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Don't return 5 refugees to North Korea

Don't send North Koreans back to horrific prison camp system

Human Rights Watch (24.06.2017) - <http://bit.ly/2s7Skmp> - China should immediately release five North Korean refugees held in Chinese detention and agree not to return them to North Korea, where they would face grave danger, Human Rights Watch said today. China should protect the five refugees and let them travel to safety in a third country, Human Rights Watch said in a letter to Chinese President Xi Jinping.

North Koreans who are forcibly repatriated after fleeing their country face a real risk of torture, sexual violence and abuse, incarceration in forced labor camps, and public executions, making them refugees in need of urgent protection under international law.

"China should not force these five refugees back to North Korea, where the government is known to severely violate the rights of those sent back using methods such as torture, sexual violence, forced labor, and long-term incarceration in North Korea's brutal prison

camp system," said Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director at Human Rights Watch. "Beijing should fulfill its obligations under the UN Refugee Convention by releasing these five refugees and permitting them to go to a third country where they can be safely protected."

Late last week, Chinese government officials detained the group traveling to the city of Shenyang, Liaoning province, in northeastern China. Three of the five refugees are relatives of "Lim," a North Korean now living in South Korea and using a pseudonym. On June 16, Lim received a call from her brother, who was using a smuggled Chinese phone in North Korea. He told Lim that he had crossed the Yalu river, on the border between North Korea and China, with their mother and a cousin. He had been carrying their mother, who was too weak to walk, and needed help because the group had gotten lost on the mountain. Lim's relatives had no food and her brother eventually lost consciousness from exhaustion and hunger.

Lim was eventually able to contact someone who could help guide the group and provide them with food and basic assistance. Lim told Human Rights Watch that she spoke to her family a few days later, when the person trying to help them reached the group before departing by car. She has not been able to contact them since then.

On June 21, Lim learned from her local contacts that the group, including her three relatives, was detained by the Chinese military near Yanji city, Jilin Province. On June 22, she heard that authorities were about to move her family to Helong, 70 kilometers southwest of Yanji.

China regularly labels North Koreans as illegal "economic migrants" and forcibly repatriates them to North Korea based on a 1986 bilateral border protocol. However, regardless of why North Koreans decide to flee the country, they are virtually guaranteed to face extremely abusive treatment if forced to return. For this reason, international law considers them all to be *refugees sur place*, or refugees because of circumstances after their departure.

China, as a state party to the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, as well as the 1984 Convention against Torture, is specifically obligated not to return refugees when that may put them at risk of persecution or torture. The same obligations bind China as a matter of customary international law. Forcing North Koreans back to North Korea amounts to refoulement, or the sending of persons back to territory where they face serious human rights violations. Such a practice forbidden by international treaties to which China is a party.

According to interviews conducted by Human Rights Watch with North Koreans who have previously been apprehended in China and returned to North Korea, the North Korean government harshly punishes all those who leave the country without permission.

In 2010, North Korea's Ministry of People's Security adopted a decree making defection a crime of "treachery against the nation," punishable by death. North Koreans who have fled the country since 2013, or who maintain contacts inside the country, have told Human Rights Watch that people repatriated by China face severe penalties. Those caught while trying to go to South Korea can face 7 to 15 years of forced labor in ordinary prison camps (*kyohwaso* – re-education correctional facilities), incarceration in political prison camps (*kwanliso*), or even execution.

North Koreans may be sentenced to more than two years of forced labor in ordinary prison camps for living illegally in China. A former senior official in the North Korean state security service (*bowibu*) who worked on the border and received North Koreans sent back from China, told Human Rights Watch that officials torture every returnee to find out where they went in China, who they contacted, and what they had done.

Lim remains especially concerned about her family's treatment because police detained and forcibly disappeared her father in 2010. When detainees vanish without information on whereabouts, trial dates or result, the community assumes the person has been sent to political prison camps (*kwanliso*). Lim fears that because of their father's status, her family will be lost in the *kwanliso* system.

Political prison camps in North Korea are characterized by systematic abuses and often deadly conditions, including meager rations that lead to near starvation, virtually no medical care, lack of proper housing and clothes, regular mistreatment that includes sexual assault and torture by guards, and summary executions. Death rates in these camps are reported by former North Korean prisoners and guards to be extremely high. Detainees in ordinary prison camps also face forced labor, food and medicine shortages, and regular mistreatment by guards.

The 2014 UN Commission of Inquiry on Human Rights in North Korea found that those fleeing the country are targeted as part of a "systematic and widespread attack against populations considered to pose a threat to the political system and leadership of the DPRK... to isolate the population from contact with the outside world." It also found that crimes against humanity, including torture, execution, enslavement, and sexual violence, are committed against prisoners and people forcibly returned to North Korea from China.

Human Rights Watch calls on China to stop repatriating North Koreans, and to allow the UN refugee agency to exercise its mandate and protect people. China should provide asylum to North Korean refugees, let them seek resettlement in a third country, or allow them to pass through Chinese territory without fear of arrest or forced returns.

In December 2016, the UN Security Council again discussed for a third year in a row the human rights situation in North Korea as a threat to international peace and security. In March, the UN Human Rights Council passed a resolution that strengthens the UN's work to assess and develop strategies to prosecute pervasive human rights crimes by the North Korean government.

"There is no way to sugarcoat this: if these people are forced back to North Korea, their lives and safety will be at risk," said Robertson. "The world is watching to see whether Beijing fulfills its duty to protect these five refugees or again becomes complicit with North Korea's abuses."

China sparks human rights outcry by ramping up DNA testing in Muslim-dominated region

By Matthew Brown

The Uyghur American Association (17.05.2017) - <http://bit.ly/2qRuSFV> - China appears to be laying the groundwork for the mass collection of DNA samples from residents of a restive, largely Muslim region that's been under a security crackdown, rights observers and independent experts said Tuesday.

Police in western China's Xinjiang region confirmed to The Associated Press that they are in the process of purchasing at least \$8.7 million in equipment to analyse DNA samples.

Observers from Human Rights Watch said they've seen evidence of almost \$3 million in additional purchases related to DNA testing. They warned such a collection programme could be used as a way for authorities to beef up their political control.

The move comes after Chinese authorities last year reportedly required Xinjiang residents to submit DNA samples, fingerprints and voice records to obtain passports or travel abroad.

Xinjiang borders several unstable Central Asian countries, including Afghanistan. It's experienced numerous bombings and vehicle and knife attacks blamed on ethnic separatists from the native Uighur Islamic minority.

In one of the most recent attacks, eight people, including three assailants, were killed in a February knife attack in southern Xinjiang's Pishan County, which borders Pakistan.

Chinese authorities seeking to counter religious extremism among the Uyghurs have taken increasingly aggressive steps to quell the unrest. Those have included mandatory satellite tracking systems for vehicles in some areas, rewards for terror-related tips and prohibitions against women wearing veils and men growing beards.

The purchases of DNA testing equipment in Xinjiang were confirmed by an official at the regional Public Security Bureau. The official, who gave only her surname, Huang, said a supplier already had been found. In Xinjiang's Sheche County, suppliers were being sought for voiceprint collection systems and 3-D portrait systems, according to a security official surnamed Yin, who declined to give further details.

If used at full capacity, the new equipment could be used to profile up to 10,000 DNA samples a day and several million a year, said Yves Moreau, a computational biologist specialising in genome analysis and DNA privacy at the University of Leuven in Belgium.

The scale of the purchases raises "a legitimate concern that Chinese authorities could be planning to DNA profile a large fraction, or even all" of the Uighur people in Xinjiang, Moreau said.

Since it started collecting DNA profiles in 1989, China has amassed the unique genetic information on more than 40 million people, constituting the world's largest DNA database, according to a study last year by forensic researchers at the China Ministry of Public Security.

Unlike many other countries, China lacks legal protections to guard people's privacy and prevent their genetic information from being misused, said Helen Wallace, founder of the British group GeneWatch.

"Xinjiang is already an oppressive region with a high level of surveillance," said Human Rights Watch researcher Maya Wang. "To collect even more information on a mass scale unrelated to criminal investigation opens the door for an even greater level of surveillance and control."

Government-sponsored DNA databases compile the genetic markers present in each individual, typically from blood, saliva or hair samples. They're used by law enforcement agencies around the globe as evidence in criminal prosecutions and to monitor prior offenders.

In the United States, where laws generally limit DNA collection to people who have been arrested, the Federal Bureau of Investigation has 12.8 million offenders in its DNA database, according to the agency. That's almost 4 percent of the total US population. The United Kingdom has 5.2 million people in its database, or about 8 percent of its population, according the British government.

China's database now covers about 3 percent of its population. It's been used by authorities to reunite abducted children with their parents. It was also used in a highly

publicised case last year to help track down a serial killer who authorities said admitted to the murders of 11 women and girls over a 14-year period.

"It's clear there's a fairly large infrastructure being built for DNA collection and they're planning to expand that further," Wallace said. "I would like to see China put their legal database on clear legal footing. That includes the kinds of safeguards we see in other countries."

Christian Pastors arrested for smuggling defectors out of North Korea, will likely be charged

By Leah Marieann Klett

The Gospel Herald (16.03.2017) - <http://bit.ly/2mrLSUp> - Two South Korean Christian pastors have been arrested in China for allegedly helping to smuggle North Korean defectors out of the country.

Reuters quotes Yonhap news agency as reporting that one of the pastors was arrested with his wife as the pair tried to board a flight from China to South Korea, while the other was arrested at a Chinese hotel.

The wives of the two had been released but the pastors remained under arrest, the news agency said.

Pastor Peter Jung, who heads Justice for North Korea in Seoul, told Yonhap the two South Korean nationals were "protecting defectors" but were tracked down by Chinese police who promptly arrested the religious clerics and their families.

"The arrested pastors openly stated to Chinese authorities they were helping North Korean defectors out of fear they would be subject to inhumane treatment if repatriated to the North," Jung said.

He added that Chinese police are seeking to charge the South Koreans for operating a human smuggling operation.

The arrests come amid an ongoing crackdown against Christian evangelizing in China and a mass expulsion of South Korean missionaries. According to Asianews, authorities recently arrested four missionaries and deported at least 32 more. The missionaries had been working in the northeast Yanji region of the country - which borders North Korea - for decades, providing assistance to fugitives fleeing North Korea.

"Chinese authorities raided the homes of the missionaries, citing a problem with their visas, and told them to leave," a human rights activist told AFP.

The outlet notes that while missionary work from the foreigners is illegal in China, evangelism from South Korean missionaries has been overlooked on the grounds that these missionaries prove humanitarian service.

According to Reuters, China has a strictly enforced policy of sending back illegal entrants from North Korea, whom it considers economic migrants. For over a decade, North Korea has ranked no. 1 on Open Door USA's [World Watch List](#) of countries where believers face the most persecution.

"Worship of the ruling Kim family is mandated for all citizens, and those who don't comply (including Christians) are arrested, imprisoned, tortured or killed," reads the report. "Entire Christian families are imprisoned in hard labor camps, where unknown numbers die each year from torture, beatings, overexertion and starvation. Those who attempt to flee to South Korea through China risk execution or life imprisonment, and those who stay behind often fare no better."

Tibet: Tensions on the roof of the world

By Matt Rivers

CNN (30.12.2016) - <http://cnn.it/2imjSyH> - It's dawn in Lhasa, Tibet, and the quiet is punctuated only by the gentle chanting of Buddhist pilgrims.

They pray outside the Jokhang temple, Tibetan Buddhism's holiest place.

Some prostrate themselves on the cool stone ground, while others walk clockwise around the temple, spinning hand-held prayer wheels.

The thick, sharp scent of incense hangs heavy in the air.

We're watching all this from the side, mere silent observers to rituals honed over hundreds of years.

More restricted than North Korea?

The early morning calm belies the region's tumultuous history.

The Communist government in Beijing has controlled Tibet since 1951. After a failed revolt against Chinese rule in 1959, the 14th Dalai Lama -- Tibet's spiritual leader -- fled to India.

Simmering defiance from Tibetans who remained sometimes boils over into large-scale riots.

Activists say more than 140 people have lit themselves on fire in protest of religious and cultural suppression since March of 2009.

It's a side of Tibet the Chinese government doesn't want outsiders to see. Beijing requires all foreign tourists to have permits and sometimes shuts down access for weeks at a time. It only rarely allows reporters to visit the region.

However, in early September, CNN was among a small group of journalists invited on a five-day, government-led trip to what China calls the Tibetan Autonomous Region.

It was the first time a CNN team had been allowed to visit Tibet since 2006. By comparison, CNN has been to North Korea, often referred to as the hermit kingdom, more than a dozen times in the same period.

We were allowed in only under the watchful eye of government minders, who packed our days with activities -- art classes, operas and an international tourism expo.

What we saw ... and didn't see

The lack of access to anything controversial or the ability to ask any real questions was a theme of our trip.

When we met Tibet's vice chairman, Penpa Tashi, the most senior official we encountered, we hoped to be able to pose some tougher questions.

Instead, we were forced to sit silently as he spoke for 80 uninterrupted minutes, talking about how everyone in Tibet is happy and content -- a picture in stark contrast to the one painted by human rights activists.

We also asked to visit a Buddhist monastery during our stop in Nyingchi, a town near the border with India, but were told there were none nearby.

A quick Google search brought up a Chinese state media article from just two weeks earlier, showing a photo spread from a monastery in the same area, a mere 15 miles (24 kilometers) from where we were.

We asked our minder about that too, and he simply shrugged and ignored our question.

All in all, Lhasa, Tibet's capital, felt like most other Chinese cities I've visited -- safe, busy and very much in Chinese control.

A tinderbox

For people who track daily life in Tibet, demonstrations of dissent are just a spark away from being reignited.

"Tibet is one of the regions in China where political oppression and religious oppression are at the highest point," says Nicholas Bequelin, East Asia Director at Amnesty International.

Much of the tension stems from concerns over the influx of Han Chinese -- China's dominant ethnic group -- into Tibet.

In 1964, there were just 39,500 Han Chinese in the remote region, just under 3% of the population, according to scholars. That figure now stands at 245,000, according to the 2010 census figures.

While this is less than 10% of the population, Han Chinese traders, workers and investors have mainly settled in Lhasa, where they control many businesses and fill better-paying jobs -- deepening resentment with Tibetans.

Nearly every shop we visited appeared to be owned by Han Chinese.

Economic inequality

The government has invested billions of dollars into transforming the region, focusing on building new infrastructure, schools, and modern medical facilities.

We saw a new multi-lane highway being built between Lhasa and Nyingchi.

As our mini-bus bounced over the existing road -- a muddy, potholed mess -- we envied what future travelers will drive on: the highway that will cut the nine-hour journey by half.

Many Tibetans are still extremely poor and welcome these improvements. But they have come at a cost. Traditional nomadic ways of life are beginning to disappear.

Others complain that ethnic Tibetans don't share equally in the benefits.

One afternoon in Lhasa, we left our minders behind during a lunch break, and wandered into some back streets not far from our hotel.

We met a 29-year-old Tibetan laborer who said he had never gone to school. He said he made more money than he used to and his neighborhood has paved roads. However, he complained that his Han co-workers got paid more than he did.

"When we are doing exactly the same work, the Han people get, say 300 kuai, and the Tibetans get 200 kuai," he said, using the colloquial term for China's currency.

It's an example of the dichotomy facing many Tibetans -- frustration over Chinese rule combined with a desire for an easier way of life.

Tibetan culture

Many Tibetans also feel their native culture is under threat as the number of Chinese tourists visiting the region's yak-filled grasslands and snowy peaks has surged.

This year, some 17 million tourists will have come, state media says, up from just a trickle a decade ago — although some have questioned whether the number is really that high. By 2020 authorities expect upwards of 35 million, according to officials we met.

Critics say locals are being marginalized, as the Chinese make money hand over fist using Tibetan culture as a selling point.

Western brands are also cashing in on the tourist influx, with new hotels like the InterContinental opening in Lhasa. Five-star hotels once steered clear of the area, fearful of the backlash from pro-Tibetan groups.

In Nyingchi, our minders took us to a newly built village, which will feature shops and restaurants with Tibetan facades. It's expected to open soon as a tourist attraction.

A Chinese company built it, and most of the stores that will be renting out space will be Chinese owned.

A Tibetan settlement stood on the site for many years, but villagers were forcibly relocated and given new apartments, according to the government official giving us the tour.

He added that the villagers would be allowed to sell biscuits and tea to the tourists if they wanted.

No space for dissent

CNN also spoke to La Mu, a Tibetan woman who has upgraded her small farmhouse and turned it into a guesthouse for tourists with the help of government subsidies. Government minders hovered behind us and took notes on her answers.

When asked if she thought all the development and Han migration was having a negative effect on Tibetan culture, she would only smile uncomfortably, and said she didn't know.

Her reticence at speaking openly is quite common in a place where activists say she could be swiftly questioned or jailed for voicing dissent.

Since 2012, Bequelin says upwards of 400 Tibetans have been detained for protesting over the lack of religious freedom and economic inequality -- including what some call the illegal Chinese extraction of minerals from lands considered holy to Tibetan Buddhism.

"The lack of space for any dissent, even peaceful, will continue to drive deep resentment within Tibetan society," he says.

'Expendable' Christians 'victims of organ harvesting' in China

World Watch Monitor (02.12.2016) - <http://bit.ly/2hLlaCJ> - Christians meeting in "house churches" in China are amongst thousands of Chinese people "considered expendable" by the Chinese government and being used in the "harvesting" of organs, according to China watcher Ethan Gutmann.

Gutmann, who has written two books about China and published several reports, said as many as 100,000 organ transplants may be taking place annually in the country, despite the Chinese government's claims it administers only 10,000.

And the source for the "majority" of these, Gutmann said, are Falun Gong adherents, but also other "expendable" citizens such as Tibetans, Uighurs and Christians.

Gutmann, speaking at the UK Parliament on 30 November as part of an event titled, 'China's Darkest Moment: The Crackdown on Human Rights under Xi Jinping', added that so-called "organ tourists" from several Western nations were amongst the recipients of the organs, although several countries have banned their patients from undergoing transplants in China.

Gutmann gave the example of one unnamed man from the UK, whom he said had been sent by the British health service to receive an organ in a hospital in Xi'an, China.

British MP Fiona Bruce, chair of the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission, then told the audience: "Organ tourism from this country should not happen".

However, a spokesperson for the charity Open Doors, who did not wish to be identified, said: "From our experiences over the past decades, we never heard Christians were targeted for organ harvesting. But as Christians account for more than 5% of China's population, I am not surprised if some Christians faced such tragic experiences by chance.

"We do at times hear about organ harvesting in China, which is done by gangs. They are considered crimes by China's government and the perpetrators are subject to criminal sentencing by the authorities."

In October, Reuters reported that the director of the China Organ Donation and Transplantation Committee, had said "100 per cent" of organ donors were voluntary and that the government had "zero tolerance" regarding organ harvesting.

China's darkest moment?

Benedict Rogers, the vice chair of the Commission, speaking at the 30 Nov. event, said that in the 24 years in which he has been watching the country, he has "never seen a

period in which human rights have deteriorated so rapidly in such a short space of time as they have in the last three years”.

He said that China has “always had a very bad human rights record”, but that there were hopes that its economic development and international ties may lead to improvements.

A day before the event, long-term Christian political prisoner Peng Ming died in custody while serving a life sentence for “terrorist activities”. Meanwhile, Jian Tianyong is one of several lawyers currently missing in China. The Christians human rights defender hasn’t been seen since 21 November.

Rogers referred to the “tightening of restrictions, even further, on religious practice”, a reference to the government’s [recently announced amendments](#) to its rules regulating religious affairs.

He concluded that “under Xi Jinping, the barbarians are in charge... It falls to us to stand up for the Chinese people”.

Rogers then read out a statement from Angela Gui, the UK-based daughter of a Hong Kong publisher being detained in China, who said she felt “lucky” to live in a country in which she could speak out against injustice, and said “we need to speak up for those people who can’t”.

Yaxue Cao, founder and editor of US-based ChinaChange.org, speaking via video link, told the audience that freedom of expression has been further squeezed since Xi came to power, while there has been an increase of propaganda suggesting “foreign governments are trying to instigate a Cultural Revolution in China”.

India to deport three asylum-seeking Uyghurs to China

Radio Free Asia (23.11.2016) - <http://bit.ly/2fUKjt5> - India is set to send back to China three Uyghurs who were jailed in 2013 for illegal entry and espionage, almost two years after they completed Indian court-ordered prison terms, documents show.

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) decided in May to deport Abdul Khaliq, Abdul Salam and Adil to China, although their petition seeking asylum in India was pending before a court in the state of Jammu and Kashmir, according to official documents accessed by BenarNews, an RFA-affiliated online news service.

The three were arrested by the army near the Sultan Chusku Glacier in the Ladakh region of Kashmir, whose northeastern corner borders China’s Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, in June 2013. They were convicted of illegally entering India and espionage, and jailed for 18 months.

But after completing their sentences in January 2015, they have remained locked up in a prison in Leh district under the controversial Public Safety Act (PSA). The act allows for detention without trial for up to two years.

State officials said they only recently received directions from the ministry to arrange for the trio’s deportation.

“The process of preparing travel documents for the three Uyghurs has begun and they will be sent back to China very soon,” Ravinder Raina, a senior leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which belongs to the ruling coalition in Kashmir, told BenarNews on Tuesday.

"They had entered the Indian territory with an intention to spy and pass on information to security agencies in China. They are a threat to national security," Raina said.

On Nov. 11, the state government requested that the Jammu and Kashmir High Court dismiss the trio's petition for asylum in India, he said.

Fear of China

The three Uyghurs have consistently denied charges of spying for the Chinese government, and have maintained that they entered India to escape persecution in China.

According to their petition for asylum submitted in court, they said they feared "being prosecuted or even executed" if sent back to their native country.

The Uyghurs, a Muslim minority in China largely concentrated in Xinjiang, have been fleeing to other countries to escape Chinese repression. The authorities there consider them to be separatists and terrorists, and have cracked down on their religion and culture. The Turkic-speaking minority is also spread across Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkey.

The petition states that the three will face charges for crossing into another country and there is a "high risk that the petitioners will be tortured upon their return to China." In addition, they will face the prospect of life imprisonment or a death sentence, according to the petition.

India's MHA, however, had decided to deport Khaliq, Salam and Adil before the court heard the trio's plea for refuge.

