

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 21, 2026

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We write to request that as Xi Jinping visits Washington, you use the occasion to raise particular cases of wrongful detention and imprisonment of prisoners of conscience in the People's Republic of China (PRC), including cases of American citizens and those with ties to the United States. We believe it is important to insist that the PRC uphold the commitments it made when it entered into treaties, conventions, and international agreements that safeguard human rights, freedom of religion, and freedom of speech. These freedoms not only represent core principles of international law, but foundational American values.

Respect for human rights, including the freedom of expression, is a cornerstone of our democracy and of stable security and economic cooperation with our global partners. The United States and China have both signed or ratified the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Yet PRC authorities routinely detain individuals for their political or religious views, in violation of the PRC government's obligations to respect such views under international law. These detentions include individuals who exercised free speech and were accused of spreading "propaganda," journalists who exposed corruption, religious figures who were practicing their faith, and businesspeople who refused to participate in corrupt practices. Many of those who have been detained by the PRC are serving sentences for vague charges or under laws applied retroactively. Many have been deprived of adequate nutrition and access to medical care, daylight, and visitation with their family members.

The Chinese government's violations of fundamental human rights affect more than PRC nationals. They negatively impact Americans too. Several of the individuals listed below have ties to Americans, including through American citizenship, permanent resident status, or family members in the United States who are unable to visit, communicate with, or ascertain the well-being of their loved ones detained in the PRC. Moreover, such restrictions impinge on the ability of Americans to travel freely and do business in China.

U.S. leadership in this area still holds great weight. Even a single mention of a detainee's name by a senior U.S. official, let alone by yourself, can significantly increase that individual's chances of clemency or improved treatment. We urge you to be their champion during President Xi Jinping's upcoming visit.

Every prisoner of conscience in China deserves to be free and supported through advocacy. The following list is an illustrative set of names on whose behalf we request you engage directly with PRC leaders:

- **Gulshan Abbas** is a Uyghur doctor who was detained in 2018 and later sentenced to 20 years in prison on charges including “terrorism-related offenses.” Her detention came shortly after her sister, Rushan Abbas, spoke publicly in the United States about human rights abuses against Uyghurs, raising concerns of retaliation. She suffers from serious health conditions, including hypertension and osteoporosis, and her well-being in custody remains a concern.
- **Ekpar Asat** is a Uyghur entrepreneur and founder of the popular Uyghur-language website, *Baghdax*. Authorities detained him in 2016 shortly after he participated in a U.S. State Department exchange program. He was soon thereafter sentenced to 15 years in prison on charges related to “inciting ethnic hatred.”
- **Konchog Choedrag** is a Tibetan Buddhist monk and acting head of Hortsang Kirti Monastery who was detained in December 2024 in Gansu province. Authorities reportedly targeted him in connection with his role in a monastic education network linked to religious leaders in exile. His whereabouts and condition remain unknown, and no formal charges have been publicly disclosed.
- **Chow Hang-tung** is a Hong Kong barrister and former vice-chair of the Hong Kong Alliance, which organized the city’s annual Tiananmen vigil. She has been imprisoned since 2021 and is serving a combined sentence of more than seven years for “inciting subversion” under the National Security Law, following her role in the Hong Kong Alliance.
- **Dong Yuyu** is a Chinese journalist and editor who was convicted, without evidence, of espionage and is currently serving a seven-year prison sentence. His writing is widely perceived as advocating for progressive reform in China, including support for the rule of law and constitutional democracy. While in prison, he has suffered from an irregular heartbeat and a lung tumor.
- **Fang Yirong** is a young Chinese activist who staged a solo protest in Hunan province, calling for freedom and democratic reform. Authorities detained him shortly afterward, and his whereabouts have remained unknown since August 2024. Fang had previously been placed under surveillance for activism inspired by the White Paper Movement.
- **Gao Zhen** is a Chinese artist and U.S. permanent resident known for works that critically examine Mao Zedong. Authorities detained him in August 2024 in Hebei province on suspicion of “insulting or slandering heroes and martyrs” in connection with his artwork. He has reportedly been subjected to prolonged interrogation and held in poor conditions, with concerns about his health in detention.

