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# How to Integrate Human Rights into U.S.-China Relations

BLUEPRINT FOR THE NEXT ADMINISTRATION

December 2012

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FOR THE NEXT U.S.  
ADMINISTRATION

## About Us

On human rights, the United States must be a beacon. Activists fighting for freedom around the globe continue to look to us for inspiration and count on us for support. Upholding human rights is not only a moral obligation; it's a vital national interest. America is strongest when our policies and actions match our values.

Human Rights First is an independent advocacy and action organization that challenges America to live up to its ideals. We believe American leadership is essential in the struggle for human rights so we press the U.S. government and private companies to respect human rights and the rule of law. When they don't, we step in to demand reform, accountability and justice. Around the world, we work where we can best harness American influence to secure core freedoms.

We know that it is not enough to expose and protest injustice, so we create the political environment and policy solutions necessary to ensure consistent respect for human rights. Whether we are protecting refugees, combating torture, or defending persecuted minorities, we focus not on making a point, but on making a difference. For over 30 years, we've built bipartisan coalitions and teamed up with frontline activists and lawyers to tackle issues that demand American leadership.

Human Rights First is a nonprofit, nonpartisan international human rights organization based in New York and Washington D.C. To maintain our independence, we accept no government funding.

Dr. Nancy Stetson, international affairs strategy and policy consultant, led the team on this blueprint.

This report is available for free online at [www.humanrightsfirst.org](http://www.humanrightsfirst.org)

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*"We want China to be strong and we want it to be prosperous, and we're very pleased with all the areas of cooperation that we've been able to engage in. But we also believe that that relationship will be that much stronger and China will be that much more prosperous and strong as you see improvements on human rights issues."*

President Obama, April 30, 2012

## Introduction

When to press China's leadership on human rights, how hard, and with what tools has been an ever-changing calculation, as successive U.S. administrations have tried to balance America's strategic and economic interests in the expanding U.S.-China relationship with America's leadership as an advocate for and protector of universal rights and freedoms.

Today, China is not only an Asian power, but an emerging global power with the capacity to help or hinder U.S. policy on a broad range of issues. As a result, the imperative for the United States to have a cooperative, productive, stable relationship with China grows. And as it grows, so does the temptation for the U.S. government to place human rights further down the priority list on the agenda.

Human Rights First recommends that the Obama Administration elevate the priority placed on the

promotion of human rights in China, and maximize the potential for progress by developing a comprehensive, integrated approach built on a strategy that advances human rights through other issues on the U.S.-China agenda. The record of progress, still woefully inadequate, demands an aggressive approach that treats human rights as a mainstream issue rather than as an obstacle to the relationship.

## ELEVATING THE PRIORITY: THE CASE OF CHEN GUANGCHENG

In April 2012, Chen Guangcheng, a self-taught, blind Chinese legal activist who had been confined to house arrest after four years of imprisonment, escaped from local authorities in his home province of Shandong. In need of medical treatment by the time he arrived in Beijing, Chen asked the U.S. Embassy for assistance. The timing of Chen's request was critical: just days before the start of the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue (S & ED) and some six months before a leadership change in China scheduled for November 2012. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton took the bold and unexpected step of ordering embassy officials to go out, get Chen, and bring him into the embassy compound, as Chinese agents followed. That decision propelled Chen's case to the forefront of the U.S.-China agenda.

Secretary Clinton's decision to give Chen refuge in the embassy could have backfired. China's leaders could have blasted the United States, refused to negotiate a solution to the case, and walked away from the upcoming dialogue, leaving a set of issues important to the United States on the table. But they did not. To the surprise of many, high-level talks continued even as the two sides negotiated a resolution to Chen's case.

Chen's case offers important lessons for the Obama Administration as it pursues the human rights agenda with China. First, the imperative to have a working relationship exists for both sides, suggesting that the U.S.-China relationship is stronger than the differences between the two countries imply. Chinese officials dislike the American focus on human rights issues, and they come to the relationship with a fair amount of mistrust of American intentions. But they understand that, just as China is in a position to affect U.S. interests, the United

States is in a position to affect theirs. And both sides recognize that maintaining a constructive relationship requires continual engagement across a host of issues, even when disagreement in one area challenges the relationship.

