

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0908

January 16, 2024

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20522

Dear Secretary Blinken:

In January 2024, the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) will begin its fourth universal periodic review (UPR) of the People's Republic of China's (PRC) adherence to international human rights standards. The United States, as a member of the UNHRC, will have the opportunity to raise areas of concern about the deteriorating human rights situation within the PRC. As we rapidly approach the PRC's UPR session, we urge you to ensure that the United States prioritize the following concerns and raise the list of specific prominent cases highlighted below, pressing for the release of these individuals:

Treatment of American Citizens

The PRC, under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), continues to wrongfully detain at least three U.S. citizens – **Mark Swidan, Kai Li, and David Lin**. The CCP also continues to ban dozens of American businessmen and consultants, including at firms such as Kroll and Mintz Group, from leaving the country in retaliation for efforts to scrutinize the many risks of doing business in the PRC. In June 2023, your department issued a travel advisory recommending Americans reconsider travel to the PRC due to the “arbitrary enforcement of local laws, including in relation to exit bans, and the risk of wrongful detentions.”

Xinjiang

As your predecessor determined, the People's Republic of China (PRC) under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is conducting an ongoing systematic genocide and crimes against humanity against the Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim ethnic groups in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR). Under the guise of counter-terrorism policy, the PRC has committed human rights abuses by subjecting these groups into forced labor schemes and re-education camps. Recent reporting has shown that Beijing is now seeking to eradicate traces of Uyghurs' unique culture in their homeland by removing perceived “Arabic” architectural features from mosques and constructing new buildings over Uyghur cultural sites. These are clear violations of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, which the PRC ratified in 2001.

Approximately one million Uyghurs remain detained in Xinjiang as part of this horrific widespread campaign of oppression, including those who have directly called out the CCP's abuses or as punishment for their relatives overseas who have raised awareness of the genocide. These include **Rahile Dawut, Dr. Gulshan Abbas, Ilham Tohti, Memet Abdulla**, and the relatives of **Mamatjan Juma, Bahram Sintash, and Adalet Sabit**.

Tibet

In the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), as well as other Tibetan-majority regions, the

CCP continues its decades-long campaign to erase Tibetan history and culture. Not only has the CCP tried to promote its own name for the region, Xizang, but also has forcibly enrolled more than a million Tibetan children into government-run boarding schools as part of a policy of forced cultural assimilation. Multiple Tibetan religious leaders and activists remained detained simply for espousing their religious beliefs, including **Drubpa Kyab, Ronbo Gangkar**, and the **Panchen Lama**. As recently as August of this year, the U.S. Department of State sanctioned PRC officials responsible for these abuses.

Hong Kong

Since the PRC's last UPR in November 2018, the human rights situation in Hong Kong has deteriorated drastically as a direct result of the draconian 2020 National Security Law, which led to both you and your predecessor certifying that Hong Kong does not warrant the same treatment it received under U.S. law as it received before Hong Kong's handover to the PRC. Hong Kong authorities, under CCP direction, have engaged in the mass imprisonment of pro-democracy lawmakers, journalists, and activists, including **Jimmy Lai, Joshua Wong** and **Chow Hang-tung**. Furthermore, the closure of independent media and civil society groups in the territory, and the erosion of the rule of law and independence of the judiciary, are all violations of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights, of which the PRC is a signatory.

Rights Defenders

The CCP continues to wield the PRC's legal system to intimidate, punish, and silence Chinese activists for raising awareness of civil and social issues that the CCP does not want discussed, advocating for human rights, and criticizing government policies and practices. **Sophia Huang Xueqin** and **Wang Jianbing** are accused of "inciting subversion of state power." Each face prison sentences of up to five years for, respectively, being involved in campaigns to provide support and assistance to survivors of sexual assault and harassment, and providing legal support for people with disabilities and workers with occupational diseases. Human rights lawyer **Gao Zhisheng** was taken into custody in August 2017 after writing a book about the torture and harassment he experienced in detention. He has not been seen or heard from since.

On top of the aforementioned concerns, we further urge you to hold the PRC accountable for not ratifying the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights. This is despite the agreement to do so in response to a recommendation issued by the last UPR in 2018. The PRC consistently reiterates its desire to be treated with the respect and deference the country believes is warranted, yet repeatedly ignores and violates the responsibilities it has voluntarily agreed to uphold. The CCP's treatment of its own people, at home and abroad, is a preview of how it will treat the citizens of other countries, including the United States, if it expands its influence in global governance. The United States must stand up for the principle of the universality of human rights and help hold the PRC accountable for its ignoring its obligations to respect human rights under international law.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this important matter.

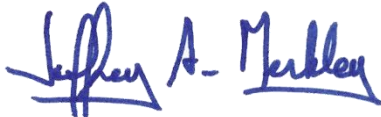
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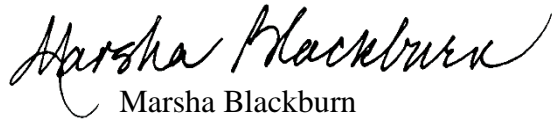
Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator



Tim Kaine
U.S. Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
U.S. Senator



Marsha Blackburn
U.S. Senator