- **Go Sherab Gyatso** is a Tibetan Buddhist monk and religious scholar who was detained in 2020 and later sentenced to 10 years in prison on charges of “inciting separatism.” Known for his advocacy of religious freedom and independent monastic education, he was reportedly in Chengdu seeking medical treatment at the time of his detention. He suffers from a chronic lung condition and is reportedly being denied adequate medical care in custody.
- **Gwyneth Ho** is a Hong Kong journalist-turned-democracy activist and former candidate in the 2020 pro-democracy primaries. She was convicted under the National Security Law for “conspiracy to commit subversion” related to her participation in those primaries, as well as for joining an “unauthorized” assembly at a Tiananmen vigil. She is currently serving a sentence of seven years and six months in prison.
- **Jimmy Lai** is a Hong Kong media entrepreneur and founder of the pro-democracy newspaper, *Apple Daily*. A prominent critic of Chinese Communist Party rule, he has been imprisoned since 2020 under Hong Kong’s National Security Law on charges including “colluding with foreign forces” and conspiracy to print “seditious materials.” He was sentenced to 20 years in prison and remains in poor health while held in solitary confinement.
- **Mei Shilin** is a Chinese activist who hung banners in Chengdu in April 2025 calling for political reform and criticizing Communist Party rule. Authorities detained him shortly afterward on suspicion of “picking quarrels and provoking trouble.” He remains in custody following his formal arrest in July 2025.
- **Ikram Nurmehmet** is a Uyghur filmmaker who was detained in 2023 and transferred from Beijing to Xinjiang, where he was later sentenced in 2024 to six and a half years in prison on charges related to “separatism” and “terrorism.” During detention, he reported being tortured, forced to confess, and denied access to legal counsel of his choice.
- **Peng Lifa** is a Chinese protester who staged a high-profile demonstration on Beijing’s Sitong Bridge in October 2022, calling for political reform and the removal of President Xi Jinping. Authorities detained him immediately, and his whereabouts and legal status have remained unknown since.
- **Dorje Tashi** is a Tibetan businessman and philanthropist serving a life sentence in Lhasa’s Drapchi Prison, following a conviction widely criticized as politically motivated. Initially detained in 2008, he was later sentenced on charges related to “loan fraud,” which legal experts have challenged as unfounded. While in prison, he has reportedly been subjected to repeated assaults, denied medical care, and restricted access to legal counsel and family.

- **Ilham Tohti** is a Uyghur economist and professor who was sentenced to life in prison in 2014 on charges of “separatism” following his advocacy for Uyghur rights and dialogue between ethnic groups. Founder of the website, *Uyghur Online*, he was known for promoting peaceful engagement on ethnic policy issues. Reports indicate he was subjected to mistreatment in detention, and his case has drawn widespread international condemnation.
- **Youmei Wang** is a Falun Gong practitioner who was detained in Wuhan on May 17, 2026. She is currently detained at Wuhan No. 1 Detention Center. Her case has since been returned by the Xinzhou District Procuratorate of Wuhan to the Changjiang Branch of Public Security Bureau, but she has yet to be formally convicted. She has faced repeated detention since 1999 and most recently been denied access to family and attorney visitation while in custody.
- **Xin Ruoyu** is a Chinese Christian who was detained in July 2024 in connection with her work developing a religious app providing hymns and devotional materials. Authorities reportedly transferred her to an extralegal “black jail” facility in Shandong province. Her current whereabouts and condition in custody remain unknown.
- **Xu Na** is a Chinese artist and Falun Gong practitioner serving an eight-year sentence after being detained in Beijing in 2020. Authorities convicted her of “using a cult organization to undermine the implementation of the law” in connection with sharing information and possessing religious materials. She is currently held in Beijing Women’s Prison. Xu has previously been imprisoned for her beliefs, and her husband died in police custody in 2008.
- **Zhang Zhan** is a Chinese citizen journalist who reported on the COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan and was previously imprisoned for her coverage. Authorities detained her again in August 2024 and later sentenced her in September 2025 to four years in prison for “picking quarrels and provoking trouble.” She has faced repeated detention for her reporting, with past concerns about her health during hunger strikes in custody.
- **Yang Rongli** is a Protestant house church pastor who was detained in Shanxi province in 2021 along with other members of the Golden Lampstand Church. Authorities sentenced her in June 2025 to 15 years in prison on fraud-related charges tied to church fundraising. Her church had previously been targeted for refusing to join the state-controlled religious system.
- **Zhao Ying** is an elderly Falun Gong practitioner who was detained in Guangzhou in 2021 for distributing religious materials. Authorities later sentenced her in October 2024 to three years and six months in prison. Now in her eighties, she suffers from serious health conditions, including cancer, heart disease, and diabetes, and has been reported to be in critical condition in custody.

- **Min Zin**, a U.S. citizen and independent scholar who was detained upon arrival at the airport in Yunnan province on June 3, 2026, after traveling at the invitation of a Chinese academic institution. His family has grown increasingly concerned that he is not being treated in accordance with international standards of due process and minimum standards of treatment. Secretary Rubio has determined that Min Zin is wrongfully detained in China. Chinese officials later confirmed that he had been placed under criminal detention at an undisclosed location and that he was being investigated on spurious allegations of espionage and endangering China's national security.

We ask that you raise the above cases with President Xi and encourage the PRC to uphold principles of humane and transparent treatment of detainees. These are long-standing matters that must be resolved as a basis for further discussions on the development of relations between our countries.

At the same time, the PRC has increasingly sought to silence critics beyond its borders through acts of transnational repression, including intimidation and coercion targeting individuals living in the United States and other countries. Such actions represent a direct affront to U.S. sovereignty and to the fundamental freedoms that people in this country have the right to enjoy. We urge you to raise this concern during your meeting.

The ability of the United States to most effectively promote its own security and economic interests with China will always be strengthened if we ground our approach to the relationship on the universal principles of human rights and freedom. Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,



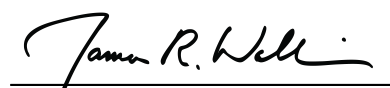
James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress



James R. Walkinshaw
Member of Congress

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris Van Hollen", is positioned above a horizontal line.

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator