceful advocate of the rights of the Uyghur minority, who has sought to build bridges among ethnic groups. We are grateful that his daughter joined us today.

We are grateful that the prominent human rights lawyer Teng Biao could join us via Skype. Teng Biao has provided legal assistance in human rights cases at great risk to himself. Our staff has made every effort to ensure the security of this feed and we hope there will be no disruption.

We are grateful, too, that Mr. Clarke and Ms. Richardson could take time out of their busy schedules to be here. Ms. Richardson is a respected expert on human rights. Mr. Clarke has done considerable

research into understanding China's legal reform and rule of law development.

This hearing comes at an important time.

President Xi Jinping has been in power more than a year.

As we will learn more today, he has presided over a worrisome crackdown that is estimated to have swept away more than 150 activists, lawyers, journalists, and intellectuals.

President Xi spoke of respecting the Constitution and rule of law when he entered office. He has talked tough on corruption. His government has pledged to protect ethnic minorities.

But when his own citizens, including the father of our witness today, sought to hold the Chinese government accountable they were punished.

They include the legal advocate Xu Zhiyong, who has sought to promote educational opportunity and transparency of officials' finances. He is now serving a four-year sentence for "disturbing social order."

They include the activist Cao Shunli, who sought to participate in the drafting of China's human rights report to be presented to the UN Human Rights Council. She died last month after being detained and denied medical treatment.

They include the four lawyers trying to defend Falun Gong members held in illegal detention centers known as black jails. The lawyers have been detained and beaten.

During President Xi's first year in office we have learned that independent voices—even those that echo the government's concerns and try to uphold the law—will not be tolerated.

These actions are not befitting a country that every day claims to want, and is seeking, in fact, greater international legitimacy.

We urge the government of the People's Republic of China to respect the fundamental rights of every one of its citizens to freedom of expression, press, association, and religion.

We do so not simply because this is China's obligation under international law, but because China will be better and stronger if it gives its citizens a voice and stake in the system.

By listening to and respecting the rights of citizens like Ilham Tohti and Xu Zhiyong, China can involve all its people in dealing with the most important problems of the day—corruption, ethnic tensions, income inequality.

But first, President Xi and China's leaders must view these citizens not as threats but as people who want what's best for their country.

I look forward to hearing the witnesses.

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