In a letter dated May 17, the MHA wrote to the Jammu and Kashmir state government: "... it has been decided to deport/repatriate three Chinese nationals – Adil, Khaliq and Abdul Salam, R/O Xinjiang, China (Uyghur), presently lodged in district jail Leh – to their native country.

"You are, therefore, requested to complete the deportation of the above China (Uyghur) nationals in consultation with [the] Ministry of External Affairs (East Asia Division) for issuance of travel documents for deportation to their native country at the earliest provided there is no other court case pending against them and they are not required in any other case."

Right to be heard

Rights activists have come out in support of the three men, saying they should be given a fair hearing.

"India should respect the international law that aims to safeguard the interests of refugees and give them the right to be heard. It should also extend them the right to access a counsel before taking an irretrievable decision," V. Suresh of the People's Union for Civil Liberties, a New Delhi-based human rights organization, told BenarNews.

"China has no respect for issues faced by Uyghurs and there is a possibility of insecurity to their lives if they are deported. Nobody can say with [a] guarantee if they were spying for China, but India should respect the aspect of international law, which allows them certain protection," he said.

Ahsan Untoo, chairman of the International Forum for Justice and Human Rights, said Indian authorities had no valid reason to keep the Uyghurs in prison for two years after they had finished their sentences.

"[T]hey are still languishing in prison under the PSA. And they are only being deported now because they can't be kept in prison any longer. Authorities in Jammu and Kashmir are blatantly misusing the PSA," Untoo told BenarNews.

Uyghur activists echoed the criticism of India's decision.

"So far the ones who were deported back to China met with worse consequences. And the international community knows about it," said Dilxat Raxit, a spokesman for the Munich-based World Uyghur Congress, a diaspora organization.

"In this kind of situation if India deports these Uyghurs back to China, their consequence will be even worse," he told RFA's Uyghur Service.

Omer Uyghur founder of Omer Uyghur fund, a Pakistan based Uyghur organization, urged world rights activists "to pay attention to our situation."

"They have to take this issue seriously. If these Uyghurs are deported back to China and get killed, how it does look in the world?" he told RFA.

"Pakistan has deported a lot of Uyghurs, but we hope that India would not make this same kind of mistake. But they are about to do the same. If they are deported back to China, they too will be disappeared," added Omer Uyghur..

But Indian state authorities defended the trio's ongoing detention.

"Any person who enters India with anti-national intention or commits an act that can be a threat to national security can lawfully be held for two years under the PSA. We will now complete all necessary formalities and deport them to China at the earliest," Prasanna Ramaswamy, Leh district's Deputy Commissioner, told BenarNews.

Imprisoned Uighur scholar given top human rights award

Democracy Digest (11.10.2016) - <http://bit.ly/2dKA7l8> - A prominent Uighur scholar jailed in China after speaking out against repression in his native Xinjiang was named on Tuesday as the winner of a prestigious international human rights award for his efforts to promote understanding and dialogue, The New York Times reports:

The scholar, Ilham Tohti, 46, an economics professor at a Beijing university at the time of his arrest in 2014, was selected by the Swiss-based Martin Ennals Foundation for its annual award, known as the Nobel of human rights prizes, in recognition of two decades of trying to foster better ties between Uighurs and Han Chinese.

"He has rejected separatism and violence, and sought reconciliation based on a respect for Uighur culture," the foundation said in its announcement of the award, which flatly contradicts the Chinese government's depiction of Mr. Tohti as a dangerous separatist propagating hatred and extremism.

Many pointed out that Tohti was a voice for moderation and understanding at a time of intense friction between Islam, the West and China, notes The South China Morning Post.

"The real shame of this situation is that by eliminating the moderate voice of Ilham Tohti, the Chinese government is in fact laying the groundwork for the very extremism it says it wants to prevent," said Dick Oosting, chairman of the foundation that presents the award, named after a former secretary general of Amnesty International.

An exiled human rights lawyer and friend of the jailed scholar, welcomed the award, The Guardian adds.

"It is definitely good news," he said. "It won't necessarily lead to an early release or have direct consequences but at least this kind of prize will make the international community more aware of Ilham Tohti. Every award is helpful to Chinese political prisoners and human rights defenders."

Teng said his friend had attempted to address the causes of the bloodshed [of the 2014 people's war on terror"] by serving as a "bridge to connect Uighurs and Han Chinese".

"He was never a radical. He never resorted to violence or extreme ideas."

Two other finalists received consolation Martin Ennals Prizes, notes Human Rights Watch:

Razan has dedicated her life to defending political prisoners, documenting violations, and helping others free themselves from oppression. She founded the Violations Documentation Center (VDC), which documents the death toll and ill-treatment in Syria's prisons. She had started to cover all sides in the conflict when she was kidnapped, alongside with her husband and two colleagues, on 9 December 2013. Her whereabouts remain unknown.

Kality prison in Ethiopia, has 8 zones and holds many journalists and political prisoners. 9 young activists called themselves 'Zone 9' as a symbol for Ethiopia as a whole. They document human rights abuses and shed light on the situation of political prisoners in Ethiopia. Six of its members were arrested and charged with terrorism. Although they have now been released, three are in exile while four of the six remaining in Ethiopia are still facing charges and are banned from travel.

A Uyghur Chinese intellectual sentenced to life imprisonment on the short list for the EU Sakharov Prize

HRWF (11.10.2016) – Ilham Tohti, an intellectual belonging to the Uyghur ethnic minority in China, who was sentenced to life imprisonment in 2014, is among the few candidates that have been shortlisted for the 2016 Sakharov Prize.

Yesterday, on 10 October, MEP Ilhan Kyuchchyuk hosted a conference at the European Parliament entitled "Ilham Tohti and the Sakharov Prize: Courage in face of the Brutality" organized by the Ilham Tohti Initiative, UNPO and Chinachange.org.

The speakers were:

Representative of Marino Budashin, UNPO Secretary General
Yaxue Cao, co-founder and chief editor of chinachange.org (USA)

Ingrid Widiardo, www.uigurkultur.com (Germany)

Vincent Metten, EU Policy Director of the International Campaign for Tibet (Belgium)

Prof. Marie Holzman, co-founder of the Ilham Tohti Initiative (France)

Prof. Elliott Sperling, Associate Professor at Indiana University (USA)

We reproduce hereafter the vibrant plea in favor of granting him the Sakharov Prize prepared by Prof. Sperling, Yaxue Cao and the Ilham Tohti Initiative:

"Ilham Tohti is the most renowned Uyghur intellectual in the People's Republic of China. For over two decades he has worked tirelessly to foster dialogue and understanding between Uyghurs and Chinese over the present-day repressive religious, cultural and political conditions of the Uyghurs, a Muslim Turkic people living mostly in modern China's northwestern Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. As a result of his efforts he was sentenced in September 2014 to life in prison following a two-day show trial. He remains a voice of moderation and reconciliation in spite of what has been done to him.

Ilham was born in 1969 in Artush, in Xinjiang, and began his studies in 1985 at the institution that is today the Central Minzu University in Beijing, and known for minority studies. He eventually became a faculty member at the same university and a recognized expert on economic and social issues pertaining to Xinjiang and Central Asia. As a scholar, he has been forthright about problems and abuses in Xinjiang, and his work led to official surveillance and harassment that began as early as 1994. From time to time he was barred from teaching and after 1999, he was unable to publish in normal venues.

In order to make the economic, social and developmental issues confronting the Uyghurs known to China's wider population, Ilham established the Chinese-language website *Uyghurbiz.net* in 2006 to foster dialogue and understanding between Uyghurs and Chinese on the Uyghur issue. Over the course of its existence it was shut down periodically and people writing for it were harassed. Ilham Tohti has adamantly rejected separatism and sought reconciliation by bringing to light Uyghur grievances, information the Chinese state has sought to keep behind a veil of silence.

Following massive Chinese repression in Xinjiang in 2009, Ilham was taken into custody for weeks for posting information on Uyghurs who had been arrested, killed and 'disappeared'. In subsequent years, he was subjected to periodic house arrests and barred from leaving the country.

Western governments and the EU condemned Ilham Tohti's arrest and sentence. He received the Barbara Goldsmith "Freedom to Write" Award from the PEN America Center in May 2014. In January 2016, he was named a finalist for the Martin Ennals Award.

Ilham Tohti's case is particularly important given the crucial international issues and human rights concerns on which it touches: the fostering of moderate Islamic values in the face of state-directed religious repression; efforts to open lines of dialogue between a Muslim minority and a non-Muslim majority population; and the violent suppression of non-violent dissent by an authoritarian state.

Ilham Tohti's life and career have exemplified the ideals of Andrei Sakharov. His nomination for the European Parliament's Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought has been supported by organizations and renowned individuals, including the Dalai Lama and Sakharov Prize laureate Hu Jia."

Ilham Tohti, a four-minute video: <http://bit.do/4minute-Ilham-video>

Statement to the Uyghur Service, Radio Free Asia before his arrest in July 2013: <http://bit.do/statement-uyghur>

My Ideal and the Career Path I have Chosen by Ilham Tohti, <http://bit.do/ideals-career>

Present-day Ethnic Problems in Xinjiang by Ilham Tohti, <http://bit.do/xinjian-analysis>

Voice of America Interview with Uyghur Professor Ilham Tohti in 2013: <http://bit.do/voa-interview>

UK should rethink China friendship over human rights, Tory group urges

Human rights commission's report details crackdown on human rights lawyers, Hong Kong booksellers and journalists

The Guardian (27.06.2016) - <http://bit.ly/28X6r4m> - Britain should reconsider its "golden" friendship with China as a result of the unprecedented human rights crisis unfolding under president Xi Jinping, Conservative party MPs will warn this week.

In a report set to be launched in Westminster on Tuesday afternoon, MPs and activists will chronicle the rapidly deteriorating situation since Xi took power in late 2012.

The report, called *The Darkest Moment*, details a severe crackdown on human rights lawyers, the suspected abduction by Chinese security agents of a group of Hong Kong booksellers, the growing use of televised forced confessions and attempts to cow free speech by detaining dissidents, bloggers and journalists.

Fiona Bruce, the chairman of the Conservative party's human rights commission, said witnesses heard by her group complained of "a severe deterioration in human rights" under Xi, revealing what some now believed was the most intense crackdown since the roundup of protesters following the 1989 Tiananmen massacre.

"China is not what it was five years ago," China expert Christopher Hancock said in a statement issued by the report's authors. "It has undergone a 180-degree turn in its political ethos."

"Outsiders should not attempt - and will always fail - to change China's political and social behaviour," Hancock added. "However, British citizens can, and must, attempt to change their government's hitherto misguided response to it."

David Cameron and George Osborne have been the architects of a major charm offensive towards Beijing designed to boost economic ties with China and usher in what both Downing Street and the Communist party have called a "golden era" of ties.

Osborne flew into one of China's most politically sensitive regions last September in a bid to cement the new relationship while Xi praised Britain's "visionary and strategic choice" to become Beijing's best friend in the west during a state visit to Britain the following month.

To the dismay of some in the Foreign Office, the strategic pivot towards the world's second largest economy has been spearheaded by the Treasury, with some dubbing it the "Osborne doctrine".

Downing Street's attempts to woo Beijing have infuriated human rights activists, coinciding with a period of severe political repression in China that has seen security forces embark on a wide-ranging offensive against activists, human rights lawyers, outspoken academics and publishers.

Earlier this month pro-democracy leaders in Hong Kong accused China's leaders of acting like "political thugs" and "gangsters" by allegedly ordering special forces to abduct a group of booksellers who specialised in books critical of the party elite.

Nearly a year after a major offensive against human rights lawyers and activists began, more than 20 people remain in custody facing political subversion charges that could see them jailed for life.

British criticism of the crackdown on lawyers has been muted with officials largely preferring to voice their concerns through EU statements, something that may no longer be possible following last week's decision to leave the union.

The authors of the Conservative report - which is being published just days after Cameron announced the end of his six-year premiership in the wake of Brexit - argue this must now change.

"In light of [Xi's crackdown], we believe it is time for the UK government to rethink its approach to China, to speak out publicly and consistently on human rights, and consider ways it can more effectively promote and protect basic rights that are being gravely violated in mainland China and in Hong Kong," the Conservative party human rights commission said in a statement.

It added: "While we recognise the strategic and economic significance of China, we do not believe that it is in anyone's interests for the United Kingdom government to be almost silent, publicly, on human rights, in light of such a grave deterioration."

Analysts believe that irrespective of whether Cameron's successor chooses to end or intensify Britain's courtship of China, Beijing itself will be far less interested in the "golden" relationship.

"Brexit condemns the golden thing to history, I think," said Nick Bisley, a professor of international relations and the executive director of La Trobe Asia.

"Britain's stock has declined and Britain will be less important to China in its view of the world."

The report, which will be launched by Conservative peer Lord Patten, the last governor of Hong Kong, calls for a "thorough review" of Britain's policy towards China.

Those who gave testimony to the commission include Joshua Wong, a prominent leader of the umbrella movement protests, and Teng Biao, a human rights lawyer who was forced to flee China with his family after Xi took power.

In a statement, Chris Patten, whose battles with Beijing over the former British colony saw the Communist party label him "the triple violator", said Downing Street had to react to "China's increasingly deplorable human rights record".

Can recognizing poverty reduce executions in China?

Dui Hua Human Rights Journal (09.06.2016) - <http://bit.ly/21ia3OP> - Dui Hua has obtained 525 reviews of death penalty decisions by China's Supreme People's Court (SPC) between 2013 and 2015. Of the 525 SPC reviews in the Dui Hua sample, only two percent were reversed--a figure considerably lower than that provided by SPC officials in 2014, when it was estimated that the SPC reversal rate was near 10 percent.

In carrying out its reviews, the SPC may consider several mitigating factors, including the defendant's remorse, good behavior, and role in the crime, as well as the severity of the crime. Poverty is another mitigating factor that, while sometimes ignored, has the potential to decrease the number of executions China carries out each year. A collection of drug-related death penalty cases the SPC overturned between 1997 and 2015 demonstrates the court's willingness to take economic factors into account.

In 2007, Li Budu (李补都), a native of Sichuan Province, was sentenced to death for transporting over 1,000 g of heroin—20 times the 50 g threshold making drug transport a capital crime. After Li's loss on appeal, the SPC ultimately found that, while Li should be severely punished due to the quantity of drugs involved in his case, the poverty level of Li's family and other mitigating factors were sufficient to reverse the sentence.

In advocating leniency in Li's case, the SPC noted that the people sentenced for transporting drugs—as opposed to smuggling, trafficking, or manufacturing them—are usually “farmers, people living in border regions [which have higher rates of poverty], or people experiencing unemployment, whose motives are to solve economic difficulties.”

Recognizing poverty in death penalty decisions is just and equitable because it takes into account the circumstances affecting individuals' choices to engage in criminal activity. It is also economical: as an infographic from Chinese news portal NetEase makes clear, the cost of the death penalty is rising. These costs include travel reimbursements for SPC judges' traveling from Beijing to local jurisdictions to interview defendants, defense attorney fees, equipment necessary to shift from firing squad to lethal injection as the preferred method of execution, and state compensation in the event of wrongful execution.

Costs are likely to add up during the period before a capital case ever reaches the SPC for final review. It now it takes an average of six months for a death sentence to reach the SPC after pronouncement by an Intermediate People's Court and review by a High People's Court.

China has committed to gradually reducing use of the death penalty, but downward trends have stalled in recent years. Dui Hua estimates that China executed about 2,400 people per year in 2013, 2014, and 2015, after marking annual declines in the previous three years and a precipitous drop from 6,500 executions per year in 2007—the year the SPC regained final authority to review death sentences.

70 Uyghurs under threat of deportation to China on a hunger strike

By Willy Fautré from Bangkok

HRWF (07.06.2016) - More than 70 Uyghurs locked up in the Thai Immigration Police detention centre are on a hunger strike to appeal for help and raise awareness about their situation; they face the threat of being sent back to China where they could be prosecuted for fleeing the country. At the detention centre, they were separated from their wives and children, parents and siblings. “We are not criminals,” they said.

The detainees said they would rather die in Thailand than go back to China where they face torture and death, or would be sentenced to life in prison.

Last year, the military regime of Thailand surprised the international community with its decision to hand over 109 Uyghurs to Chinese authorities. China then promised Thailand that the Uyghurs would be treated humanely, but pictures of them being hooded and dragged from the transport plane suggested otherwise.

When local reporters confronted Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha about the deportation, the junta chief shot back and asked “Do you want us to keep them for ages until they have children for three generations?”

For the Uyghurs, Thailand is simply a transit point to Turkey, where Erdogan said they would be welcome.

In recent decades, Thailand has permitted many people to enter and stay in the country: anti-communist Lao fighters, Khmer Rouge leaders, various anti-Burmese ethnic armies (Shan, Karen, Mon...), as well as the now defunct Tamil Tigers. Thailand has a lot of experience with different groups seeking refuge on its soil. Therefore, there is no need to bend over backwards to please the Chinese.

The long arm of Chinese censorship reaches South Korea

A performance in Seoul is cancelled after threats from Beijing.

By Sarah Cook

The Diplomat (09.05.2016) - <http://bit.ly/1WlpUxr> - In recent months, incidents of Communist Party restrictions on free expression extending beyond China's borders have occurred across Asia. Now South Korea, a leading democracy in the region, has joined this disturbing trend.

On May 4, a court in Seoul issued a last-minute ruling canceling a series of classical Chinese dance and music shows by Shen Yun Performing Arts, scheduled to take place at KBS Hall over the weekend. The ruling explicitly cites threats by the Chinese embassy aimed at the theater owner, including implicit references to financial reprisals if the shows go on as planned.

The mission of the New York-based performance group is to revive China's five-millennia-old traditional culture, which has been largely destroyed under decades of Communist rule. Shen Yun's performers practice Falun Gong, a meditation and spiritual discipline whose practitioners are persecuted in China today; some company members have themselves fled religious persecution or have family members imprisoned in China still.

Alongside dances portraying scenes from imperial dynasties and literary classics, some of the show's pieces also depict the story of what Falun Gong practitioners face in China today or attacks on Buddhist temples during the Cultural Revolution. An overarching theme throughout the Shen Yun performance is the traditional Chinese concept of a connection between Heaven, Earth, and humankind.

The performance has been widely acclaimed and drawn millions of audience members, including celebrities, around the world. But it is these perspectives on Chinese history, culture, and spirituality that have put Shen Yun on the Chinese Communist Party's target list.

Since its inception a decade ago, Chinese officials have employed a wide variety of direct and indirect tactics to try to sabotage the show and prevent its messages from reaching a global audience. Over 60 incidents—ranging from intimidating theaters and elected officials to online hacking and tire slashing—have been documented. Most of the sabotage attempts in Europe, North America, and Australia have been futile, but South Korea has been susceptible to them. Indeed, they have led to cancellations and near-cancellations in South Korea in the past.

Nevertheless, this week's incident stands out for two reasons.

First, the court that issued this decision is the very same one that had ruled two weeks earlier in favor of the Shen Yun performance, despite already hearing arguments drawn from Chinese embassy communications. The last-minute “flip flop” raises the question of what changed in the interim and who intervened to alter the final ruling. Whether it was higher-level input from Chinese diplomats or from South Korea’s own executive branch, such pressures infringe on judicial independence and ultimately hurt South Korean democracy and rule of law.

Second, the court ruling provides unusually explicit insight into the financial leverage that may have been employed by the Chinese embassy to incentivize this obstruction of a performing arts event outside China.

A translated copy of the court decision refers to the financial losses that the Korea Broadcasting System—the owner of KBS Hall—could incur if the shows were allowed to go forward, ostensibly because of Chinese government retaliation against the firm’s Korean television dramas, which are popular among viewers in China. The judicial decision states that if KBS “cannot export its broadcasting contents to China, there are possibilities that it may face huge losses, which cannot be compared with the income from ticket selling.” It then calculates that if the content exported to China were obstructed, it would result in 10 billion KW (\$8.5 million) in losses for KBS each year. By contrast, the court says, the several thousand tickets that Shen Yun had already sold and would be forced to forfeit amounted to only 18 million KW (\$15,000), so that even if KBS has to reimburse these losses, it would be worth the relatively minor expense.

Using such calculations, based on the potential earnings from selling or broadcasting content inside mainland China, in order to justify restrictions on free expression outside China is disturbing, but not new. When conducting research for a 2013 report, *The Long Shadow of Chinese Censorship*, Freedom House investigators found that this was precisely what was happening in other television markets in Asia. In those instances, the financial rationale was often downplayed and kept behind closed doors for fear of public censure.

But in this week’s South Korean case, it is effectively being legitimized by the court of a democratic country, and by a public broadcaster funded by the South Korean government. That sets a dangerous precedent.

The case also highlights the growing risk of cross-ownership in the media, telecommunications, and entertainment sectors. The case studies covered in *The Long Shadow of Chinese Censorship* and incidents like this one illustrate that when the same company owns businesses that seek to profit from commercial activity inside China alongside businesses that disseminate or create media content for audiences outside China, it is extremely susceptible to Chinese government demands to restrict information reaching external audiences.

But this need not be the case. We can continue to hope that the values of freedom and democracy will outweigh the Communist Party’s economic leverage. Media regulators, democratic governments, and free expression advocates would also be wise to consider new legislative and other means to ensure that businesses—and judges—have the necessary incentives to uphold these values.

Otherwise, audiences outside China will be prevented from seeing more compelling art exhibits, independent films, or dance performances—and they may never know what they are missing.

Family planning police screen women four times a year for illegal pregnancy

By Thomas D. Williams, Ph.D.

Breitbart (07.05.2016) - <http://bit.ly/2eqBwvO> - Despite its recent publicized move to a "two-child policy," China's family planning police continue to regularly examine women to make sure they have not gotten pregnant illegally, and make use of forced abortions and involuntary sterilizations in case of unpermitted pregnancies.

According to experts on China, little has changed since the communist nation approved a new two-child policy, and human rights abuses such as forced sterilizations and abortions continue unabated.

According to a recent report from the BBC, all Chinese women of childbearing age have mandatory check-ups four times a year to ensure they are healthy and not pregnant without permission. A couple needs official approval before starting a family and must ask permission before trying to conceive. Population officers keep strict tabs on each woman's medical history, listing the children she has, the contraception she uses, and any terminated pregnancies.

The Communist Party employs an estimated one million people in its army of family planning officials, who patrol the land, enforcing China's strict population-control policies.

China's government says that its population-control measures have prevented about 400 million births since their adoption in 1979. A disproportionate number of the children aborted have been girls, leaving China with the world's worst gender imbalance.

Because of sex-selective abortions, men now outnumber women in China by nearly 35 million, creating a situation of desperation for many men of marriage age who simply cannot find any eligible women to marry.

As Breitbart News has reported, the dearth of marriageable women has spawned a human trafficking industry that smuggles young girls across the border from Vietnam into China to be sold as child brides.

The villages on the border between Vietnam and China have become a veritable hunting ground for human traffickers, where girls as young as 13 are trapped, drugged, or lured under false pretenses and then transported across the border.

Chinese men are willing to pay upwards of \$3,000 for a Vietnamese bride because the cultural similarities between the two countries make the women especially desirable.

In its 2015 report, the Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) said that China's coercive population-control program, now known as the "two-child policy," continues to employ torture methods, such as forced abortion and sterilization, despite a widespread public outcry.

Many provincial laws in China explicitly instruct officials to forcibly carry out abortions for "illegal" pregnancies, with no requirement for consent.

New York dance troupe says China banned shows over Falun Gong links

The troupe has accused China's government of forcing cancellation of shows in Seoul because of its links to a spiritual movement Beijing calls an 'evil cult'

By Alan Yuhas

The Guardian (06.05.2016) - <http://bit.ly/1OhaAJL> - A New York-based dance troupe has accused China of forcing the cancellation of its shows in South Korea over its links to a banned spiritual movement that Beijing calls "an evil cult" intent on "mind control".

Shen Yun, a performing company affiliated with the Falun Gong movement, accused China's government of shutting down their shows in Seoul. The Chinese government maintains that the troupe is "a political tool" of Falun Gong.

This week a Seoul court let a theater cancel four shows by the company, which provided a translation of the court order. The venue, KBS Hall, is owned by Korea's national broadcasting company, one of the few companies Beijing lets air foreign television in China.

The court order cited a letter from the Chinese embassy in Seoul, which warned the theater about "a huge loss" should China revoke broadcasting rights. Shen Yun also provided a copy of the January letter, written on embassy letterhead.

The legal battle over the shows began when the company that booked Shen Yun asked the courts to let the troupe perform over the theater's cancellation.

In reply to a request for comment, the Chinese government in Washington sent a link to a page about Shen Yun's links to the "anti-society cult" Falun Gong, and said the movement's founder, Li Hongzhi, ordered the performances.

According to the troupe, a Seoul court said on 19 April that they could perform, but then reversed its decision on 4 May after another letter from the Chinese embassy.

"They've sent these kinds of letters around the world many times before to theaters and to government officials," said Leeshai Lemish, "master of ceremonies" for the company. Lemish said that not only had thousands of tickets sold for the four planned performances, but that the company would now have to endure travel and hotel costs for its 80-some members.

Falun Gong was banned in China in 1999, and human rights groups have for more than a decade criticized Beijing for repressing practitioners and mischaracterizing the movement with the "evil cult" language.

Lemish also said that the letters follow a pattern of harassment and intimidation by Chinese government officials, dating back to the company's inception in 2006. Most of these attempts to shut down performances have gone in vain, he said, and a handful have seen documents leaked to the public.

In 2008, for instance, China's consulate general in Los Angeles wrote a letter to a local official saying that certain dances "defame China's image in the international community and undermine the development of US-China relations". The local government rejected the call to cancel the performances.

Beijing's outposts abroad have also taken their opposition to Shen Yun public over the years. In 2009 China's consulate in Chicago called the troupe "a political tool" of "evil cult Falun Gong".

The consulate then described some of Shen Yun's songs and dances, which mimic qigong – slow, meditative exercises practiced by many Buddhists and Taoists. Consulate officials accused Shen Yun of "propaganda" that uses a message of compassion and peace to disguise "the truth and to realize their evil purpose of exerting mind control over them".

In 2000 the embassy in Washington DC accused Falun Gong's founder, Li Hongzhi, of tax evasion, and said his prophecies drove people so "insane" that they "even committed suicide or killed their loved ones".

The consulate also objected to Shen Yun's publicizing "the 'persecution' on Falun Gong".

Chinese adherents have said that thousands of practitioners have been detained, abused and even killed since 1999. Beijing has repeatedly rejected visa requests for practitioners living abroad, including for Shen Yun.

"We're very open about the fact that there's a connection between Shen Yun and Falun Gong," Lemish said, admittedly that "several performers are practitioners" and that shows do "depict the persecution of Falun Gong and the courage of Falun Gong practitioners".

But he insisted that those sections are "not the majority of the performance", but rather "just a part of the legends and genesis of Chinese culture as it goes through different dynasties, cultures, ethnic groups, into contemporary China". The troupe's mission, according to Lemish, is to "revive this lost heritage, a very spiritual world".

"They're opposed to it because we're putting on stage something that they've spent the last 17 years pretending isn't happening," he added.

Lemish also said that the troupe has felt fewer attempts to cancel shows in recent years, perhaps because of western officials' tendency to ignore censorship demands. The letters were indicative of the communist party's tense and often confrontational relationship with religious groups, he said, as well as "the long arm of Chinese censorship" that seeks to silence the Dalai Lama, artist Ai Weiwei and others.

"All of this is actually quite funny if you're not stuck in a hotel and supposed to be performing."

Citing threats from Beijing, South Korean theater cancels shows

Shen Yun Performing Arts (05.05.2016) - <http://bit.ly/1SPtnBv> - Shen Yun Performing Arts learned today that a South Korean court has issued an order cancelling four upcoming performances in Seoul this weekend. The court ruling cites intervention by the Embassy of the People's Republic of China and the theater's fear of losing potential business with China. As a result, thousands of ticket holders will not be able to see Shen Yun's performance, and South Korea's democracy and freedom have been dealt a blow, as it appears that Korean courts now listen to Beijing.

Will the world allow the Chinese Communist Party to dictate the arts?

Shen Yun is based in New York. We were established in 2006 with the mission of reviving traditional Chinese culture and sharing it with the world. This culture, which has a history of five thousand years, needed to be revived because the Chinese Communist Party spent decades trying to destroy it. Its political campaigns like the Cultural Revolution took this traditional culture—once so incredibly spiritual and rich—to the brink of extinction.

But over the last decade, Shen Yun has been celebrating this heritage on the world's stage. Through classical Chinese dance, music, and authentic costumes, we present the legends and virtues of ancient China. Every year we tour over 100 cities around the world, performing in some of the most venerated theaters, and receiving praise from government officials, artists, and theater critics.

This year, we had been looking forward to performing at Seoul's KBS Hall as part of our five-month world tour. In February, after having received a letter from the Chinese Embassy, KBS Hall decided to cancel the rental of the venue to Shen Yun even after the contract had been signed. The show's hosting organization, New Cosmos Media, then took the case to court and, on April 19, Seoul Southern District Court issued an order ruling that Shen Yun must be allowed to perform at KBS and that the cancellation does not hold.

On May 4, however, the same District Court issued a new order, reversing the decision and upholding the cancellation. KBS had previously denied receiving any pressure from the Chinese Embassy, but the new court judgment, though unfavorable to Shen Yun, revealed that the Embassy had written at least two letters to KBS (Jan. 22 and April 29). These contained thinly veiled threats about endangering cooperation with China should Shen Yun be allowed to perform.

The new ruling was announced half an hour before all administrative offices, courts, embassies, and theaters went on a national holiday, which, when combined with the subsequent weekend, extends until after the scheduled performances are over.

We learned of this new ruling while performing in Ulsan, South Korea, just two days before opening night in Seoul at KBS. Thousands of tickets have already been sold.

The court order leaves no doubt that:

- 1) The People's Republic of China is using political power and the lure of financial benefit to try to dictate to the citizens of other countries what they can and cannot watch. This we already know from similar incidents in South Korea and other countries, as well as a copy of a letter sent from the Chinese Embassy to KBS Hall.
- 2) South Korea's theaters and legal system are sacrificing their moral integrity and the freedoms of the Korean people in order to comply with the Chinese embassy's demands.

contact: info@shenyunperformingarts.org

China passes law imposing security controls on foreign NGOs

Campaigners say law deals severe blow to non-profit groups in latest phase of Xi Jinping's clampdown on civil society

By Tom Phillips

The Guardian (28.04.2016) - <http://bit.ly/24lU5jB> - A Chinese government offensive against civil society that campaigners describe as the worst in nearly three decades has intensified with Beijing's approval on Thursday of a controversial new law that gives security forces control over foreign NGOs operating in the country.

Campaigners attacked the move as the latest phase of President Xi Jinping's bid to rein in opposition to the Communist party. They said it represented a severe blow to non-profit groups involved in issues such as the environment, public health and education, as well as human rights.

Lu Jun, a well-known social activist who was forced to move to the US last year after his organisation was targeted by law enforcement, described the decision to give greater powers to police as a disaster.

"The real purpose of the foreign NGO law is to restrict foreign NGOs' activities in China and to restrict domestic-rights NGOs' activities in China by cutting the connection between [the two]," he said.

Lu, whose group, Yirenping, has campaigned on health and employment issues, claimed Beijing was attempting to use the new legislation to neutralise foreign-supported groups that it suspected were attempting to destabilise the government. "They consider foreign NGOs and some domestic NGOs as a threat to their regime," he said.

Members of China's rubber-stamp parliament, the National People's Congress, green-lit the long-awaited law on Thursday afternoon, according to Xinhua, the country's official news agency.

The foreign NGO "management" law, which will come into effect on 1 January 2017, stipulates that any group wishing to operate in China must register with public security officials. Foreign NGOs must refrain from engaging in political or religious activities or acting in a way that damages "China's national interests" or "ethnic unity", according to a 15-page outline of the law distributed to the media.

Criminal measures will be taken against any individual who is directly responsible for a foreign NGO found to have engaged in activities that "split the country or damage national unity or subvert the state".

The law also gives authorities the power to ban any NGO found to have "violated Chinese regulations" from operating in China for five years. Foreign NGOs in China will only be permitted to use bank accounts registered with public security officials.

"The authorities, particularly the police, will have virtually unchecked powers to target NGOs, restrict their activities, and ultimately stifle civil society," said William Nee, China researcher at Amnesty International.

"The law presents a very real threat to the legitimate work of independent NGOs and should be immediately revoked."

Chinese officials have defended the need for such a law, arguing that it is an important step in improving the management of an estimated 7,000 foreign non-governmental operations operating in China.

Until now NGOs have operated in a legal grey area in China with no specific law setting out how they can work.

"Since their number has grown quickly and their activities have intensified, it is necessary to have a law to regulate and guide them," Xu Xianming, a senior legal official, told Chinese state media on Tuesday.

However, critics claim the law is a pretext to expanding the clampdown on Chinese civil society that many observers say is the most severe since the days following the 1989 military offensive against Tiananmen protesters.

"Civil society groups have been one of the only human rights success stories in recent years, and their survival is crucial for the country's future," said Sophie Richardson, the China director for Human Rights Watch. "But the government seems incapable of tolerating independent, peaceful work and advocacy, and with this law it's making clear that only state-sanctioned work will be tolerated."

Richardson said giving police authority over foreign NGOs was "presumably designed to make all groups think at least twice about which issues they work on, how they work on them, and what the risks to them and their domestic partner organisations will be."

"Police in China have long arbitrarily harassed and detained domestic and foreign NGOs working on issues the authorities considered 'sensitive'," she added. "Those dynamics will now extend to a far broader set of organisations."

Lu, the Chinese activist, said he also expected the situation to deteriorate for non-profit rights groups in China. With its "very hostile" new law, Beijing was indicating it would now treat foreign NGOs as enemies rather than friends.

"I assume many foreign NGOs will withdraw their offices from China and will cancel their grants in China. And it will affect many, many domestic NGOs' budgets because it is very hard for NGOs to raise funds inside China because the government has set up many, many restrictions on funding raising for domestic NGOs."

"Almost all kinds of service and charity NGOs will be confronting very big difficulties," Lu added. "There are so many restrictions – many, many obstacles."

Critics of the legislation believe it was born out of Beijing's fears that foreign governments were using NGOs to undermine the Communist party by spreading western concepts such as democracy and freedom of speech.

However, Lu predicted the law would cause most damage to groups involved in social issues such as HIV and Aids, poverty relief and education.

China has been engaged in a widening campaign against civil society since Xi came to power in late 2012, detaining and jailing activists, journalists, and human rights lawyers.

In January Peter Dahlin, a Beijing-based Swedish human rights campaigner, was taken into secret detention and accused of being an agent working for "western anti-China forces" to stir up opposition to the Communist party.

Dahlin was subsequently removed from China after being paraded on state television to make what supporters called a "forced confession".

Since last July, security services have been pursuing a major crackdown on Chinese human rights lawyers, several of whom are still being held in secret detention.

China is not alone in seeking to curtail the activities of non-governmental and civil society organisations, with activists warning of similar moves in places including Cambodia, Egypt, India, and Russia.

Last year campaigners claimed the world was witnessing the "viral-like spread of new laws" targeting such groups.

In a statement the Chinese Human Rights Defenders group, which is run by overseas activists, criticised the "draconian" new law.

The group predicted the law would have a "profoundly detrimental impact on civil society" and would "suffocate [China's] already beleaguered independent organisations".

China addresses plight of left-behind children

Their care and safety is mutual responsibility of families, government and society as a whole

Chinamil.com (28.01.2016) - <http://bit.ly/1oJdYaA> - The central government intends to improve care systems for children left-behind in rural areas by migrant worker parents, a high-level government meeting pledged on Wednesday.

A system will be set up to serve such children by reporting on them, intervening and offering assistance as needed, all to keep them from falling prey to criminal activity.

The decisions were made at an executive meeting of the State Council presided over by Premier Li Keqiang.

The meeting also discussed measures to reduce the number of left-behind children by encouraging migrant workers to permanently move to cities or work near their rural homes.

A statement issued after the meeting said that "caring for and protecting millions of children left behind in rural areas, and allowing them to grow safely and in good health is the mutual responsibility of families, government and the society as a whole".

Each party, it said, including the local government, village committee and school, must carry out its duties. Charity and social organizations were encouraged to participate to improve the system.

China has about 60 million left-behind children.

In recent years, a number of tragedies have called attention to their plight.

Last year in Bijie, Guizhou province, four children of absent migrant workers committed suicide at home. They were aged 5 to 13.

Also in Bijie last year, a 15-year-old girl and her 13-year-old brother were killed at home. Police found that the girl had been sexually assaulted before she was murdered. Their parents were migrant workers away from home.

In 2014, 10 villagers were imprisoned for repeatedly raping and sexually assaulting a left-behind 13-year-old girl in Guangxi province.

Over 7500 people die of cancer every day in China

The data released by the National Cancer Centre in Beijing reveals an overall decrease in mortality rate, but an increase in cancer diagnosis. In 2015, 2.8 million deaths. Lung cancer is the most common, with pollution and active smoking among the first causes.

AsiaNews.it (03.02.2016) - <http://bit.ly/1UMUMCu> - More than 7,500 people a day died of cancer in China in 2015, while there were 12 thousand new diagnoses of cancer per day. The alarming figures were published by the National Cancer Centre in Beijing.

Chen Wanqing, one of the researchers, said that the overall death rate is decreasing compared to 2006, but there was a 78% increase in deaths due to cancer. This, according to experts, is due to the growth and aging of the population.

In total, last year there were 4.3 million new positive diagnosis and 2.8 million cancer deaths. The most common is lung cancer, which is also the leading cause of death in China. Added to its causes is air pollution and the continued growth of active smokers (more than half of Chinese men smoke). Even domestic pollution (with coal heating and biomass fuels) is among the leading causes of lung infections.

Among men, the most common cancers (besides in the lungs) are the stomach, esophagus, liver and bowel cancer. Among women the most common is breast cancer (15% of the total), lung and bronchus, stomach and intestinal cancer.

According to the researchers, the individuals most at risk are the poor and those living in rural areas, where often the soil and water are contaminated. The preventable cause of death for most common cancer, experts say, is chronic infection (stomach, intestines, etc.), which is responsible for 29% of deaths.

Chen Wanqing and colleagues analyzed data from 72 local registries, covering 6.5% of the Chinese population. It is a very large information pool, when compared with that available only a few years ago, which covered less than 2% of the citizens.

China's labor rights movement gaining momentum

Democracy Digest (05.01.2016) - <http://bit.ly/1RweTHe> - Chinese authorities recently detained seven labor activists in the southern province of Guangdong, alleging that they were "inciting workers to go on strike," and "disturbing public order," among other accusations, Deutsche Welle reports:

But rights groups have criticized the move as part of the authorities' crackdown on the country's growing labor activism. Labor disputes have been on the rise in China in recent years, as a slowing economy has led to an increase in workers' layoffs.

The phenomenon is particularly evident in Guangdong, a traditional manufacturing centre. The province recorded a total of 412 strikes in 2015, the highest in the country, according to data compiled by Hong Kong-based advocacy group China Labor Bulletin (CLB). The statistics also show a remarkable increase in the total number of strikes across the country, growing from 1,379 incidents in 2014 to a total of 2,741 in 2015.

The Chinese government has also noted the upsurge in labor disputes, with the country's Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security stating that there were 1.56 million registered cases in 2014, an increase of 4.1 percent compared to that of 2013.

"In five to 10 years, (Chinese) workers will be able to reclaim the union through collective bargaining, and that [would be] the biggest national union on earth with bargaining power," says Han Dongfang, founder and director at China Labour Bulletin.

If Beijing seems overly sensitive on the labor issue, it isn't without reason, say analysts:

On top of a slowing economy, as labor costs in China keep rising many factories are moving to cheaper locations, such as Vietnam. Meanwhile the number of protests and strikes in Guangdong doubled from 23 in July to 56 in November, according to the China Labour Bulletin. Overall, Guangdong has had nearly 400 strikes this year—the most across the country.

No independent unions

The rapid rise in the number of strikes and worker protests in the world's second-biggest economy is a result of the country's weakening growth, CLB spokesman Geoffrey Crothall told DW.

"The economic slowdown is causing factories, construction projects and coal mines to close, and workers are often owed several months wages when their employers go out of business," Crothall said, adding that, in most cases, workers have no option but to take collective action to claim their rights.

They came for the feminists in the spring. In the summer, they came for the rights-defense lawyers. And on Dec. 3, the eve of China's Constitution Day, Chinese authorities initiated a widespread crackdown on labor activists in the industrial powerhouse of Guangdong province, Cornell University's Eli Friedman, New York University's Aaron Halegua and Jerome A. Cohen, director of the U.S.-Asia Law Institute, write for The Washington Post:

Since they first appeared 20 years ago, China's labor nongovernmental organizations have suffered regular rounds of repression and harassment, including tax audits, mafia violence and continual interrogation by security officials. But this most recent repression is more serious.

It seems that the Communist Party is intent on stamping out labor activism in civil society once and for all.

Despite the lack of strong and independent unions, China's workers have become increasingly capable of organizing labor actions, New York University law professor Cynthia Estlund told DW.

To calm down strikes that involve significant numbers of workers, authorities usually respond with a combination of both repression and appeasement, said Estlund, who has a keen interest in labor relations in China, and is currently authoring a book about the issue.

Besides police intervention, the local ACFTU officials might attempt to negotiate a mutually amicable agreement between the factory management and the workers. But in some cases, striking workers not only look for higher wages and social security payments, but also demand the right to elect and control their own factory-level trade union.

"A single strike triggered by wage arrears may tap into discontent over low wages or other simmering issues, which may then generate demands for greater democracy in the enterprise trade unions," noted Estlund.

Part of the problem is that the state-controlled All-China Federation of Trade Unions claims an absolute monopoly on representing and advocating for China's workers, but in reality does little of either, say Friedman, Halegua and Cohen:

Unlike the labor NGOs, it seldom assists exploited workers or pushes employers to comply with the law. This stems largely from the Communist Party's conception of the trade union as a "harmonizing" force between employers and workers. What's more, employers typically exert undue control over unions at the company level. Workers therefore do not trust trade unions, creating a vacuum for someone to actually promote their interests — which labor NGOs began to fill.

Woman acquitted in child poisoning

China Daily (28.12.2015) - A woman sentenced to life in prison for poisoning children was acquitted on 12th December, renewing long-standing questions among judicial experts about the best way to ensure that legal processes are used in handling cases.

The central government determined two years ago to rectify wrongful verdicts.

Qian Renfeng was given a life sentence in 2002 by Zhaotong Intermediate People's Court in Yunnan province, after she allegedly put poison in the food of children at a kindergarten where she worked. One of the children died. At the time, Qian was 17.

The court said Qian poisoned the children because she did not get along with her employer.

After serving 13 years in prison, Qian, now 30, was pronounced innocent by the Yunnan Provincial High People's Court on Monday, because evidence in the case was flawed, as was her confession.

"The evidence presented by the police was tainted, and there were some inconsistencies in the defendant's confession. Also, signatures on three statements in which she confessed to the crime were proved not to be hers," the court in Yunnan said.

Gao Wei, vice-president of the Yunnan University Law School, said that it's a must to root out improper procedures in dealing with cases, "because in this way we'll avoid wrongful judgments effectively".

It was not the first time the country's courts have overturned a judgment in the past two years.

Since late 2013, Chinese courts have conducted a sweeping crackdown on wrongful verdicts, aiming to build up judicial credibility and implement the rule of law nationwide.

Hugjiltu, an 18-year-old ethnic Mongolian who was executed in 1996 after he was found guilty of a rape and murder he didn't commit, was cleared last December. Four months ago, 38-year-old Nian Bin in Fujian province was also acquitted because of insufficient evidence.

Zhou Lei, a legal researcher at the Difficult Case Research Center at the China University of Political Science and Law, said wrongful judgments are mainly attributable to improper procedures in collecting evidence.

"Some police still interrogate suspects or defendants using torture, even though it's illegal," Zhou said. "Some courts also ignore defense lawyers' opinions during trials,

although the country has highlighted the importance of respecting and hearing them in criminal cases."

He suggested the government invest more money in police officers and facilities for investigations.

Although it is difficult to prove wrongdoing by people who handle cases improperly, investigations must proceed, he said.

China: labor' rights leaders arrested as worker militancy grows

Democracy Digest (07.12.2015) - <http://bit.ly/1m88eWe> - Authorities in the southern Chinese province of Guangdong have detained five labor activists, two of them formally on suspicion of "gathering a crowd to disrupt public order" amid an ongoing crackdown on non-government groups, especially those involved in the country's nascent but unofficial labor movement, RFA reports:

Zeng Feiyang (above), who directs the Panyu Workers' Center near the provincial capital Guangzhou, and prominent labor activist Zhu Xiaomei were detained late on Friday, while fellow activists He Xiaobo, Peng Xiayong and Deng Xiaoming remain in detention following a series of police raids on local NGOs.

The police in southern China have arrested at least three workers' rights leaders in recent days, labor groups and activists said on Saturday. The detentions come amid rising labor unrest in southern China, one of the world's most important manufacturing centers, and are prompting concern that the Communist Party is extending its latest crackdown on civil society to a new arena, The New York Times adds:

Zeng was put under criminal detention on Friday on charges of "gathering a crowd to disturb social order," said the Hong Kong-based nonprofit group China Labor Bulletin and several labor activists. Zhu Xiaomei, a labor organizer, was also detained, as was He Xiaobo, who runs a group in Foshan that helps injured workers.....

When the economy in Guangdong, China's richest and most populous province, was booming, the authorities apparently did not see labor activism as a threat. After strikes by workers at Honda auto parts plants in the province in 2010, for example, many workers won higher wages and benefits.

But now, with many factories moving to regions where lower wages prevail — or to other countries, like Vietnam — labor unrest is rising, said Geoffrey Crothall, a spokesman for the China Labor Bulletin, which promotes independent labor unions in China and tracks strikes and other labor protests nationwide. Local governments in Guangdong are often the focus of workers' demands after factory bosses leave town, sometimes with wages and pension benefits in arrears, he said.

Guangdong saw a record 56 strikes last month, more than double any other province and a huge increase from 23 incidents in July, CLB said.

"According to information from several lawyer in Guangdong, up to 15 staff and workers from labour NGOs have been taken away by police," said an online report by Caijing on Saturday which has since been deleted, a common practice on China's Internet which is heavily censored by authorities.

Man executed for killing two family planning officials

Women's Rights Without Frontiers (20.11.2015) - <http://bit.ly/1XkWEIZ> - A man who stabbed two Family Planning Officials to death and wounded four others in 2013 has been executed, according to a report appearing in the South China Morning Post. The man, He Shenguo of Guangxi Province, was unable to pay the fine for his "illegal" fourth child, so Family Planning Officials denied registration to the child. These fines can be up to ten times a person's annual salary and out of reach for many in China.

Reggie Littlejohn, President of Women's Rights Without Frontiers, stated: "This tragic situation shows that China's One (now Two) – Child Policy devastates not only women, but also men and children. Under this policy, if a child is "illegal" – born without a birth permit – that child will be denied hukou, or household registration. Children without hukou will have no birth certificate, no official existence. They will not be eligible for health care or education. They cannot get a passport or driver's license. They will not be able officially to marry or work. As far as the Chinese government is concerned, these children do not exist.

"Unfortunately, the Chinese Government will continue the hukou system under the new Two-Child Policy. This denial of hukou is extremely distressing to parents, who may feel that their beloved children have no future. In another tragic incident last year, a Chinese father of four committed suicide because his children were denied hukou.

"Denial of hukou is a form of official child abuse. It must end."

Watch the interview of Reggie Littlejohn, head of Women's Rights Without Frontiers, by Raymond Arroyo for EWTN (05.11.2015) on: <http://bit.ly/1YW6WM1>

Uyghur teenager serving life sentence is victim of China's strike hard campaign: Father

Radio Free Asia (16.11.2015) - <http://bit.ly/1OgCerS> - A Uyghur teenager sentenced to life in prison for "leading a terrorist group" in northwestern China's restive Xinjiang region is the wrongful victim of a "strike hard" campaign to crack down on members of the Turkic-speaking, Muslim minority group, according to his father.

Eighteen-year-old Eli Mamut, from Aksu (in Chinese, Akesu) prefecture's Aykol township—the site of a deadly police action on a Uyghur crowd in August 2013—is innocent and a victim of the tense situation in the region, his father Mamut Awut told RFA's Uyghur Service.

"My son did nothing wrong—he simply watched videos on his cell phone," he said. "I believe he had no idea that the videos are classified as illegal by the authorities."

The family has not been able to do anything about the situation other than pray, Awut said.

Mamut, then 17, was attending Aksu Technical School when authorities detained him and nine of his classmates at the end of September 2014 for watching Uyghur-language videos on their cell phones, he said.

"I heard about my son's detention a week [after he was apprehended] from the parents of his classmates," Awut said.

When Awut called Mamut's teachers about the incident, they told him that the police were questioning the students about accessing the internet from their cell phones.

At the time, the teachers told him that the students could be released soon after clarifications were made about the materials they had watched, he said.

But later, the teachers themselves became fearful and refused to take Awut's calls, he added.

When RFA recently contacted one of the teachers at the school, he said police had detained 13 people, not nine, for internet access offenses.

"It is clear that the so-called [terrorist] groups have done nothing," said the teacher, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The teacher said that Mamut and several of his classmates had gathered in his dormitory to share information he was interested in.

"Maybe some of the content was deemed sensitive by authorities, but for students their age it was not," he said.

"All the teachers believe that local authorities victimized the students as they have done to others in the city to show their loyalty to their higher-ups and support to the strike hard campaign."

When teachers stopped answering his calls, Awut went to the police department in Aksu, but he could not locate the right office or the officers whose duty it was to answer questions about his son's whereabouts, he said.

'Given a life sentence'

It was only after Mamut had spent four months in detention that Awut received a notice from the No. 3 Regional Forced Labor Camp Administration, which read: "Eli Mamut has been relocated from a detention center in Aksu to our camp in order to implement his life sentence [for] ... leading a terrorist group."

The notice is the only official information that Mamut's family received about his conviction, Awut said.

Eight of his classmates received sentences ranging from two to 20 years in prison for "participating in a terrorist group," he said.

"But nobody knows the organization's name, its program and goals, or what it has done wrong," he said.

Later, Awut had learned that Mamut's trial had been held during the first week of January 2015.

He returned to the Aksu police department and demanded that he be shown evidence supporting the charge against his son, he said.

But the officers refused to answer him and threatened to throw him in jail as well, he said.

One police officer pushed him out, saying, "You should take care of your other children," Awut said.

Awut said he believed his son, who was born in August 1997, had been handed a heavier sentence because his identification card erroneously listed him as being 18 years old at the time of the trial.

One of Mamut's classmates, Ablikim Tursun, had received a two-year jail sentence and was placed in a labor camp for teenagers in the Xinjiang capital Urumqi, because he was identified as 17 years old when authorities issued the verdict in his trial.

"Actually, my son is the same age as [Tursun], and the difference between what's listed on his ID card and his real age should have been clear," Awut said. "But the authorities sentenced him so heavily. I am still in shock as to why they hate us so much."

No details

Husenjan Tursun, a police officer in Aykol township, told RFA that authorities there were aware of Mamut's life sentence, but said he did not know the official charges the teenager was convicted of because the case was handled by police in Aksu city.

"We were not involved in the case, because Eli Mamut was in a boarding school in Aksu city," he said.

When RFA contacted the Aksu city police department, an officer who declined to provide his name said he knew Mamut had been sentenced to life in prison on terrorism charges, but was not aware of the details of the case.

Chinese authorities rolled out the "strike hard" campaign across Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region following a deadly suicide bombing in May 2014 in the regional capital Urumqi, which they blamed on Uyghur separatists.

The campaign has included police raids on Uyghur households, restrictions on Islamic practices, and curbs on the culture and language of the Uyghur people, including videos and other material.

Aykol township became a major focus of a crackdown by Chinese authorities after a violent incident that occurred there during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan in July and early August 2013, which left at least three people dead and 50 injured when authorities fired on a crowd of Uyghur protesters.

China burns much more coal than reported, complicating climate talks

NY Times (03.11.2015) - <http://nyti.ms/1Q0w29u> - China, the world's leading emitter of greenhouse gases from coal, has been burning up to 17 percent more coal a year than the government previously disclosed, according to newly released data. The finding could complicate the already difficult efforts to limit global warming.

Even for a country of China's size, the scale of the correction is immense. The sharp upward revision in official figures means that China has released much more carbon dioxide — almost a billion more tons a year according to initial calculations — than previously estimated.

The increase alone is greater than the whole German economy emits annually from fossil fuels.

Officials from around the world will have to come to grips with the new figures when they gather in Paris this month to negotiate an international framework for curtailing greenhouse-gas pollution. The data also pose a challenge for scientists who are trying to reduce China's smog, which often bathes whole regions in acrid, unhealthy haze.

The Chinese government has promised to halt the growth of its emissions of carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse pollutant from coal and other fossil fuels, by 2030. The new data suggest that the task of meeting that deadline by reducing China's dependence on coal will be more daunting and urgent than expected, said Yang Fuqiang, a former energy official in China who now advises the Natural Resources Defense Council.

"This will have a big impact, because China has been burning so much more coal than we believed," Mr. Yang said. "It turns out that it was an even bigger emitter than we imagined. This helps to explain why China's air quality is so poor, and that will make it easier to get national leaders to take this seriously."

The new data, which appeared recently in an energy statistics yearbook published without fanfare by China's statistical agency, show that coal consumption has been underestimated since 2000, and particularly in recent years. The revisions were based on a census of the economy in 2013 that exposed gaps in data collection, especially from small companies and factories.

Illustrating the scale of the revision, the new figures add about 600 million tons to China's coal consumption in 2012 — an amount equivalent to more than 70 percent of the total coal used annually by the United States.

"It's been a confusing situation for a long time," said Ayaka Jones, a China analyst at the United States Energy Information Administration in Washington. She said the new data vindicated her earlier analysis of China's preliminary statistics, which flagged significantly increased numbers for coal use and overall energy consumption.

The new data indicated that much of the change came from heavy industry — including plants that produce coal chemicals and cement, as well as those using coking coal, which goes to make steel, Ms. Jones said. The correction for coal use in electric power generation was much smaller.

Officials accepted the need to correct worsening distortions in the old data but have not commented publicly on the changes, according to Lin Boqiang, director of the China Center for Energy Economics Research at Xiamen University in eastern China. Mr. Lin said in a telephone interview that this was partly because the new figures made it more complicated to set and assess the country's clean-energy goals.

"It's created a lot of bewilderment," he said. "Our basic data will have to be adjusted, and the international agencies will also have to adjust their databases. This is troublesome because many forecasts and commitments were based on the previous data."

When President Xi Jinping proposed that China's emissions stop growing by 2030, he did not say what level they would reach by then. The new numbers may mean that the peak will be higher, but they also raise hopes that emissions will crest many years sooner, Mr. Yang, the climate adviser, said.

"I think this implies that we're closer to a peak, because there's also been a falloff in coal consumption in the past couple of years," he said.

Chinese energy and statistics agency officials did not respond to faxed requests for comment on the data revisions.

The press office of the International Energy Agency said by email that the organization would revise its own data to reflect China's revisions, starting with numbers for 2011 to 2013 that will be released Wednesday. The agency estimated, based on the new figures, that China's carbon dioxide pollution in 2011 and 2012 was 4 percent to 6 percent greater than previously thought.

But some scientists said the difference could be much larger.

Jan Ivar Korsbakken, a senior researcher at the Center for International Climate and Environmental Research in Oslo, said that based on his preliminary analysis, the new data implied that China had released about 900 million metric tons more carbon dioxide from 2011 to 2013.

That would be an 11 percent increase in emissions, he said. For comparison, the International Energy Agency estimated before the revision that China had emitted 8.25 billion tons of carbon dioxide from fossil fuels in 2012. Dr. Korsbakken, a physicist, emphasized that deeper analysis of the new data was needed before firm conclusions could be drawn.

When estimating emissions, scientists prefer to account for coal use by the amount of energy in it rather than by its raw mass, which includes impurities that end up as ash. Measured in energy terms, Dr. Korsbakken said, China consumed 10 percent to 15 percent more coal than the old data had showed from 2005 to 2013, the last year for which the new and old figures can be compared. The revisions for 2001 through 2004 were smaller.

Economists have grown increasingly skeptical about the economic data China publishes, and the revisions open a new episode in the debate over its energy use and greenhouse-gas emissions.

China burned or otherwise consumed 4.2 billion metric tons in 2013, according to the new data, and its emissions now far exceed those of any other country, including the United States, the second-largest emitter.

This is not the first time China has underestimated its coal consumption. In the late 1990s, small coal mines were ordered to close, but many of them simply stopped reporting their output to the government. For a time, this created an erroneous impression that China had succeeded in generating economic growth without increasing emissions.

More recently, some scientists concluded that China's emissions were lower than widely believed because the coal it was using burned less efficiently than researchers had generally assumed. But Mr. Yang said that conclusion had been disputed.

The revised numbers do not alter scientists' estimates of the total amount of carbon dioxide in the air. That is measured directly, not inferred from fuel consumption statistics the way countries' emissions are usually estimated.

So if China's emissions have been much greater than believed, researchers will want to understand where the extra carbon dioxide output ended up — for example, how it might have been absorbed in natural "sinks" like forests or oceans, said Josep G. Canadell, executive director of the Global Carbon Project, which studies the sources and flows of greenhouse-gas pollution.

"If the emissions are partially wrong," Mr. Canadell said, "we'll be wrong in attributing carbon sources and sinks."

Correction: November 6, 2015

Because of an editing error, an article on Wednesday about the release of new data showing that China burns up to 17 percent more coal per year than the government had previously disclosed misidentified, in some editions, the measurement that the figure of 4.2 billion metric tons applies to. It represents the amount of coal consumed in China in 2013, not the amount of carbon dioxide emitted.

China's new two child policy will not end forced abortion or gendercide

WRWF (29.10.2015) - <http://bit.ly/1RN6MC8> - Xinhua News Agency reported today that China will move to a two-child policy for all couples, "abandoning its decades-long one-child policy."

Characterizing this latest modification as "abandoning" the One-Child Policy is misleading. A two-child policy will not end any of the human rights abuses caused by the One Child Policy, including forced abortion, involuntary sterilization or the sex-selective abortion of baby girls.

The reason given for this adjustment is entirely demographic: "to balance population development and address the challenge of an ageing population." The adjustment is a tacit admission that continuation of the one-child policy will lead to economic and demographic disaster. The policy was originally instituted for economic reasons. It is ironic that through this very policy, China has written its own economic death sentence.

Noticeably absent from the Chinese Communist party's announcement is any mention of human rights. The Chinese Communist Party has not suddenly developed a conscience or grown a heart. Even though it will now allow all couples to have a second child, China has not promised to end forced abortion, forced sterilization, or forced contraception.

Coercion is the core of the policy. Instituting a two-child policy will not end forced abortion or forced sterilization.

The problem with the one-child policy is not the number of children "allowed." Rather, it is the fact that the CCP is telling women how many children they can have and then enforcing that limit through forced abortion and forced sterilization. There is no guarantee that the CCP will cease their appalling methods of enforcement. Women will still have to obtain a government-issued birth permit, for the first and second child, or they may be subject to forced abortion. It will still be illegal for an unmarried woman to have a child. Regardless of the number of children allowed, women who get pregnant without permission will still be dragged out of their homes, strapped down to tables, and forced to abort babies that they want.

Further, instituting a two-child policy will not end gendercide. Indeed, areas in which two children currently are allowed are especially vulnerable to gendercide, the sex-selective abortion of females. According to the 2009 British Medical Journal study of data from the 2005 national census, in nine provinces, for "second order births" where the first child is a girl, 160 boys were born for every 100 girls. In two provinces, Jiangsu and Anhui, for the second child, there were 190 boys for every hundred girls born. This study stated, "sex selective abortion accounts for almost all the excess males." Because of this gendercide, there are an estimated 37 million Chinese men who will never marry because their future wives were terminated before they were born. This gender imbalance is a powerful, driving force behind trafficking in women and sexual slavery, not only in China, but in neighboring nations as well.

Sending out the message that China has "abandoned" its one-child policy is detrimental to sincere efforts to stop forced abortion and gendercide in China, because this message implies that the one-child policy is no longer a problem. In a world laden with compassion fatigue, people are relieved to cross China's one-child policy off of their list of things to worry about. But we cannot do that. Let us not abandon the women of China, who continue to face forced abortion, and the baby girls of China, who continue to face sex-selective abortion and abandonment.

The one-child policy does not need to be modified. It needs to be abolished.

China to end one-child policy and allow two

BBC (29.10.2015) - <http://bbc.in/1XB4PNd> - Couples will now be allowed to have two children, it said, citing a statement from the Communist Party.

The controversial policy was introduced nationally in 1979, to slow the population growth rate.

It is estimated to have prevented about 400 million births. However concerns at China's ageing population led to pressure for change.

Couples who violated the one-child policy faced a variety of punishments, from fines and the loss of employment to forced abortions.

Over time, the policy has been relaxed in some provinces, as demographers and sociologists raised concerns about rising social costs and falling worker numbers.

The decision to allow families to have two children was designed "to improve the balanced development of population" and to deal with an aging population, according to the statement from the Community Party's Central Committee carried by the official Xinhua News Agency (in Chinese) on Thursday.

Currently about 30% of China's population is over the age of 50. The total population of the country is around 1.36 billion.

The Communist Party began formally relaxing national rules two years ago, allowing couples in which at least one of the pair is an only child to have a second child.

Correspondents say that despite the relaxation of the rules, many couples may opt to only have one child, as one-child families have become the social norm.

Critics say that even a two-child policy will not boost the birth rate enough, the BBC's John Sudworth reports.

And for those women who want more than two children, nor will it end the state's insistence on the right to control their fertility, he adds.

"As long as the quotas and system of surveillance remains, women still do not enjoy reproductive rights," Maya Wang of Human Rights Watch told AFP.

I was born in 1979, the year the one-child policy was implemented. And even then, I wasn't supposed to be born.

In my parents' work unit, there were also quotas for babies. By the time my mother announced her pregnancy, the quotas were all used up for the year.

But kind-hearted officials decided to look the other way and allowed my birth. My would-be siblings were less lucky.

As a result of the policy, my mother had to endure two abortions. Even today, she talks about 'Number Two' and 'Number Three' and what they might have been like.

Writing in *The Conversation*, Stuart Gietel-Basten, associate professor of social policy at the University of Oxford, says the reform will do little to change China's population and is instead a "pragmatic response to an unpopular policy that made no sense".

The announcement in China came on the final day of a summit of the Communist Party's policy-making Central Committee, known as the fifth plenum.

The party also announced growth targets and its next five year plan.

China's one-child policy

- Introduced in 1979, the policy meant that many Chinese citizens - around a third, China claimed in 2007 - could not have a second child without incurring a fine
- In rural areas, families were allowed to have two children if the first was a girl
- Other exceptions included ethnic minorities and - since 2013 - couples where at least one was a single child
- Campaigners say the policy led to forced abortions, female infanticide, and the under-reporting of female births
- It was also implicated as a cause of China's gender imbalance

'Letting China off the hook'? Dissident released ahead of Xi Jinping's U.S. visit

Democracy Digest (16.09.2015) - <http://bit.ly/1Okyyws> - Scholar and activist Guo Yushan, arrested in January for "illegal business activity" after being detained in October 2014, has been released on bail ahead of Xi Jinping's state visit to the U.S. next week, China Digital Times* reports:

Guo played an instrumental role in helping blind activist Chen Guangcheng receive asylum in the U.S. after his 2012 escape from house arrest. Also released on bail was He Zhengjun, who served as the administrative director of the Transition Institute, an independent think tank founded by Guo that was raided and closed by authorities in 2013. The New York Times' Andrew Jacobs reports:

Both men have been accused of illegally printing books and other publications, charges that remain in effect while they are free on bail. [...]

Hu Jia, a prominent Chinese dissident and a friend of Mr. Guo's, described his release as a "diplomatic card" that the government hoped would ease criticism of Beijing's crackdown on independent journalists, rights lawyers and advocates for political reform.

The Guardian's Tom Phillips quotes Human Rights Watch China director Sophie Richardson on the possibility that Guo's release is an attempt to keep human rights out of the spotlight on Xi's state trip:

Sophie Richardson, the China director at Human Rights Watch, said Guo's release appeared to be part of an attempt by Beijing to prevent criticism of the country's human rights record overshadowing Xi's visit.

[...] "We have seen the Chinese government make what appear to be a series of small concessions presumably as a way of trying to keep human rights issues out of the summit. That shouldn't happen," said Richardson. "Letting people out of jail and letting certain kinds of people visit are good things but that should not get Xi Jinping off the hook." RTWT

As President Obama prepares to host Chinese President Xi Jinping on September 24-25, 2015, the Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) will hold a hearing to examine the critical human rights and rule of law issues that deserve frank and robust discussions during the planned state visit.

Chinese authorities have targeted for arrest and harassment human rights defenders; media outlets and journalists; human rights lawyers; Tibetans and Uyghurs; religious groups; nongovernmental organizations (NGOs); intellectuals and democracy advocates; and supporters of "universal suffrage" in Hong Kong. The CECC Political Prisoner Database has case information on over 1,300 political and religious prisoners currently known or believed to be detained or imprisoned.

Urging China's President Xi to Stop State-Sponsored Human Rights Abuses

Friday, September 18, 2015
2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Capitol Visitors Center, HVC 210
Capitol Hill
Washington DC

Witnesses [including partners of the National Endowment for Democracy] will address a variety of human rights developments and will make policy recommendations in the context of the upcoming summit.

Witnesses:

Teng Biao (above): Chinese human rights lawyer, Harvard University Law School Visiting Fellow, and Co-founder, the Open Constitution Initiative

Xiao Qiang: Founder and Editor-in-Chief, China Digital Times
Yang Jianli (left): President, Initiatives for China/ Citizen Power for China

Shohret Hoshur: journalist reporting on news in China's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region for Radio Free Asia

Ethan Gutmann: China Analyst and Author of *The Slaughter: Mass Killings, Organ Harvesting, and China's Secret Solution to Its Dissident Problem*

As China's one-child policy turns 35, woman to abort at 8 months, or husband to lose job

Women's Rights Without Frontiers (14.09.2015) - A woman "illegally pregnant" with her second child in Yunnan, China says she feels pressured to have an illegal abortion at eight months, so that her husband will not lose his job as a police officer. Her struggle has given rise to an outcry against the One Child Policy in China, which will turn 35 on September 25th.

According to reports, the 41-year-old woman, who will only identify herself as by her surname, Chen, stated, "I am fearful. If my husband believes I must abort the child, there's nothing I can do . . . I am worried he would lose his job even after we lose the baby, if the situation gets messy."

Wen Xueping, a Yunnan Family Planning Official, stated, "No way will we force them to have an abortion." He did, however, warn of the consequences of having a child without permission. These consequences can include heavy fines and job loss for government employees, such as Chen's husband.

Reggie Littlejohn, President of Women's Rights Without Frontiers, stated, "The statement of the Family Planning Official is typical Chinese communist double-speak. On one hand, he says that they will not force Chen to have an abortion. On the other hand, the hefty fines he warns of can be ten times a person's annual salary. If a couple cannot afford to pay this 'terror fine,' then they have no choice but an abortion. This constitutes a forced abortion."

On June 12, 2012, Women's Rights Without Frontiers broke to the West news of the forced abortion of Feng Jianmei, posting a heartbreaking photo of Feng with her daughter, forcibly aborted at seven months. [Warning, graphic image.] The brutality of this violence unleashed a firestorm of criticism against forced abortion under China's One Child Policy.

<http://www.womensrightswithoutfrontiers.org/blog/?p=667>

Littlejohn continued, "The fact that Chen is now being forced to choose between abortion at 8 months and the loss of her husband's job demonstrates that forced abortion continues to this day under China's One Child Policy. Headlines have stated that the Policy has been 'relaxed,' allowing some couples to have a second child. But in the urban areas, if both members of a couple have siblings, these couples still can have only one child. If they get pregnant without a Birth Permit, they may still be subject to forced abortion.

"The anguish of Chen dramatically demonstrates that China's forced abortion policy needs to be abolished now. Forced abortion is official government rape. The One Child Policy - having 'prevented' 400 million births, too often by forced abortion -- has caused more violence against women and girls than any other official policy on earth and any other official policy in history. This heinous crime against women must end."

Sign a petition against forced abortion in China:

http://www.womensrightswithoutfrontiers.org/index.php?nav=sign_our_petition

Read the South China Morning Post (AP) Report:

Outcry as Chinese woman considers illegal abortion at 8 months, fearing draconian one-child policy means her husband would lost job

<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/policies-politics/article/1856171/outcry-chinese-woman-considers-illegal-abortion-8>

Women's Rights Without Frontiers

www.womensrightswithoutfrontiers.org

Stop Forced Abortion – China's War on Women! Video (4 mins)

WRWF files a complaint against China at the UN

WRWF (09.08.2015) - September 25, 2015 marks the 35th anniversary of China's brutal One Child Policy. Coercive enforcement of China's One Child Policy continues to this day. As blind activist Chen Guangcheng stated, Family Planning Officials "will kill your baby in your face."

Women's Rights Without Frontiers has filed a Complaint with the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW) against the Chinese Government for the coercive enforcement of China's One Child Policy. (See attached, as well as the electronic link below.) The Complaint chronicles the history of savagely cruel and profoundly disturbing reports emerging from China over the past year, including reports that Chinese officials were forced to meet monthly abortion quotas, that a Chinese firm planned to punish employees who had unscheduled children, and that Chinese women are increasingly resorting to overseas "maternity hotels" to give birth to their children.

The Complaint provides evidence that the Chinese Communist Party will *never* abolish the One Child Policy, because the government is exploiting this Policy as social control, masquerading as population control.

The Complaint argues that the recent "reform" – really, a minor modification – of the One Child Policy has done little or nothing to end coercive population control or gendercide.

The Complaint discusses the connection between China's One Child Policy and sexual slavery.

The Complaint also discusses a recent finding that multiple abortions lead to a greatly increased risk of breast cancer.

The Complaint acknowledges the UNCSW for its "Agreed Conclusions" condemning forced abortion, sterilization and contraception. It nevertheless challenges the UNCSW to investigate the UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund), which was found to be complicit with coercive family planning by former Secretary of State Colin Powell.

WRWF President Reggie Littlejohn stated: "The United Nations should urge the Chinese government to abolish all forms of coercive population control and investigate UNFPA. China's forced abortion policy does not need to be modified. It needs to be eliminated."

The full Complaint can be read here:

<http://www.womensrightswithoutfrontiers.org/blog/?p=2043>

Learn more about WRWF's campaign to save girls in China:

<http://womensrightswithoutfrontiers.org/index.php?nav=end-gendercide-and-forced-abortion>

Sign a petition against forced abortion in China:

www.womensrightswithoutfrontiers.org/index.php?nav=sign_our_petition

Watch a four-minute video, "Stop Forced Abortion - China's War on Women":
www.youtube.com/watch?v=JjtuBcJUjY

Getting to the core of Human Rights: Demanding greater environmental protection in China today

By Leah Strauss for Human Rights Without Frontiers In'tl

HRWF (04.08.2015) - "I had never felt afraid of pollution before. I had never worn a mask anywhere." Chai Jing stands on the stage, images blinking on the backdrop behind her, recounting the point where her way of looking at the world changed. Like any first time parent, the birth of Chai's daughter completely altered her universe. Yet universals of parenthood are not so universal outside of China, when it comes to extreme pollution. It is not so relatable for instance, to harbor acute, daily anxiety over the quality of the air entering your child's lungs--so much so that for half of her first year of life you keep her indoors, "like a prisoner."

Chai's own personal story is documented in the film "Under the Dome."[1] Stories from the former TV anchor's life are woven with interviews of figures of authority across China, in the most high profile environmental investigation in the country to date. The film went viral in China in February 2015, with over 200 million views over a matter of days. In the film, Chai takes her camera everywhere: from inside operating rooms of lung cancer patients, to the blackened bellows of their lungs, to inside the bellies of pollution-belching factories. She presents a picture of the scale and extent of pollution in China, highlighting problems with corruption, mismanagement and the laxity of regulations.

The film, which stayed online for less than one week before it was banned by government censors, closes with a call from Chai for bottom-up, individual action from "millions and millions of ordinary citizens." She envisions them one day standing up and shouting: "No! I'm not satisfied! I will stand up and do something!"

However, doing something, as Chai says, "Right now! Right here!" is not without risk. While city-dwellers in China increasingly demand greater environmental protection, the current trend suggests increasing vulnerability. In June, in the heart of Shanghai's financial hub, at least three busloads of environmental protesters were taken away in an effort to forcibly prevent an impending rally.[2] Affluent Chinese are increasingly forming such protests, but authorities are matching their rise with wariness. In northern China two activists were in March arrested for holding signs reading: "the government has a duty to control smog," a move apparently inspired by Chai's film.[3]

One month after the protesters were quelled in Shanghai, in an ominous sign for human rights defenders across China, environmental and otherwise, at least 146 lawyers, activists and their relatives were taken into custody in 24 Chinese cities and provinces according to Hong Kong-based China Human Rights Lawyers Concern Group, and 22 remain in custody. State media reported that in the mass round-up, Chinese police were targeting a "criminal gang." Lawyers were accused of "trying to create social conflict by using paid protesters, trying to influence public sentiment and spreading rumors."[4]

Those questioned say the real goal of recent moves by the government, is to "discredit and dismantle the 'rights defense' movement" in China. Zhang Lei, a lawyer questioned by the police, called the crackdown, "the biggest attack we've ever experienced."[5]

In her call to action, Chai correctly insists that the government, "must rely on ordinary citizens like you and me. On our choices. On our Determination." Considering the hard

line being taken by the current government against environmentalists and human rights defenders alike, Chai's words are equal parts emboldening and potentially perilous.

On a daily basis, Chai's concerns prompt her to check the Air Quality Index of Beijing, which she then uses to plan her day. While the extremes she contends with remain virtually unimaginable for those who have not experienced them in China or elsewhere, there remains an underlying current that *is* familiar to her story: the instinct to protect oneself and one's family from environmental harm.

Indeed, on the other side of the planet, a celebrated Canadian journalist published her much anticipated environmental treatise on climate change a half year prior to the release of "Under the Dome." Like Chai, Naomi Klein's call to take action and end our reliance on fossil fuels is also a deeply personal one. In Klein's book, "This Changes Everything," she reveals how her own struggle with fertility and the eventual birth of her son influenced her perception of the threat of runaway climate change.[6]

In fact, Klein intended to withhold reference to her pregnancy and new motherhood which directly coincided with her writing. She was skeptical of calls to action based on our responsibilities to "our children," as such invocations felt to her exclusionary while she herself struggled with issues of infertility. Her sentiments, however, changed: "It's not that I got in touch with my inner Earth Mother; it's that I started to notice that if the Earth is indeed our mother, then she is a mother facing a great many fertility challenges of her own." [7]

Underlying the work of Chai and Klein, is a common revelation about threats to the environment being inextricably tied to threats to one's own body and that of loved ones. For these journalists, there is courage in painting their arguments with a personal brush. And why not frame it this way? What is more personal after all, than living on a planet that is so polluted one's own very genetic integrity is at risk?

Indeed, promotion of human rights, being about the human, the person, the body and the environment of the body, must form an essential part of any demand for greater environmental protection. In highlighting the body, these women get to the "core" of what it means to defend one's human rights.

* * *

In Chai's investigation, she points the camera towards microscopic particulate matter invisible to the naked eye, but visualized en masse in the refracted light of smog. Klein, in speaking about her own personal story, returns to spring and the spawning season. To tell this story, Klein directs her lense towards what the naked eye will never see, no matter the precision of our instruments. She is intent on illuminating absences.

She explains that during spawning season for aquatic life, the marsh acts as an "incubator." The wetlands are thus a place of birth, but it is also a fragile place, as fish in their egg and larval phases lack defensive tools and are unable to avoid poisons that enter the landscape. Encounters with toxins, even in negligible amounts can lead to their death or mutation.

Klein travelled to Louisiana after the BP Horizon oil spill to see the marshlands herself. She notes that, unlike oil-coated sea birds and turtles, the likenesses of which are familiar from international media covering disastrous spills, the deaths of eggs and larvae do not make headlines and go uncounted. Instead of a "camera-ready mass die-off," what is left is "...nothing. An absence. A hole in the life cycle."

Klein had been struggling with fertility issues for some time before her trip to the marsh. Yet, while there in the waters and grass, she felt less of an, "exile from nature" and

instead “what I can only describe as a kinship of the infertile.” She felt like part of a, “vast biotic community,” that, due to the environmental damage already being suffered across the planet, was, “engaged in an uphill battle to create new living beings,” deprived of that “most essential tool: the ability to create new life and carry on their genetic lines.”

Similar invocations to train our eyes on what we are not used to seeing come from a professor of English, Rob Nixon, who in his book “Slow Violence” also highlights the absences and uncounted. He asks: “Who is counting the victims of genetic deterioration—the stillborn, malformed infants conceived by parents whose DNA has been scrambled?”[8]

These activists ask us to count losses in a way more reflective of reality—losses that are too often irreversible. The violations we are seeing today, which *already* pose irrevocable damage, are unacceptable human rights violations. Human rights can capture the gravity and unacceptable nature of *one* life being irreparably damaged or worse, lost. Human rights are uniquely posed as a defense we must call upon when the most basic, microscopic materials that construct us, our most basic building blocks, are threatened.

Ensuring the protection of human rights must go hand-in-hand with ensuring the protection of the environment of the human body. Nowhere is this made more clear than in China, where we see the devastating effects of combined absences: the absence of well-being wrought by pollution and the absence of full respect for human rights.

The casualties in China, official and unofficial, are unequivocally increasing as a result of pollution, especially for those most vulnerable. Coal and car emissions are raising the risks of premature babies, low birth weights, and neural tube defects, and the dangers begin in the womb. Birth defect rates have increased in China by 70% over the past two decades. Neural tube defects have climbed to a rate 13 times higher than in the US.[9]

It is no coincidence that the superlatives swirling around China are interrelated. China is the world’s largest economy, the biggest emitter of carbon in the world, with the world’s largest car market. Corresponding graphs that creep upwards in tandem to these developments, can be found related to serious health impacts and threats to one’s biology. The Chinese Ministry of Health reports that pollution has made cancer China’s leading cause of death.[10]

Slowly, the science is identifying and naming the dangers, some of which are compiled and highlighted in a recent, also very personal account. Gardiner Harris, a NYTimes correspondent based in India, became deeply concerned about his son’s declining ability to breathe in New Delhi, a city twice as polluted as Beijing. Spurred by his own experience, Harris found in his research numerous studies involving pollution and increased risk for disease including epilepsy, diabetes, autism, and multiple sclerosis.[11]

In a particularly memorable scene from Chai’s film, she asks a 6-year old girl from Shanxi province, “Have you ever seen the stars?” The girl stares back, giving a direct, unblinking answer: “No.” “Have you ever seen the blue sky?” “A little bit.” “How about white clouds?” “No.” Human rights ensure dignity and well-being, and what is a more basic requirement to ensuring one’s full well-being than seeing the sky?

Experiencing the sky, knowing that the air you breathe is not a death sentence, and that the pores of the vegetables you eat are not seeping with heavy metals—in other words, being able to exist in a safe and decent environment—is a basic human right necessary to ensuring all other human rights. Knowing this makes one human.

The writer, Jonathan Safran Foer, poetically described this elemental knowing when speaking on one of his own areas of research: factory farming (the narrative of which

revolves around feeding his sons).[12] The example he chose was a pregnant animal, put in a cage so small she couldn't turn around--an apt metaphor for those most vulnerable, and unable to escape extreme pollution. He explained that the idea of treating an animal in this way was "just not right." Moreover, he didn't need to be convinced by the authorities to reach such a conclusion: "I don't need a philosopher to explain that to me. I don't need a veterinary scientist to explain it to me. My humanity is enough--the humanity that I was born with." [13]

One's own humanity is enough to understand that a safe and decent environment is an essential, universal human right. This knowing is perhaps most fully at the front of one's consciousness when it is felt from within one's own viscera, that is, when this right is denied.

In Foer's writing, a common element he addresses is that of intergenerational trauma and the idea that memory of trauma can be inherited and passed down across generations. In his own life, Foer's grandmother, a Holocaust survivor, was a central influence both in his work and his interest in trauma. It can be said that the 6-year old girl Chai interviewed, along with other children across China born into an environment which, while not a war zone, does inflict counted and uncounted casualties, are experiencing a certain kind of trauma. What sort of intergenerational trauma is being passed down today as a result of growing up and existing in a harmful, toxic environment? Certainly the hard science is beginning to make such suggestions, e.g. there is evidence that certain forms of pesticide exposure can be felt three generations out, in the *absence* of continued exposure. [14]

* * *

"You are part of this world." These words came in response to a question I posed to my own midwife at a routine check-up. I had asked her if she had any advice about achieving as toxin-free a pregnancy as possible for my developing daughter. Her words were meant to allay my fears and leave me feeling more grounded in the knowledge that there was only so much I could do, especially at this point.

Indeed, I did find her words reassuring. She succeeded in imparting some comfort, but only based on the timing of the situation. In essence, these are after-the-fact words of complacency--words necessary when the window for radical change is closed. However, they are immobilizing when what's done is not yet done.

In sweet paradox, you can take the same words, "you are part of this world," and put them in a completely different context where they have the opposite effect. Instead of inspiring a sort of anesthetizing acceptance, they hold a powerful spark, capable of inciting an inner recognition and bold call to action.

The window of opportunity for radical change in many ways has not yet closed. Klein and Chai both outline ways forward, and as Klein puts it, many of the changes "are distinctly un-catastrophic. Many are downright exciting." In considering what we can do *now*, in order to avoid scenarios where we have to throw our hands up in the air and accept defeat, human rights defenders must evoke the precautionary principle when calling on greater environmental protection.

The precautionary principle holds that if there is a reasonable indication that an action or policy may be unsafe, then we should simply refrain from using it, even when there is not yet scientific evidence conclusive to that effect. Essentially, the level of risk to which we are exposed today is unacceptable, especially in the extreme scenario happening in China. With the precautionary principle, perfect scientific certainty is not necessary to take action to protect human health and the environment. Here the burden of proof is

not placed on the people who could be harmed. As Klein puts it, the movement has found what is *non-negotiable*.

We know that reducing factory emissions in China can have immediate and measurable, positive effects. In 2008 during the Beijing Olympics, the city closed factories and power plants and restricted traffic, resulting in a reduction of air pollutants by between 18% and 59%. Babies carried by pregnant women during that time were born heavier than babies born a year earlier or later.[15] In a similar study, after a coal-fired plant closed in Chongqing, China, children had fewer signs of exposure and DNA damage, and they also performed better on developmental tests.[16]

The wire cutters of pollution, poised at the neck of the double helix curls we carry within and that carry us, are ready to sever our connections—sacred connections to future generations and within ourselves. To prevent this damage, we must in addition vigorously demand that a new intertwining is ensured: that of language. The language of human rights must be interwoven into the text of all international environmental treaties, in an integral and meaningful way.

We must also ensure greater synergies are formed across traditionally distinct sectors. The borders between the activist worlds of human rights and that of environmental protection must continue to dissolve so that they become interwoven and fully united.

Human rights reflect our universal human values. It is vital that the circle enclosing our “shared environment” includes all of humanity. Pollution is also universal in that its effects are borderless, particularly when you withhold limits on time. As part of this global picture, China’s increasing reach and influence must also be considered, as China continues to invest and become more powerful in countries with risky political regimes and weak protection of human rights, making it more difficult to demand environmental standards in these countries.[17]

In this way, we are all part of the story of what is happening in China: there is nothing happening in China today related to pollution that will not affect us all eventually. While it is not necessary to be part of the story to be moved to action, now more than ever, given the scale and extent of the destruction and threats to human health, well-being and dignity, we, as Klein puts out, must not look away.

In promoting greater environmental protection, Chai calls us to shout: “No! I’m not satisfied!” One can hear in her plea, the echo of another journalist and environmental activist, Dai Qing. Some 25 years earlier, in protest against the construction of the Three Gorges Dam Project, Qing similarly and defiantly proclaimed: “The highest expression of dignity can be summed up in a single word: No!”

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China's One-Child Policy 'Reform' won't end abuses: Reggie Littlejohn interviewed by Radio Free Asia



A Chinese mother looks at her newborn baby at a hospital in Shenyang city, northeast China's Liaoning Province, March 20, 2014. Imaginechina

By Richard Finney and Nadia Usaeva

Radio Free Asia – Changes recently introduced to China's brutal one-child policy are not likely to reduce the number of forced abortions or ease human trafficking in the country, according to a prominent American women's rights activist whose group is battling forced abortion and sexual slavery in China.

Reggie Littlejohn, founder and president of California-based Women's Rights Without Frontiers, said Beijing's move allowing couples to have two children if either parent is an only child under a so-called reform of the one-child policy "is not going to end gendercide," the voluntary sex-selective abortion of baby girls.

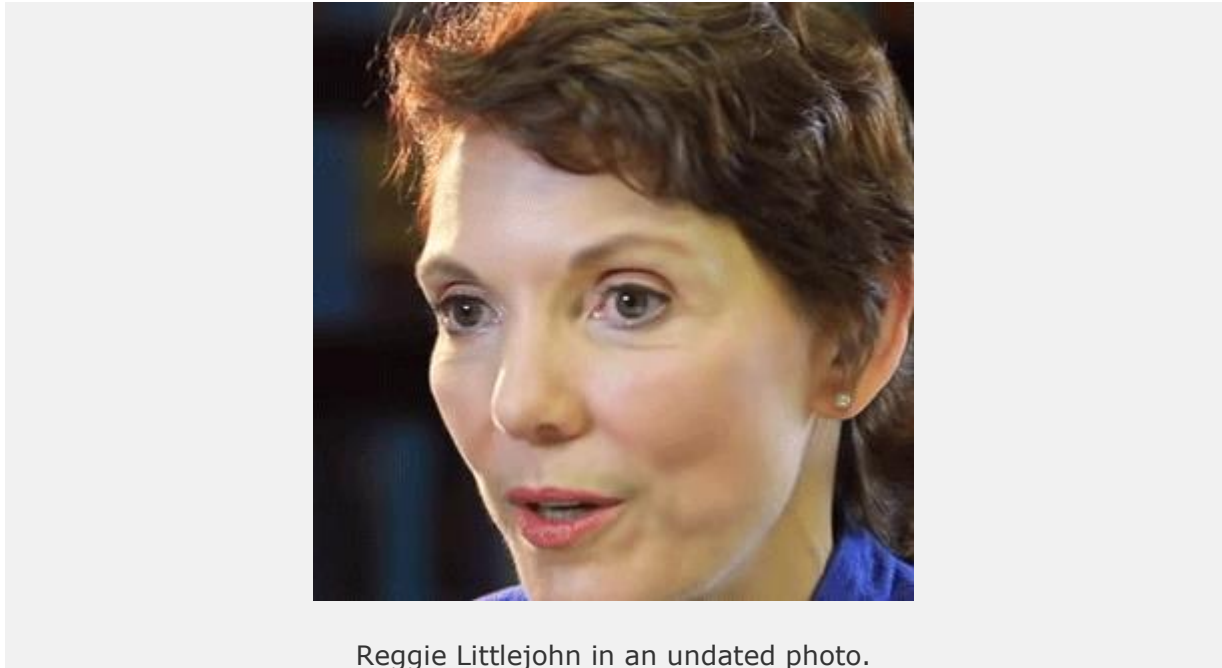
"And even if it did—even if the numbers of girls improved immediately in response to this modification of the one-child policy—the effect of that would not be felt on human trafficking for decades to come," she said in an interview with RFA.

A traditional preference for boys among Chinese families has created a gender imbalance as some couples opt for sex-selective abortions.

Littlejohn said that while the Chinese government has promised to end gendercide, "they have not taken any effective action whatsoever."

"Girls are being selectively aborted in China, in massive numbers, to this day," she said.

Preference for sons



Reggie Littlejohn in an undated photo.

Littlejohn called on the Chinese authorities to remove the incentive for son preference among Chinese families.

"Because of son preferences in China, people feel that if they have only one child or if they have two children, their only child or one of their two children must be a boy," she said, adding, "And that has led to very serious abortion or abandonment of baby girls."

"So now there's a situation where there's about 37 million more men than women living in China, and that is driving human trafficking and sexual slavery because there aren't enough women, because there's an enormous gender imbalance," Littlejohn said.

"There is human trafficking all over the world, but it's much worse in China because of the one-child policy," she said.

Littlejohn's Women's Rights Without Frontiers is a broad-based, international coalition striving to raise public awareness on the "coercive enforcement of China's One Child Policy, the connection between this coercion and human trafficking in Asia, and the other human rights abuses that arise out of this coercive enforcement."

Under policy changes announced in November 2013, the ruling Chinese Communist Party "has given the green light to couples wanting to have two children if [either parent] is an only child," according to a Nov. 16 report by the state-controlled Xinhua news service.

But the number of Chinese couples that will be covered by the new policy "is not very large across the country," Xinhua said, quoting Wang Pei'an, deputy director of China's National Health and Planning Commission.

"In addition, there is no unified timetable nationwide to start the new policy, as regions will implement it at different times based on their local situation," Xinhua continued, quoting Wang.

Upgrade criticized

Littlejohn also criticized the U.S. State Department for upgrading China this year from the lowest ranking in an annual global survey of human trafficking, calling the move “completely unwarranted and baseless.”

Last month, the State Department’s Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons placed China on Tier-2 Watch List—the second lowest rank—after dumping it last year to the Tier-3 blacklist of the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report.

The report noted the change made by Beijing to allow families with one single-child parent to have a second child.

It said that the change “may affect future demand for prostitution and for foreign women as brides for Chinese men—both of which may be procured by force or coercion.”

The report added that the Chinese government was “making significant efforts” to meet basic standards in fighting human trafficking.

“I think that that is completely unjustified, because this so-called modification of the one-child policy was extremely minor,” Littlejohn said.

“But whether a woman has one child or two, she will still need a permit authorizing the birth of each child, Littlejohn said. “And if she doesn’t have one, she will still have a forced abortion.”

“That is never a proper way to control a population.”

Failure to act

Meanwhile, in the absence of changes made to Chinese cultural views, gendercide will continue unabated, Littlejohn said.

“Allowing couples to have a second child is not going to end gendercide,” she said.

Chinese daughters, when they marry, traditionally join the households of their husband’s family and help support his parents in their old age, “so the entire investment now that people make in raising their daughters goes entirely to the family of the young man that she marries.”

China’s government could reduce the numbers of aborted or abandoned girls by providing economic incentives to families giving birth to girls and special compensation to retirement-age couples who have no sons to support them, Littlejohn said.

“But they have not taken any effective action at all,” she said.

“There is no need for a one-child policy. It should be abolished entirely.”

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<http://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/policy-07232014161119.html>

Prominent Tibetan monk dies in Chinese prison

Al Jazeera (13.07.2015) - A Tibetan monk who was one of China's most prominent political prisoners has died in jail, a relative said on Monday, and a rights group said security forces were deployed after protesters gathered near a government office in his home region.

The United States, the European Union and international rights groups had called for the release of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, 65, who was serving a 20-year sentence on charges of "crimes of terror and incitement of separatism."

He died on Sunday in Chuandong prison in the southwestern city of Chengdu, his cousin, Geshe Nyima, told Reuters by telephone from India. The Tibetan government-in-exile, the Central Tibetan Administration, also confirmed his death.

"The fact that he was not even allowed medical parole and last wish of followers to see him reflects continuing hardline policies of the Chinese government," said Lobsang Sangay, who heads the India-based administration.

"Such mistreatment will only generate more resentment among Tibetans," he said.

Free Tibet, a human rights group, said security forces had been deployed in Tenzin Delek's home county in China's Sichuan Province, where thousands of Tibetans had gathered outside a government office near his monastery.

Reuters could not independently verify the protest and security response. Authorities in the area were not available for comment.

The cause of Tenzin Delek's death was not clear, his cousin said, but rights groups had said he was suffering from a heart condition. Authorities notified his sisters about his death on Sunday, the cousin said.

Telephone calls seeking comment from officials in Chuandong prison went unanswered.

Tenzin Delek was sentenced to death with a two-year reprieve in 2002, according to Students for a Free Tibet, a rights group that has campaigned for his release. The sentence was later commuted to life imprisonment and reduced to a term of 20 years.

"He is one of the most respected leaders," said Dorjee Tseten, Asia director of Students for a Free Tibet. "His death is a shock for all of us."

Tenzin Delek was also a supporter of the Dalai Lama, Tibet's spiritual leader, whom China claims is seeking to use violent means to establish an independent Tibet.

The Dalai Lama, who has been living in exile in India since 1959 after an abortive uprising against Chinese rule, says he wants genuine autonomy for Tibet and denies supporting violence.

On Monday, China's foreign ministry said it "firmly opposed" the participation of U.S. White House adviser Valerie Jarrett in a birthday celebration for the Dalai Lama in New York on July 10.

Human rights lawyers, staffers detained in widespread crackdown across China

Los Angeles Times - Many of the lawyers were interrogated by police officers and national security officials after being detained Friday. By Saturday night, most had been released after receiving stern warnings, but some faced house arrest. Several remained incommunicado.

China hacking? Beijing is also a victim, foreign minister says in interview.

"This is certainly a coordinated, organized crackdown, not ordinary law enforcement," said Fu Hualing, a law professor at the University of Hong Kong. Fu counted several friends among the detainees.

Rep. Chris Smith (R-N.J.), a member of the House Foreign Affairs committee, condemned the crackdown and warned of possible diplomatic fallout.

"The detentions come only two weeks after the end of the U.S.-China Strategic & Economic Dialogue and set an ugly tone for President Xi's (Jinping) U.S. visit in September," Smith said in a statement Friday.

The mass roundup began with the disappearance of Beijing lawyers Wang Yu and Zhou Shifeng, colleagues at the same law firm well-known for tackling high-profile cases. Zhou "disappeared" hours after he celebrated the release of client Zhang Miao, formerly a news assistant for Die Zeit, a German newsweekly, who was held since October for allegedly organizing activities in support of pro-democracy demonstrations in Hong Kong.

Wang was on the legal team that represented Ilham Tohti, an economics professor and outspoken advocate for Uighurs, whose life sentence on separatism charges was upheld after appeal last year. Wang's lawyer husband, Bao Longjun, and their son were intercepted by police for detention, after Wang saw them off at the airport Wednesday. Their 16-year-old son has since been released.

Speculation is rife that the roundup was expanded as a result of the solidarity lawyers showed in protesting the initial disappearances. But professor Fu said there wasn't sufficient evidence to support any theory.

"There's a deficit of information at the moment, and the lack of knowledge about what is going on only generates more fear," Fu said.

In recent crackdowns, the focus has centered mostly around the capital Beijing, where a number of public-interest law firms operate close to the national seat of power. The latest effort was unusual for its broad geographical sweep. Lawyers from as many as 15 provinces have been involved.

In the southern city of Guangzhou, veteran lawyer Sui Muqing stepped out of his apartment to check a report of his car being damaged. Once outside, Sui was taken to the local police station. Last October, Sui accepted the case of Wang Zang, a Beijing poet detained after voicing support on social media for Hong Kong's pro-democracy demonstrators.

Sui since has been placed under house arrest for "subversion of state power," according to a stream of updates disseminated on Twitter regarding the roundup. Chinese human rights lawyers in the U.S. and rights groups in Hong Kong have been proactive in broadcasting news of the crackdown.

A protest march is planned for Sunday in Hong Kong by the Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China.

Many observers pointed out that the crackdown is the largest since 2011, when 35 human rights activists and lawyers were arrested in the midst of pro-democracy protests sparked by those in Africa and the Middle East.

Police in Shanghai remove at least 3 busloads of protesters who oppose rumored chemical plant

AP (27.06.2015) - Police in China's financial hub Shanghai took away at least three busloads of environmental protesters outside the municipal government Saturday, preventing the latest rally that started with a rumor that a petrochemical plant could move into the area.

Concerned with public health but shut out of decision-making, more affluent Chinese are increasingly taking to the streets to oppose potentially hazardous projects such as petrochemical plants. Authorities in turn have suppressed the assemblies that have in the past turned violent and weakened the authority of local governments.

In the latest case, thousands of residents in the Shanghai suburban district of Jinshan have been protesting outside the district government — about 70 kilometers (43.5 miles) from downtown Shanghai — during the past week following the rumor about a petrochemical plant moving into their neighborhood. Shanghai authorities have dismissed it as untrue.

Still skeptical, the residents planned to protest outside the municipal government in central Shanghai on Saturday, but the venue was guarded by hundreds of police, both uniformed and plainclothes. SWAT police patrolled police tapes fencing off the area the protesters planned to gather.

The police forced demonstrators to board buses before driving away from downtown Shanghai. Scuffles broke out with less obedient protesters. Police also grabbed an Associated Press reporter and tried to shove him away. Plainclothes officers used umbrellas to try to block filming.

"People got angry and started to chant, and then they were taken away by police," said a Jinshan resident who only gave her family name of Shen.

The rumor involves a paraxylene plant the protesters believe will be built in an industrial zone in Jinshan. Paraxylene is a hazardous chemical used to produce fibers and plastics. Exposure to paraxylene can cause eye, nose and throat irritation. In April, six people were hospitalized in an explosion at a paraxylene plant in the southeastern Fujian province.

The Shanghai government announced Friday that it would cease any environmental assessment for the industrial zone — possibly meaning no new project — and focus on cleaning up pollution. It earlier made repeated assurances that no paraxylene factory would be built in Jinshan.

However, many are distrustful of the government, citing rampant corruption, incompetence, and lack of transparency in decision-making.

EU should stand firm against Chinese censorship

Epoch Times (30.06.2015) - While many once believed access to the Internet would usher in universal human rights and democracy, in the hands of China and other tyrannical governments it has become an extraordinary instrument of repression and thought-control.

While countless millions (indeed, 40 percent of the world's population) have come to rely on the Internet as a primary source of information, censorship and the spread of disinformation via the Internet have given dictatorships huge powers to deceive and manipulate citizens, and to deprive them of access to information crucial to their ability to understand global and local realities.

On the world stage, Internet manipulation by the People's Republic of China stands out.

China has about 642 million Internet users, close to half its massive population. But the Internet to which they have access is deeply corrupted by government censorship ruthlessly aimed at maintaining the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in power.

The content of electronic media is thoroughly shaped by blocking access to a wide variety of information, inserting what is deemed useful to achieving the political goals of the CCP, which ensures that editorial opinions never question the authority of the Party and the state.

The Communist Party, which unilaterally runs the government, has asserted full "national sovereignty" concerning what may or may not be seen on the Internet. Thanks to technology provided by Google and Cisco Systems, thousands of words, phrases and names cannot be accessed using search engines in accordance with policies of the State Internet Information Office.

Among the banned words are "human rights," "oppression," Tiananmen Square, dissident Nobel laureate Liu Xiaobo, and the name of the newspaper you are reading.

A Harvard University study found that Chinese authorities block as many as 18,000 websites, including many standard, independent sources of international news.

What is more, all books published in China are censored.

A new study by the American branch of International PEN found widespread censorship, often without the consent of authors, by editors who have removed references to difficult and controversial policies and tragic events that have occurred in modern Chinese history.

Chinese media are prevented from collecting and exposing facts about such issues as the recent Oriental Star cruise ship disaster; while the authorities vigorously denied the practice of selling the organs of executed prisoners, the government has slowly walked back its lies in the face of international publicity.

The state posits itself unabashedly as the arbiter of truth. Citizens are thus prohibited from "making falsehoods or distorting the truth, spreading rumors, and destroying the order of society."

But of course, that is precisely what the Chinese state itself is doing by arbitrarily removing facts and ideas from the Internet and replacing them with propaganda, and by its broader censorship regime.

Moreover, the crude effort to retain control and power by limiting citizens' access to information and ideas is amazingly shortsighted from a strategic point of view. It

severely limits fulfillment of the human potential of the Chinese people, putting them at a huge disadvantage vis a vis peoples of living in free societies.

We in the free world know what the Chinese people know, and what they are not allowed to know. But by and large, the Chinese people do not have the means to know what has been "disappeared" from their available spectrum of knowledge. They are forced to live in a restricted, distorted universe constructed by functionaries blindly following commands issued by a brittle bureaucracy so insecure that its leaders fear challenging ideas.

Yet we can assume that millions of Chinese live with the knowledge that they are being deprived of information and manipulated by the state—a perilous frame of mind that itself breeds rumors and deep anxieties, and, ultimately, social instability, the very thing communist rulers seek to prevent.

People around the world who enjoy freedom and democracy owe it to Chinese citizens to hold firm to our principles and insist that the Chinese people enjoy them as well.

A Pew Foundation poll found that huge proportions of people in major European countries recognize that the Chinese are deprived of their human rights. But in the face of pressure to maintain economic cooperation, Western governments are showing strong tendencies to appease China's violations of the freedom of expression and other fundamental human rights.

They tend to remain silent as China twists the concept of human rights to mean nothing but economic benefits and social entitlements.

Indeed, the current Chinese authorities apparently do not understand that all people possess universal human rights by virtue of the common human nature they share with all others. They cling to the retrograde falsehood that human rights are defined and conferred upon citizens by the state.

Without freedom, the Chinese people have little hope of contributing to solving global problems like pollution. It is thus important that European Union officials, as they engage with China during events like the EU-China summit held on 29 June, reflect and honor the views of European citizens as regards human rights. By doing so they will be moving the world toward a future where the Chinese people can truly join the international community.

Tiananmen's legacy: after 26 years, participants still in prison for human rights

AsiaNews (03.06.2015) – Twenty-six years ago, during the night between 3 and 4 June 1989, the People's "Liberation" Army terminated a movement of about a million students and workers who occupied Tiananmen Square for over a month, demanding greater democracy and less corruption among the members of the Chinese Communist Party.

According to the most credible estimates, from 200 to 2,000 people were gunned down or crushed by army tanks. Tens of thousands of people were arrested in the following days and convicted as "counter-revolutionaries" because they had attacked the party's hegemony.

Since then, the authorities have continuously defined the crackdown as "a lesser evil", necessary to ensure China's subsequent economic development. However, the wounds opened at the time have not healed. First, the demands made by the young protesters in

Tiananmen Square are still alive. Xi Jinping's fight against corruption is evidence of that. Second, year after year, the victims' relatives continue to demand a review of the decision that led to the bloody intervention.

In particular, the Tiananmen Mothers want the names of those behind the decision to crack down and a trial to remove the counterrevolutionary label pinned on the movement. For the Mothers, the protest movement was instead patriotic, and the young people who died sacrificed themselves for the good of the country. However, China's government and ruling party will have none of that. In fact, every time the anniversary comes around, victims' relatives are rounded up, shipped outside of Beijing and prevented from communicating.

Still, this year, the Tiananmen Mothers have issued again a message, calling for a review of what happened and an exemplary condemnation of the perpetrators of "historical crimes". This year they cited Prime Minister Li Keqiang who called on Japan to take on the "historical responsibility" for what happened during its occupation of China.

"By the same logic," the group said, "shouldn't today's Chinese leaders bear responsibility for the series of crimes, manmade famine and slaughter, perpetrated in their own country by China's leaders at the time: Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping?"

For this reason, the Mothers want China to commemorate the deaths of people during the 1958-1961 famine, the 1966-1976 Cultural Revolution and the Tiananmen crackdown, noting that leaders "cannot impose a forced amnesia".

That Tiananmen is still an open wound for China is seen in the fact that many of those who took part in the protest so many years ago became involved in civil society groups, only to find themselves in prison, pointlessly silenced so that their experience be in vain.

China Human Rights Defenders (CHRD) has prepared report with a list with the names of scores of people who took part in the Tiananmen movement 26 years ago. Many are still in imprisoned for their commitment to human rights and democracy. Many others, after what they went through in Tiananmen, have continued the non-violent struggle they began in 1989, with more becoming activists in various areas of civil society. Here is the CHRD's report and list.

On the 26th anniversary of the Chinese government's bloody suppression of the 1989 pro-democracy demonstrations, scores of individuals who took part in the movement are detained or in prison today for their continuing efforts to push for human rights protections and democratic reforms. Several activists and lawyers seized last year for commemorating the Tiananmen Massacre are still detained and have been subjected to torture or prolonged pre-trial detention. Since last week, more activists, including 1989 participants, have been detained, put under house arrest, or visited by police who issued warnings against any activities marking the 26th anniversary of Tiananmen. The suppression of all these individuals is an indication of the government's fear of a mass pro-democracy movement emerging inside China.

Among those 1989 participants now behind bars are some of the most prominent and influential members of China's civil society, who have actively promoted human rights, democracy, and rule-of-law reforms since 1989. They played leadership roles or joined the protests in 1989 as young students, professors, journalists, writers, or factory workers. Some of them served previous prison terms for their role in the movement, and all of them resumed their pro-democracy and rights advocacy activities after being released. They persisted in their pursuits despite police monitoring, harassment, and restrictions on their movements and communications.

As these cases (see below) and other cases documented by CHRD reflect, the Chinese government has shown a tendency to severely persecute those involved in the 1989 movement. Relative to measures taken against other activists, punishments for June Fourth participants have tended to be harsher; many leading activists from the 1989 era have served lengthy or multiple prison sentences.

The cases listed below, far from being exhaustive, highlight former 1989 participants who are currently imprisoned or detained for their post-1989 activities promoting human rights and democracy. (For more case details, click on the links to go to CHRD's website.)

Former 1989 participants in prison (in chronological order of their imprisonment):

- Historian and writer **Yang Tongyan** has been serving a 12-year sentence since 2006 for his political activism. He participated in the 1989 pro-democracy movement and was jailed from 1990 to 2000 on "counterrevolutionary" charges for opposing the military crackdown;
- China Democracy Party (CDP) member **Xie Changfa** was sentenced to 13 years imprisonment in 2009 for his work with the party. He spent two years in a Re-education through Labor camp for giving speeches at secondary schools in Hunan in support of the 1989 movement;
- Nobel Peace Prize winner **Liu Xiaobo** has been serving an 11-year sentence since 2009 for his leading role in the "Charter 08" campaign. A university lecturer in 1989, he was jailed for 18 months for his role in the movement;
- Student leader **Zhou Yongjun** has been serving a nine-year sentence since 2010. He was held in prison until 1993 for his role in the 1989 movement;
- China Democracy Party member **Liu Xianbin** was sentenced to 10 years imprisonment in 2011 for his human rights advocacy. He served 30 months in prison for participating in the 1989 movement and another 10 years (1999-2009) for his activism;
- Sichuan activist **Chen Wei** has been serving a nine-year sentence since 2011 for his human rights activism. A student in 1989, he was imprisoned after the demonstrations and released in 1991;
- Pro-democracy activist **Chen Xi** was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment in 2011 for leading local efforts to promote human rights in Guizhou Province. He was a political cadre at a university and served a three-year sentence for participating in the 1989 movement;
- Democracy activist and writer **Zhu Yufu** was sentenced in 2012 to seven years in prison for his persistent advocacy for democracy and human rights. He took part in the 1989 movement while working in Hangzhou;
- Sichuan dissident and poet **Li Bifeng** was sentenced to 10 years in 2012 for his activism. He served five years in prison on charges of "counterrevolutionary propaganda and incitement" for his role in the protests;
- Pro-democracy activist **Zhang Lin** was sentenced to 42 months in prison in 2014 for his rights activism. He spent two years in prison for participating in the 1989 pro-democracy movement;
- Activist **Zhao Changqing** was sentenced 30-months in prison in 2014 for his active role in the "New Citizens' Movement." Zhao spent four months in prison for his role as a student leader in the protests in Tiananmen Square. He was jailed two more times for his pro-democracy activities (in 1997 and 2002) on charges of "inciting subversion of state power," for three and five years, respectively; and
- Veteran journalist **Gao Yu** was sentenced to seven years in prison in April 2015. She is one of several individuals who have faced criminal punishments after the crackdown surrounding the 25th anniversary of June 4th (see more below). Gao joined the 1989 protests and criticized the government suppression through her writings, and as a result was detained twice and served six years in prison. She was barred from publishing in China after her past releases.

Former 1989 participants in detention:

- Guangzhou activist **Guo Feixiong** (aka Yang Maodong) was put on trial in November 2014 on a charge of “gathering a crowd to disrupt order of a public place,” but no verdict has been announced. He has been in custody since August 2013 for organizing protests for press freedom in front of the Southern Weekly. Guo took part in the 1989 movement as a student in Shanghai and previously served jail time for his political activism;
- Buddhist monk **Sheng Guan** (aka Xu Zhiqiang) was put on trial on a charge of “inciting subversion of state power” in April 2015. He was detained in May 2014 for giving a lecture in which he talked about rights and democracy issues. Xu worked at a state-owned enterprise in 1989 and helped found the Xi’an Workers Autonomous Federation, and was jailed for a year for his participation in the movement;
- Guangzhou-based activist **Tang Jingling** is scheduled to be tried on charges of “inciting subversion of state power” on June 19. He was detained in May 2014 for his role in the Non-violent Citizens’ Disobedience Movement. He had been stripped of his license to practice law for taking on “sensitive” cases. Tang participated in the 1989 movement as a student;
- Henan authorities charged activist **Yu Shiwen** in April 2015 with “creating a disturbance” for holding a memorial for June Fourth victims in early 2014. He and his now-wife, Chen Wei, were imprisoned for their roles as student leaders in 1989;
- Beijing-based human rights lawyer **Pu Zhiqiang** was indicted in May 2015 for “inciting ethnic hatred” and “creating a disturbance,” charges stemming from his posts on social media. A law student in 1989, Pu was a leader in the 1989 pro-democracy demonstrations, and took part in the hunger strike in Tiananmen Square. The university in Beijing disciplined him in 1989, and he has since provided support to the Tiananmen Mothers;
- Hangzhou police arrested China Democracy Party members **Chen Shuqing** and **Lü Gengsong** on charges of “subversion of state power” in September 2014 for their rights defense work, including activities related to the banned CDP. In 1989, Chen was a student at Hangzhou University and participated in the movement, and Lü was a teacher in Hangzhou who was dismissed in 1993 for supporting the democracy movement. Both have often been detained or imprisoned since 1989;
- In April, Sichuan police arrested activist **Chen Yunfei** on charges of “inciting subversion of state power” and “creating a disturbance” for organizing a memorial to June Fourth victims this spring. Chen participated in the 1989 movement as a student at the China Agricultural University in Beijing; and
- Unidentified men seized **Liu Shaoming** from his home in Guangzhou on May 29, and he has not been heard from since. Liu went from Jiangsu Province to Beijing to take part in the 1989 demonstrations and was jailed for a year for “counterrevolutionary propaganda and incitement.” In recent years, he has actively promoted workers’ rights in China’s southern industrial regions and, as a result, has been frequently harassed by police.

Of the individuals detained during the crackdown around the 25th anniversary of the Tiananmen Massacre a year ago, 13 remain in custody. Five have been put on trial, including **Gao Yu**, **Sheng Guan**, **Huang Fangmei**, and housing rights activists **Jia Lingmin** and **Liu Diwei**. Five others have been indicted, including **Yu Shiwen**, **Pu Zhiqiang**, and **Tang Jingling**, and his associates **Wang Qingying** and **Yuan Xinting**. A further two have been formally arrested—freelance journalist **Jiang Lijun** and New Citizens’ Movement activist **Zhang Kun**. Jiang is in a Liaoning detention center, and authorities reportedly moved Zhang to a psychiatric hospital in Jiangsu Province, where his lawyers were blocked from visiting him in March 2015.

This year, the United Nations Committee Against Torture (CAT) is reviewing China's compliance with the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. China ratified the Convention in 1988, one year before the Tiananmen Massacre.

CAT has since repeatedly raised the issue of accountability over the government's excessive use of force, torture, and other ill-treatment of Chinese citizens in 1989. Under the Convention, it is imperative that the Chinese government end its policy of denial and deception regarding the violent suppression of the pro-democracy demonstrations. The government has an obligation under Articles 12, 13, and 14 of the Convention to promptly and impartially investigate allegations of torture, and provide state compensation to victims of torture.

On this 26th Tiananmen anniversary, CHRD reiterates its calls on the Chinese government

1. to release anyone who remains in prison for participating in the 1989 protests, including **Miao Deshun**, the only confirmed individual still in prison for offenses that occurred around June Fourth (his current situation remains unclear and unconfirmed by the government);
2. release individuals who have been detained for organizing activities or expressing views to memorialize June Fourth around its 25th anniversary in 2014 and in the days leading up to this year's anniversary;
3. and free all 1989 participants detained or imprisoned for their ongoing activism, as well as all other prisoners of conscience in China.

Chinese authorities must end the ongoing suppression of families, survivors, and supporters who demand accountability for the human rights abuses committed in 1989. In addition, the government must end its targeted persecution of members of civil society who participated in the 1989 movement.

Continued crackdown on rights advocates & organizations, including women activists

(26.03.2015) - Chinese security agents raided the offices of a leading human rights organization, according to its employees, the latest sign of the authorities' mounting hostility toward nongovernmental groups, especially those that receive foreign funding or promote civic activism.

Employees say about two dozen police officers on Tuesday raided the [Beijing Yirenping Center](#), which champions gender equality and employs litigation to fight discrimination against people with H.I.V., hepatitis and physical disabilities. Lu Jun, a founder of the group, said the raid was probably related to the group's efforts to publicize the recent detentions of five female activists that have prompted international criticism.

The activists, who all have ties to Yirenping, had planned [to hand out stickers and leaflets](#) in Chinese cities to highlight the problem of groping of women on public transportation. They were taken into custody just ahead of International Women's Day and are being held on suspicion of "picking quarrels and provoking troubles," a charge that has been used with increasing frequency against those the government considers potential threats to social stability.

Mr. Lu said the authorities carted away files, computers and laptops, and briefly detained one of the center's employees before changing the locks on the doors.

"We can't even get into the offices, and the police won't give us any information," said Mr. Lu, speaking from New York, where he is a visiting scholar at the U.S.-Asia Law Institute at New York University. He said the center's five employees, fearing for their safety, had left the Chinese capital.

It was unclear if the authorities intended to close the offices for good.

Since President Xi Jinping came to power more than two years ago, scores of rights defenders have been jailed as part of a crackdown on social activism and political dissent.

But the detention of the five activists — young, social-media-savvy idealists — has struck a chord among women's rights advocates around the world, prompting rallies, petition drives and support from Western diplomats. Samantha Power, the United States ambassador to the United Nations, has been especially vocal about the case, demanding on Twitter that the Chinese government [free the women](#).

Lawyers for the detained women said some of them had been mistreated and subjected to lengthy interrogations and sleep deprivation. One woman, Wang Rongrong, [has been denied critical hepatitis medication](#) and has been spitting up blood, her lawyer said.

The Beijing Public Security Bureau did not respond to requests for comment, and the Foreign Ministry has dismissed expressions of concern from overseas. "No one has the right to ask [China](#) to release relevant persons, so we hope that relevant people will stop interfering in [China](#)'s judicial sovereignty in such a manner," Hua Chunying, the spokeswoman for the ministry, said during a regular news conference on Wednesday.

Communist Party leaders have long been suspicious of independent organizations, but under Mr. Xi, the authorities have come to view such groups as potential conduits for subversion — with help from those they perceive as China's enemies in the West. "Even though these organizations have tried to stay within the red lines of normally tolerated activism, the government still sees them as fomenting counterrevolution," said Maya Wang, a researcher at Human Rights Watch in Hong Kong.

In recent months, the authorities have [closed a network](#) of rural lending libraries, harassed labor advocates and dismantled a well-regarded think tank, the Transition Institute, [detaining several of its employees](#). "A lot of NGOs are facing tough times right now," said Anthony J. Spires, associate director of the Center for Civil Society Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. "The government is intent on shutting down perceived troublemakers."

Most at risk are groups that rely on foreign support, which describes the vast majority of Chinese organizations dedicated to social justice. Mr. Lu said it was nearly impossible these days to raise money domestically despite the group's record of accomplishment.

U.N., U.S. complicit in worldwide war on women

WND (14.03.2015) <http://www.wnd.com/2015/03/charge-u-n-u-s-complicit-in-worldwide-war-on-women/> – The United Nations and the Obama administration are turning a blind eye as millions of girls in China and India are murdered, and women are forced to undergo abortions and sterilizations.

A group of women's-rights activists made that explosive accusation Friday at a standing-room-only event, as the U.N. marks the 20th anniversary of the World Conference on Women.

"China is so powerful in the United Nations no one wants to offend them, so they are

willing to turn a blind eye to the biggest women's-rights issue in the world today – forced abortions in China," [Reggie Littlejohn, president of Women's Rights Without Frontiers](#) told WND.

The Family Research Council, Population Research Institute and the Catholic Family and Research Institute joined Littlejohn to draw attention to the widespread incidence of forced abortion, forced sterilization and outright murder of female infants in China and India.

[A U.N. expert estimates](#) up to 200 million women are missing in the world today due to 'gendercide,' the selective abortion, abandonment or fatal neglect of baby girls.

"The words, 'it's a girl,' are the deadliest words on Earth when said at the birth of a child" in China and India, Littlejohn said.

The Chinese Communist Party boasts its "One-Child Policy" has "prevented" 400 million lives – a number greater than the entire population of the United States and Canada. The Party's use of forced abortion is well documented and is compounded by the widespread use of sex-selective abortions by parents seeking to have a male child. When couples are restricted to one child, women are often pressured by husbands and in-laws to only give birth to a boy.

It's [reported](#) that China has 13 million abortions per year – that's 35,000 per day and 1,485 per hour. While China's population is four times greater than that of the U.S., the abortion rate is 13 times higher.

The U.S. is complicit with forced abortions in China through funding of the U.N. Population Fund (UNFPA), Littlejohn charged.

"In China, the UNFPA and International Planned Parenthood have been working hand in hand with the Chinese Communist Party on family planning, which has been found to be coercive," she said.

Previous administrations cut funding for UNFPA because of its complicity with forced abortion and forced family planning in China.

"One of the first things President Obama did on coming into office was to restore that funding," noted Littlejohn.

"Hillary Clinton has come out strongly opposing forced abortion and forced sterilization in China on one hand, and on the other hand she has said we're not going to let human rights get in the way of our trade relations," Littlejohn said.

President Clinton's administration was the first to de-link human rights from trade relations with China.

"Since then, human rights in China has plummeted to appalling depths. I believe a lot of the responsibility for the horrific condition of human rights in China has to do with that delinking that happened in the Clinton administration," charged Littlejohn.

[WND reported](#) how Beijing used pro-“free trade” advisers inside the Clinton administration to persuade President Clinton to ignore human-rights abuses in China and lay the foundation for wholesale U.S. investment in the communist nation. The Clinton family has received millions of dollars in speaking fees and donations to the family foundation from [companies](#) doing business in or [tied to China](#).

The U.N. has been marking the 20th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women this week. Dignitaries from around the world attended that conference in Beijing 20 years ago, including most notably Hillary Clinton. Events at U.N. headquarters in New York this month are discussing what progress has been made on the status of women.

China’s one child policy continues to destroy lives, despite reports

Women’s Rights Without Frontiers

<http://www.womensrightswithoutfrontiers.org/blog/?p=1914> - On January 1, 2014, the Chinese Communist Party tweaked the One Child Policy, allowing couples in which either parent is an only child to have a second child. This minor exception has been widely and wrongfully reported as an “easing” or “relaxation” of the One Child Policy. One non-profit organization recently released a statement that they “would like to celebrate and rejoice” in the “victory” that additional babies have been born under the most recent exception. Their statement – and the reports published in the mainstream media – do not mention the fact that the Chinese Communist Party has made no promise whatsoever to end coercive birth control. To the contrary, on January 28, 2015, Chinese Communist Party news organ Chinadaily.com stated, “National Health and Family Planning Commission officials said in November [2014] that China currently has no plans to suspend or further relax its One-Child Policy.” “Shanghai Couples Urged to have 2nd Children” 1/28/15 http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-01/28/content_19424074.htm

At an October 2014 event concerning the One Child Policy co-hosted by The Heritage Foundation and Women’s Rights Without Frontiers, blind activist Chen Guangcheng described a “war zone” caused by brutal family planning abuses: “In today’s China, under the Communist rule, the government can put their hand into your body, grab your baby out of your womb, and kill your baby in your face.” “They Will Kill Your Baby in Your Face – Chinese Activist Chen Guangcheng” 11/4/14 <http://www.womensrightswithoutfrontiers.org/blog/?p=1863>. At the same event, Cong. Chris Smith called the one-child policy, “the most egregious, vicious attack on women ever. China’s one-child policy announced in 1979 is state-sponsored violence against women and children – including and especially the girl child – and constitutes massive crimes against humanity.” 400 Million Lives “Prevented” through the One Child Policy, Chinese Official Says 10/10/14 <http://cnsnews.com/news/article/penny-starr/400-million-lives-prevented-through-one-child-policy-chinese-official-says>

Reggie Littlejohn, president of Women’s Rights Without Frontiers, stated, “The coercive enforcement of the One Child Policy continues unabated, destroying women, children, whole families – and indeed, the fabric of Chinese society. It constitutes the greatest women’s rights violation on the face of the earth and in the history of the world. Whether you are pro-life or pro-choice, no one supports forced abortion, because it is not a choice. The One Child Policy does not need to be ‘eased.’ It needs to be abolished.”

There has been a tragic rise in murder and suicide associated with the crushing “social compensation fees,” which can cost up to fourteen times a person’s annual salary, an amount the vast majority of Chinese citizens cannot afford. If the parents are unable to

pay these "terror fines," their children will be denied "hukou," or household registration. Without hukou, children are ineligible for healthcare or education. They become illegal aliens in their own land. "Chinese Mother, fined \$54,200 for Flouting One-child Policy, Sues Police." <http://www.voanews.com/content/reu-chinese-mother-fined-54200-one-child-policy-sues/1803992.html> 12/5/13

Here are some of the reported tragedies caused by the One Child Policy. Most abuses suffered under the One Child Policy are never reported in the west.

- In China's Guangxi Region, a man stabbed to death two government workers after they told him he could not register his fourth child because he did not pay the "social compensation fee." He injured four other workers, including severing the hand of one. "Crazed Chinese father-of-four stabs two government officials to death over one child policy." <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2376771/Chinese-father-kills-1-child-policy-officials-registering-4th-child.html> 7/24/13. (Although this incident happened before August 1, 2013, it happened so close to the deadline that it was not included in our 2013 report, so we have included it here.)
- In Hunan Province, a husband demanded compensation from the Chinese government, claiming that his wife, Gong Qifeng, has suffered from schizophrenia and violent behavior since she was forcibly aborted at seven months in November, 2011. "Forced abortion at 7 Months – The Horror of China's One Child Policy Sparks Further Outrage." <http://www.christianpost.com/news/forced-abortion-at-7-months-the-horror-of-chinas-one-child-policy-sparks-further-outrage-101764/> 8/7/13; "Chinese couple seeks damages for forced abortion." <http://www.worldmag.com/2014/01/chinese-couple-seeks-damages-for-forced-abortion/> 1/10/14
- In Shandong Province, Liu Xinwen was dragged out of her home in the middle of the night by 20 officials, who kicked down her door and restrained her husband. They forcibly aborted her, six months pregnant. "China Couple Speak of 'Forced Abortion.'" <http://news.sky.com/story/1150016/china-couple-speak-of-forced-abortion/> 10/4/13
- Ai Guangdong, a farmer in Hebei Province, killed himself by drinking pesticide during a dispute with family planning officials over fines for his over-quota children. Since the farmer did not have money to pay the fines, family planning officials confiscated 3.5 tons of corn, the entire savings of the family. Ai Guangdong then visited the home of the Party Chief to dispute this action. Finally the farmer drank pesticide at the home of the Party Chief, and promptly died. "Farmer drinks poison after being fined for violations of family planning policy." <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/830847.shtml> 12/8/13
- In Xinjiang Province, four Uyghur women were forcibly aborted, one of them at nine months. As ethnic minorities, Uyghurs are supposedly exempt from the One Child Policy. This is not the case. While they may have more than one child, they are nevertheless subject to coercive termination of out-of-plan pregnancies. "Four Uyghur Women Forced to Abort Their Babies in Zinjiang." <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/abortion-12302013050902.html>; "Xinjiang authorities try to force six women to abort for violating one-child policy." <http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Xinjiang-authorities-try-to-force-six-women-to-abort-for-violating-one-child-policy-29925.html>. 12/30/13

- An obstetrician in Shaanxi province, Zhang Shuxia, was convicted of trafficking seven infants, after she had convinced their parents that the infants were seriously ill or deceased. She was given a suspended death sentence. It has been estimated that 70,000 children a year are trafficked in China. The doctor sold boys at a premium, costing more than twice as much as girls. "Obstetrician convicted in Chinese baby-trafficking case." <http://www.wnd.com/2014/01/obstetrician-convicted-in-chinese-baby-trafficking-case/> 1/16/14; "Chinese doctor sentenced to death for selling babies." <http://nypost.com/2014/01/14/chinese-doctor-sentenced-to-death-for-selling-babies/> 1/14/14
- In Guizhou Province, a farmer and father of four committed suicide because he could not afford to pay the fines to enroll his children in school. His wife stated, "He said to me before he cut his wrists, 'What did we bring them into the world for, to be as dumb as cattle? I cannot see my children grow up uneducated.'" After his death, the authorities provided the family with a new house and money to educate the children. "Chinese father of four commits suicide over one-child policy fines so his children can go to school." <http://www.lifesitenews.com/news/chinese-father-of-four-commits-suicide-over-one-child-policy-fines-so-his-c>. 5/26/14

These atrocities continue to this day.

The minor modification of the policy that took place on January 1, 2014: 1) does not affect a large percentage of couples in China; 2) retains the dreaded "birth intervals" between children (if a woman gets pregnant before the interval has lapsed, she may be subject to forced abortion); and 3) makes no promise to end the coercive enforcement of the Policy.

To proclaim "victory" under these circumstances is entirely unwarranted and may mislead many into thinking that the One Child Policy is a thing of the past. Littlejohn stated, "It is a continuing heartache to me when people celebrate minor revisions in the One Child Policy. I think of all the women and babies suffering and dying now from forced abortions. It is hard to lead a movement to end forced abortion in China when people think it has already ended. So long as forced abortion and sterilization continue in China we must fight it. This is a time to increase pressure for change, not to release it.

In China, civic groups' freedom, and followers, are vanishing

New York Times (26.02.2015) http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/27/world/asia/in-china-civic-groups-freedom-and-followers-are-vanishing.html?_r=1 -First, the police took away the think tank's former graphic designer, then the young man who organized seminars, and eventually its founder. Another employee fled [China](#)'s capital, fearing he would be forced to testify against his colleagues in rigged trials.

"The anxiety is overwhelming, not knowing if they are coming for you," said the employee, Yang Zili, a researcher at the Transition Institute of Social and Economic Research in Beijing, who has been in hiding since November. "It's frightening because as they disappear, one friend after another, the police are not following any law. They just do as they please."

These are perilous days for independent civic groups in [China](#), especially those that take on politically contentious causes like workers' rights, legal advocacy and discrimination against people with AIDS. Such groups have long struggled to survive inside China's ill-defined, shifting margins of official tolerance, but they have served as havens for socially committed citizens.

Under President [Xi Jinping](#), however, the Communist Party has forcefully [narrowed the bounds of accepted activity](#), setting off fears that these pockets of greater openness in China's generally restrictive political landscape may soon disappear.

In recent months the government has moved against several groups, including one that fights discrimination against people with hepatitis B and [even a volunteer network of 22 rural libraries](#).

"The pressure on grass-roots organizations has never been this intense," said Zhang Zhiru, who runs a labor rights group in the southern manufacturing city of Shenzhen in Guangdong Province. In the past year, his car has been vandalized, and police harassment has forced his organization to move more than 10 times. In December, the last of his five employees quit.

Regulations that took effect last month in Guangzhou, a city in southern China, have intensified scrutiny of nonprofit organizations that receive foreign donations, and the central government has proposed legislation to tighten controls on foreign nongovernment organizations active in China, according to the state-run [Xinhua news agency](#). With Chinese philanthropists wary of upsetting the authorities, funding to Mr. Zhang's organization, the [Shenzhen Chunfeng Labor Dispute Service Center](#), has dried up, and even Chinese crowdfunding websites refuse to list it.

"The government just wants us to disappear," Mr. Zhang said.

The campaign has focused on groups deemed sanctuaries for dissent. From its cramped offices in the university district of northwest Beijing, the Transition Institute championed a mix of free market economics and support for the downtrodden, conducting research on the exploitation of taxi drivers, school policies that shortchange rural children and the environmental costs of the massive [Three Gorges Dam](#) on the Yangtze River. But the institute also attracted advocates of democratic reform, some of whom had prior run-ins with the authorities.

"We always hoped to eke out survival in tough circumstances," said Mr. Yang, 43, the researcher now in hiding, who [spent eight years in prison](#) for holding informal discussions with a group of friends about multiparty elections and a free press. "But the more independent NGOs," he added, referring to nongovernmental organizations, "especially the ones that criticize government policies or don't help the government's image, have encountered a policy of containment, even destruction."

Before its employees began vanishing, the Transition Institute was part of an undergrowth of privately funded organizations that spread despite the government's ambivalence toward independent, civil society groups. Guo Yushan, an activist and economist from rural eastern China, established the institute in 2007 after parting ways with [a legal rights advocate, Xu Zhiyong](#), who embraced a bolder approach to campaigning for citizens' rights.

"You can make your arguments online, or write articles criticizing the government, but once you mobilize people you're going to have some serious problems," Mr. Guo said in an interview shortly after [Mr. Xu was arrested](#) in the summer of 2013 for organizing street protests against official corruption.

Mr. Guo's new organization avoided street activism. Instead, it aimed to give citizens the expertise and arguments to win a bigger say in government policy, a process that Mr. Guo argued would help China move peacefully toward democracy. He and his team of researchers picked subjects that brought into focus questions about the reach of the state — such as tax policy — and then spread their findings through meetings, reports and media interviews.

The authorities closely monitored the institute's work, especially the lectures and conferences it organized. "Sometimes they would force us to limit the number of attendees, and sometimes they would just tell us to cancel an event at the last minute," Mr. Yang said.

The Communist Party says charities and other grass-roots organizations can offer much-needed social services in a nation strained by poverty and urbanization, and the number of such organizations has grown. But the party is also wary of citizen activism that it cannot control, and groups must be sponsored by a state entity before registering as nonprofits. Like many others, the Transition Institute instead registered as a private business.

The furtive relationship that many Chinese grass-roots organizations have with the government makes it difficult to count just how many there are, said [Anthony J. Spires](#), an associate professor at the [Chinese University of Hong Kong](#) who studies China's nongovernment organizations. He estimated there were 2,500 to 3,000, excluding those that are essentially puppets run by the government.

"They help fill a need in Chinese society that the government recognizes," he said. But that tolerance, he added, "can be taken away at a moment's notice."

The Transition Institute was especially vulnerable, partly because a large share of its annual budget of \$480,000 to \$650,000 has come from overseas foundations, according to former employees, who would not specify the sources, fearing it might hurt other groups that receive donations from abroad. Such foreign links are viewed with suspicion by the party authorities who increasingly consider international foundations to be [agents of political subversion](#).

The institute's troubles mounted in 2012, after Mr. Guo helped the blind legal advocate [Chen Guangcheng escape from house arrest](#) in rural Shandong Province. Mr. Chen later found refuge in the United States Embassy in Beijing, prompting a diplomatic crisis and a deluge of international news media attention. Not long after [Mr. Chen departed](#) for the United States, the police put Mr. Guo himself under house arrest for 81 days.

The institute resumed its research, but whenever it convened a meeting or event, the police visited and issued warnings. In July 2013, officials from the civil affairs department, which oversees nongovernment organizations, raided the institute's offices, seized hundreds of copies of research reports and accused the institute of operating illegally.

Early last year, Mr. Guo resigned as head of the Transition Institute. His wife, Pan Haixia, said he told her that security officials had promised in exchange to allow the institute to register as a nonprofit and continue its research, provided it refrained from organizing meetings or other events that could become a magnet for protests.

But in early October, the police [detained a former intern, Ling Lisha](#), for photocopying leaflets supporting the pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong and discovered that she had asked the copy shop for a receipt under the name of the institute.

Days later, on Oct. 9, just before 2 a.m., more than a dozen police officers and security agents rushed into Mr. Guo's apartment on the outskirts of the capital. They grabbed personal computers, an iPad and mobile phones, and [led Mr. Guo away](#). The police also raided the institute's offices three times that month, taking away more material each time an employee was detained.

Ms. Pan said she received a notice last month saying her husband had been formally arrested on the charge of ["running an illegal business."](#) The lawyer she hired to represent him, Xia Lin, has also been detained, on charges that remain unclear. At least five others associated with the institute had been detained as well; four were later released, and one, He Zhengjun, the institute's office manager, has also been charged with running an illegal business.

Calls and faxed requests for comment to the [Beijing Public Security Bureau](#) went unanswered.

With his colleagues disappearing one by one, [Mr. Yang decided to go underground](#). He was in the institute office one morning in late November when a police officer called and told him to go to a station for questioning. Instead, Mr. Yang left an Internet message for his wife, shut off his cellphone, and slipped away, taking only the clothes on his back. "It was a spur-of-the-moment decision," he said in an interview.

Meeting with a reporter at a location several hours' drive from Beijing, he said he missed his wife and 4-year-old son, and visibly nervous, he talked about his fear of being returned to prison.

Mr. Yang said he would turn himself in should a warrant be issued for his arrest, but he was not interested in cooperating with what he described as an extralegal persecution of his colleagues.

"I still don't understand what we did wrong," he said. "We were just trying to help improve China."

China executes father and daughter cult members for murdering woman in McDonald's

The Independent (02.02.2015) <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/china-executes-father-and-daughter-cult-members-for-murdering-woman-in-mcdonalds-10017254.html> -

China has executed two members of what authorities called an "evil cult" for beating a woman to death in a McDonald's restaurant.

The deaths of Zhang Lidong and his daughter, Zhang Fan, were announced on Monday by the Yantai Intermediate People's Court in the eastern province of Shandong.

A spokesperson said the Supreme People's Court approved the death penalty after a case review because the crimes were "extremely serious, their means brutal and the incident brought an extremely bad social effect".

The pair were reportedly trying to recruit their victim for the "Church of the Almighty God" group, known in Chinese as Quannengshen, in May last year when the attack started.

The 35-year-old woman, Wu Shuoyan, had refused to give her phone number to the group in the town of Zhaoyuan.

Zhang Fan and her accomplice, Lyu Yingchun, then claimed Wu was possessed by an "evil spirit," and Zhang used a chair to bludgeon her head before stamping on her face, while inciting other cult members to join the attack, China's Xinhua news agency reported.

Her father allegedly beat the victim so hard with a restaurant mop that the handle snapped, while group members stopped McDonald's staff intervening or calling the police. Wu died at the scene.

An online video emerged shortly afterwards showing a man resembling Zhang Lidong hitting an unseen person with a mop, shouting "Damn you, devil! Go to hell!" as a woman yelled "Kill her! Beat her to death!"

Zhang Lidong reportedly said in a subsequent interview that he believed Wu was a demon and that "we had to destroy her".

Church of the Almighty God followers believe that Jesus was resurrected as Yang Xiangbin, the wife of the sect's founder, Zhao Weishan, also known as Xu Wenshan. The couple fled to the United States in 2000.

The anti-Communist sect, established in the 1990s in central Henan Province, claims to have millions of followers. Since the murder, which sparked public outrage, Chinese authorities have reportedly detained more than a thousand Church of the Almighty God members.

In 2012, China launched a crackdown on the group, which called for a "decisive battle" to slay the "Red Dragon" Communist Party, and preached that the world would end that year.

Zhang Lidong and Zhang Fan were known as particularly avid followers, authorities claimed, holding hundreds of rallies in Zhaoyuan, printing leaflets and spreading articles online over five years.

They were among five cult members tried on murder charges in August.

Lyu was given a life sentence by Shandong's Yantai Intermediate People's Court for "intentional homicide and undermining law enforcement using heresy" as well as being "deprived of political rights for life" for illegal "cult activities".

Zhang Hang and Zhang Qiaolian, two other cult members who were relatives of the executed pair, were sentenced to ten and seven years in prison respectively.

The Church of the Almighty God is banned in China, along with other spiritual groups labelled "cults" by authorities.

Chinese law defines a cult as "an illegal organisation that tries to control people by deifying the sect leader, deludes members under the guise of religion, and engages in activities that harm society", according to state media.

China is thought to carry out the most executions of any country in the world annually. Although the actual number of deaths is a state secret, estimates range between 2,000 and 4,000 a year.

In its 2015 report, Human Rights Watch said that although the national constitution guarantees freedom of religion, the government restricts religious practices to officially approved mosques, churches, temples, and monasteries organised by five officially recognised religious groups.

"Any religious activity not considered by the state to be "normal" is prohibited," the report says, with activities, publications and financial records of all bodies strictly controlled.

"The government classifies many religious groups outside of its control as 'evil cults'."

Thousands of alleged cult members have been arrested in the last year.

On the eve of the 3rd Summit of Central and Eastern Europeans Countries with China, several European citizens were illegally detained in Belgrade

(16.12.2014) - Nine Bulgarians (including seven Bulgarian citizens and two Russian citizens with permanent residence in Bulgaria) were taken by police from the Big Hostel in Belgrade at 22:00 on Sunday night. The nine Bulgarians travelled to Belgrade 14th December 2014 to raise the issue of human rights violations in China, on occasion of the third meeting of heads of government of China and Central and Eastern European Countries.

During the following 17 hours, police continued to deny that the Bulgarians were detained. However according to information from the Bulgarian Embassy in Belgrade, the nine remain in detention outside Belgrade.

On Sunday December 14th 2014, two Croatians and one Slovenian Falun Gong practitioners were threatened with prosecution if they entered Serbia.

On Monday December 15th 2014, a Slovakian citizen and Finnish citizen were also detained. The Finnish citizen, Ms. Lan Lihua, was born in China and was given asylum in Finland. She had suffered brutal persecution in China before she fled.

On Monday December 15th 2014, two Finish activists were illegally deported from Belgrade Airport.

All of these people belong to the Falun Gong movement, a peaceful Chinese traditional meditation rooted in Chinese culture. They voluntarily work on human rights issue in China in particular on the illegal persecution of Falun Gong practitioners in China.

According to Dejan Markovic, the contact person of Falun Gong practitioners in Serbia, he applied for official permission from the local authorities to hold peaceful activities between December 15th and 18th 2014 but the authorities banned the activities citing them as illegal.

Falun Gong practitioners have sent letters to the Prime Ministers from the sixteen countries in Central and Eastern Europe participating at the summit, asking them to raise the issues of human rights violations in China during the meeting with their Chinese counterparts.

The group “Lawyers’ Committee for Human Rights (YUCOM) in Serbia” issued a statement condemning the Serbian authorities actions against the Falun Gong practitioners. YUCOM was also concerned for the wellbeing of the practitioners given that the Chinese government views them as a threat. YUCOM sent an official note to Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Justice.

On December 12th 2013, the European Parliament adopted an urgency resolution on systematic, state-sanctioned organ harvesting of prisoners of conscience taking place in China, including large numbers of Falun Gong practitioners imprisoned for their beliefs. The European Parliament called on EU Member States to raise the issue of organ harvesting in China; publicly condemn organ transplant abuses in China, and call for the prosecution of those found to have engaged in such unethical practices(<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P7-TA-2013-0603&language=EN>).

Falun Gong practitioners in different countries in Europe call on the Serbian authorities to immediately release detained innocent Falun Gong practitioners and respect their fundamental rights; call on all the governments of European countries participating in the summit and the international communities to safeguard human rights.

Contact for detailed info and further inquiry:

Name: Dejan Markovic, Email: skile@sbb.rs, Tel: +381621122784

Eduard Kukan MEP calls on Serbia to release Falun Gong human rights activists

EP (17.12.2014) - After the detention of human rights activists from Falun Gong in Belgrade earlier this week, Eduard Kukan, Chair of the EU-Serbia Stabilisation and Association Parliamentary Committee, made the following statement:

“I am concerned about the detention of Falun Gong human rights activists in Belgrade, who came to Serbia to raise awareness about the human rights situation in China. This happened prior to the third summit of heads of government of China and Central and Eastern European Countries, which started on Tuesday this week in Belgrade.

I was informed that among the detainees were citizens of the European Union, including one Slovak national, nine citizens from Bulgaria and one from Finland. The European Parliament is committed to supporting democracy and human rights dialogues around the world, and supports the right to assembly and peaceful protests in countries of the EU, and in the countries aspiring to become EU members. Considering that Serbia is an EU candidate country, we are alarmed by the steps the Serbian authorities took in this case, and we ask for release of the human rights activists, as well as a clear explanation of the situation.”

A history of organ pillaging in China

The Slaughter: Mass Killings, Organ Harvesting, and China's Secret Solution to Its Dissident Problem

By Ethan Gutmann, Prometheus Books, 2014, 355 pages

By David Kilgour

Epoch Times (08.12.2014) <http://www.theepochtimes.com/n3/1128867-a-history-of-organ-pillaging-in-china/> - Author Ethan Gutmann worries that, in a period when 900 non-fiction words are allegedly the maximum busy people will read on topics beyond their own range of experience, his 355-page book will not obtain the wide readership the heroes, victims, and scoundrels presented throughout it deserve.

In reality, his work is as absorbing and moving as any novel; there are even 70 images for a visual age.

It is also a meticulously-researched record of repression, torture, and murder by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in more recent years, witnessed by persons directly involved, usually as survivors but also some defectors.

Gutmann deftly places the persecution of the Falun Gong, Tibetan, Uyghur, and House Christian communities in context. He focuses mainly on Falun Gong, as the group most viciously and continuously targeted since 1999, when the CCP itself estimated the number of practitioners to be 70-100 million, but each of the others receives close attention as well.

Ample space is given to speculation as to why the Party-state in Beijing risks so much, including international respect, to attack such vast groups of its own citizens. He also attempts valiantly to allow readers to reach their own conclusions, although it's difficult for this reviewer to see how any reasonable person's conclusions would differ markedly from those of Gutmann.

On the issue of organ pillaging/trafficking, we read about witnesses who received physical examinations in forced labour camps, prisons, and black jails, which were clearly aimed at assessing their organs for tissue matching. Gutmann adds importantly to the evidence David Matas and I—and many others—have compiled about the pillaging of organs from Falun Gong by documenting similar crimes done to Uyghurs, Tibetans, and House Christians.

In the appendix, he explains how he arrives at his "best estimate" that organs of 65,000 Falun Gong and "two to four thousand" Uyghurs, Tibetans or House Christians were "harvested" in the 2000-2008 period alone. Uniquely in China, no "donors" survive pillaging because all vital organs are removed to be trafficked for high prices to wealthy Chinese nationals and even higher ones to "organ tourists" from abroad.

From media reports, *The Slaughter* became an issue in the recent Taipei mayoral election. The winner, Dr. Ko Wen-je, formerly a senior surgeon at the National Taiwan University Hospital, is one of the book's heroes. In a 2008 off-the-record interview with the author, Ko told him that surgeons in one city in China had informed him that the organs for transplantation there all came from Falun Gong practitioners. Later, Ko courageously allowed the use of this revelation in the book; its publication well before election day (Nov. 29) appears to have assisted Ko to win the election overwhelmingly even if he is now banned from China.

Three other surgeons are applauded for their “Do no harm” hippocratic principles in *The Slaughter*: Francis Navarro in France, Franz Immer in Switzerland, and Dr. Jacob Lavee in Israel. Like many of us, the author respects highly the ongoing and effective international campaign by the NGO Doctors Against Forced Organ Harvesting (DAFOH) to end organ pillaging/trafficking in China. He is unimpressed by the abolition efforts to date of many other world health organizations and medical associations.

Why is The Transplantation Society (TTS), the international body created to provide ethical leadership for transplant surgeons worldwide, singled out for particular criticism?

Briefly, Dr. Huang Jiefu, formerly China’s Vice-Minister of Health, has now admitted both that prisoners constitute virtually all of China’s sources of organs for transplantation and that he personally has performed over 500 liver transplants. Huang has never once, however, conceded the obvious: Falun Gong prisoners of conscience—who are mostly sent to inhuman forced labour camps for up to three years on police signatures only—are the principal, and in some of China’s many hospitals doing transplantations, likely the sole source.

Huang announced in March 2012 that the Beijing Party-state would end organ harvesting in three to five years. Later he claimed that by 2014 it would be finished and accordingly received support from the TTS for two years during which there were no doubt many new victims among prisoners of conscience. Some of the organ recipients were undoubtedly from countries, including most democracies, which have not yet banned the use of trafficked organs by their residents.

Gutmann notes that Francis Delmonico, the TTS’s American president, indicated to DAFOH members that he did not believe there was enough evidence to establish that Chinese hospitals were harvesting organs from prisoners of conscience. Today, it has become clear to the world that organ pillaging/trafficking will continue as “business as usual” in China.

The eloquent closing words of the book are addressed to all of us:

“No Western entity possesses the moral authority to allow the (P)arty to impede the excavation of a crime against humanity in exchange for promises of medical reform. As a survival mechanism of our species, we must contextualize, evaluate, and ultimately learn from every human descent into mass murder ... The critical thing is that there is a history. And only the victims’ families can absolve the (P)arty from its weight.”

These words coming at the end of Gutmann’s clear and well-documented account of slaughter for the pillaging of transplant organs across China is the reason why the reading world should read in its entirety what comes before.

Exploiting Chinese culture to justify repression

By Aaron Rhodes

China in Perspective (11.12.2014) - China’s human rights record has deteriorated under the rule of President Xi Jinping. The persecution of religious minorities and human rights activists has worsened. The ability of Chinese to speak and associate freely has been further restricted. China has even more aggressively rejected international concerns about such problems, with official sources denying the existence of universal human rights values and claiming a special Chinese approach to human rights.

At the same time, Xi has frequently invoked ancient Chinese philosophical traditions, in particular traditional Confucianism, as legitimating the restriction of individual rights and freedoms, suggesting that the idea of human rights is “Western,” incompatible with Chinese culture. Xi told President Obama that due to differences in history and culture, “it is only natural that we have some differences on the issue of human rights.”

No one would deny that such differences exist. But while Chinese culture may emphasize the importance of obligations to groups, as opposed to individual freedom, that does not justify the denial of individual human rights. Xi is fashioning himself as a new kind of Chinese premier—modern, pragmatic, and humane. Yet this is essentially the same, threadbare “cultural relativism” argument that his predecessors have trotted out to justify repression. It is the self-serving argument of dictators around the world who hide behind selective interpretations of cultural legacies while denying their citizens political freedom.

Chinese have both embraced and rejected Confucianism over centuries. Many Chinese intellectuals have challenged an interpretation of Confucianism used to justify autocracy and human rights violations. They have found other strands in the vast wisdom of Confucius that are consistent with the principles of human rights. Others have condemned traditional Confucianism as authoritarian and sexist. In fact, traditional Chinese culture is far from monolithic; like all great cultures, its main sources are multi-dimensional and dynamic.

Regardless of its approaches toward the individual and obligations to groups and national authorities, Xi is correct that the idea of human rights cannot be found in traditional Confucianism. Indeed, neither can the idea of human rights be found in Judaism, Christianity or Islam, or probably in any other religious tradition, despite fashionable efforts to claim otherwise. Here is where the confusion lies: Religions have given mankind an appreciation of the sanctity of life and the dignity of the person. They have been the source of values by which humans have tried to overcome the cruelties of the natural world.

But human rights are something else. Human rights, as conceived by Enlightenment philosophers, are legal mechanisms to protect individuals of any cultural background from tyrannical governments. They place a protective canopy around the individual by limiting the degree to which states can infringe on freedoms that are essential to our common human nature. Indeed, derived from the tradition of natural law, they originated as a “Western” idea, the result of a rational analysis of how governments can protect human dignity. But human rights have been recognized as a universally valid principle, embraced by leaders from every world culture and enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

We may stipulate that Chinese culture emphasizes group identities, duties, relationships, and integration, but it is false to claim that those are incompatible with international human rights standards. The system of human rights protections built around the Universal Declaration is designed to accommodate different cultural values. The international human rights system does not impose cultural homogeneity on the world, but rather accommodates diversity. In the vast majority of cases, human rights do not conflict with cultures; but human rights are incompatible with political regimes that abuse basic rights and freedoms. While the powerful Chinese president says he wants to build pride in Chinese culture, he is in fact degrading that culture by ostentatiously exploiting it to justify crude political repression.

It is a virtual certainty that Chinese citizens will increasingly demand respect for their rights, demands not driven by political or ideological ambitions as much as by dreams of living in a society free of coercion. Those who resist state oppression are not a political

opposition interested in imposing some form of imported Western liberalism on Chinese society, but citizens with diverse political views who want respect for their human rights.

If President Xi would recognize this, he could save China from increasing and tragic conflicts caused by needless violations of basic freedoms. He could differentiate himself from exhausted Marxist-Leninist rhetoric and the pitiful misunderstandings of the nature of human rights that Chinese officials have so often revealed. And if China used its immense economic and political power, and the authority of its ancient culture to promote human rights around the world instead of subverting human rights as its government now does, our common future would look much brighter.

Aaron Rhodes is president of the Forum for Religious Freedom-Europe and a founder of the Freedom Rights Project, a human rights think-tank. He also serves on the board of the China Reporters Foundation. He was executive director of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights 1993-2007. His articles have appeared in the International Herald Tribune, the Christian Science Monitor, the Wall Street Journal, Die Zeit, the Huffington Post, and elsewhere. He is based in Hamburg, Germany.

Students of Uighur scholar Ilham Tohti on trial in China

BBC News (26.11.2014) <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-30205599> - Seven university students linked to jailed Uighur scholar Ilham Tohti have reportedly gone on trial in China's westernmost province of Xinjiang.

Tohti was sentenced to life imprisonment in September for separatism and fanning ethnic tensions.

The students are accused of contributing to a website run by Tohti on Uighurs.

Tohti's sentencing was condemned by human rights groups, the White House and US Secretary of State John Kerry.

The BBC's Celia Hatton in Beijing says the trial is so secret that even the Xinjiang court will not confirm the proceedings.

Tohti's lawyer, Li Fangping, told the BBC that the students contributed to Uighur Online, a now defunct website run by their teacher that promoted discussion between Uighurs and other ethnic groups in China.

The authorities, however, claim the site advocated Xinjiang's independence.

Mr Li, who was speaking on behalf of the students' lawyer so as to protect his counterpart, said the students face between five to 15 years in prison.

The students disappeared after being taken into police custody last January, then resurfaced later giving testimonials on national television incriminating Tohti.

Release demanded

The trial follows last week's rejection of a court appeal lodged by Tohti against his sentence.

Tohti was known as an outspoken critic of the Chinese government's treatment of the Uighur minority, who largely live in Xinjiang.

His conviction and sentencing sparked concern from international observers including the US. Both Mr Kerry and the White House called for Mr Tohti's immediate release.

China has been grappling with a spate of violent public attacks this year, which authorities have attributed to Uighur extremists inspired or aided by overseas terror groups.

In response it has launched a crackdown, arresting and jailing scores of people for terrorism activities. Several have been sentenced to death.

But Uighur activists say that China's strong-armed tactics in Xinjiang - including cultural and religious repression - are fuelling tensions.

China detains an American who assists North Koreans

New York Times (20.11.2014) - http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/21/world/asia/china-detains-us-aid-worker-who-assisted-north-koreans.html?_r=0 - A Korean-American aid worker who lived in [China](#) on the border with [North Korea](#) for more than a decade has been detained by the Chinese authorities, his lawyer said Thursday.

The aid worker, Peter Hahn, who is 73 and escaped from the North many years ago, is suspected of embezzlement and possession of fraudulent receipts, said the lawyer, Zhang Peihong.

Mr. Hahn ran a Christian aid agency in Tumen City, a trading town across the border from [North Korea](#) in northeast [China](#), where he had a school and provided supplies to the poor in North Korea, Mr. Zhang said.

His detention on Tuesday came three months after the Chinese authorities detained a Canadian Christian couple, Kevin and Julie Garratt, who had lived in Dandong, also on the border with North Korea, since 1984.

At the time of the Garratts arrest, the Chinese Foreign Ministry said the couple was "under investigation for suspected theft of state secrets about China's military and national defense research."

The authorities began visiting Mr. Hahn in April, asking questions about his life and his humanitarian work, Mr. Zhang said.

In July, the police closed his vocational training school and his five-story building in Tumen, the lawyer said. The police then began questioning Mr. Hahn about his life, the lawyer said.

In an effort to satisfy the police, Mr. Zhang, who is based in Shanghai, visited Mr. Hahn in Tumen in September and advised him to write a long document detailing his escape from North Korea, his life in the United States and his return to China to help people in North Korea. The document was translated into Chinese and handed to the authorities in the nearby city of Yanji two weeks ago, the lawyer said.

"When I visited him in September, plainclothes police were stationed outside his building, and it was sealed," Mr. Zhang said.

Mr. Hahn seemed in good health, he said, adding, "His health was O.K., but if he's fit for detention, I'm not sure."

Mr. Hahn's wife, Eunice, 65, said in an interview from the South Korean capital, Seoul, that the Chinese authorities froze the couple's bank accounts in early July and confiscated their personal cars and a delivery truck.

"They stripped away all our finances, took away all our money," she said. "We're not even able to pay our employees. I'm very upset about that. All the vehicles have been taken away by the government, except the bicycles. We only have bicycles now."

Two of her husband's colleagues, one Korean and one Chinese, have been detained since August, she said. Mr. Hahn has suffered several strokes, and she is worried about his health, she said. "When I was with him, I would always take care of his food and medicine. Now he is in jail, obviously they're not going to take care of his health even though they say they have a doctor there."

The Chinese Foreign Ministry has offered no reason for the apparent crackdown on Western Christians in border towns.

China's traditionally warm relations with North Korea have cooled since the isolated nation's young leader, Kim Jong-un, came to power. China has joined recent United Nations sanctions against the North.

But China would still prefer that North Korea remain intact and separate from South Korea, most analysts agree. Above all, China fears that instability in North Korea could result in a flood of refugees into the northern region of China where Mr. Hahn and the Garretts (*) lived and worked. The detentions come during a period of tightened political control in China under President Xi Jinping.

Both Mr. Hahn and the Garretts, who ran Peter's Coffee Shop near the Sino-Korean Friendship Bridge, which leads over the Yalu River to North Korea, were devoting themselves to helping the impoverished North Korean population.

The coffee shop served as beacon of information for travelers who would often drop by for Western food and conversation about North Korea with Mr. Garrett, 53, a former pastor.

Mr. Zhang, the lawyer, said he planned to visit Mr. Hahn again on Sunday. The suspicions about Mr. Hahn are groundless, he said.

Phil Robertson, the deputy director of Human Rights Watch in Asia, said Mr. Hahn had no political agenda.

(*) HRWF Footnote :

See <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2014/08/05/china-canadian-steal-secrets/13615915/>