Second, the case demonstrates that human rights issues can be pursued vigorously and simultaneously with other issues on the American agenda with China. They do not have to be sidelined, or compartmentalized, or minimized. Indeed, the Chen case illustrates the impracticality of trying to quarantine human rights from the larger relationship. Human rights cannot be ignored, but the issue does have to be argued with recognition of Chinese interests as well as those of the United States.

## RECORD AND REALITIES

Significant change has come to China in the last two decades, but that process has yet to bring the full spectrum of rights and freedoms to the Chinese people. On the one hand, China's economic modernization and integration into the international community have brought dramatic change to the daily lives of the Chinese people, especially in the urban areas where a thriving middle class has developed. The average Chinese citizen has more economic and social mobility, access to technology, and personal liberty than was ever possible a decade ago. On the other hand, economic and social liberalization has not been matched by political reform and greater respect for civil liberties.

It is clear that much more progress needs to be made and that the Chinese leadership is going to control the pace and extent of the process of change. Convincing it to move faster and farther is a challenge because there are realities beyond any administration's control. First, China's leaders see Western pressure for political reform as a threat to the power and control of the Chinese Communist Party, and thus to the political system. Second, pressure from the majority of the Chinese people for political freedoms is largely absent. Third, U.S. efforts are hindered by lingering mistrust of the United States, which the Obama Administration's so-called pivot to Asia has deepened. Finally, U.S. leverage, while still significant, is not enough to force Chinese leaders to act.

## U.S. EFFORTS UNDER THE OBAMA ADMINISTRATION

Under the Obama Administration, human rights have remained a contentious issue on the U.S. agenda with China. Administration officials, including the president, have pressed Chinese officials publicly and privately on a variety of issues, including free speech, Internet freedoms, and policies toward the Tibetan people, as well as raising cases of specific activists and human rights defenders. The annual Human Rights Dialogue with China, which was suspended by the Chinese for nearly four years during the Bush Administration, has restarted. While the State Department maintains the lead on human rights issues, other agencies such as the Departments of Labor and Justice have been brought into the dialogue. At the grassroots level, the administration has continued to fund a broad array of programs in the areas of democracy, rule of law, civil society development, sustainable development, environmental protection, cultural preservation in Tibet, and health.

Notwithstanding these efforts, the administration has struggled to define the place of human rights on the larger agenda with China. It came into office determined to have, as Secretary Clinton put it, a "positive and cooperative relationship with China" in order to elicit Chinese cooperation on a panoply of global and bilateral issues. To this end, the administration signaled throughout its first year that cooperation with China would take precedence over human rights. However, it gradually stepped back from this careful approach when it became clear by the end of 2010 that Chinese cooperation on other issues was not forthcoming.

The policy reversal was manifest in President Obama's meeting with the Dalai Lama, which had been previously postponed; the administration's outspokenness on the detention of human rights activist Liu Xiaobo; the president's remarks in his state summit in 2011 with Chinese President Hu Jintao; and in the Chen Guangcheng case. In so doing, the administration sent a clear signal to Chinese leaders of the importance the United States places on human rights and those in China who are risking their lives and that of their families to advocate for them.

Human Rights First applauds this elevation of the human rights issue. Now the Obama Administration should strive for consistency and clarity on this issue, and move forward with an unequivocal commitment to preserving and advancing human rights on the larger U.S.-China agenda. The tools already exist; what lies ahead requires resolve to push forward with the promotion of human rights even as the strategic calculus may change.

# How to Integrate Human Rights into U.S.-China Relations

## SUMMARY

Human Rights First recommends that the Obama Administration elevate the priority placed on the promotion of human rights in China and maximize the potential for progress by developing a comprehensive, integrated approach built on a strategy that advances human rights through other issues on the U.S.-China agenda. The elements of this approach are outlined below:

- **Place overall responsibility for the human rights issue in the White House.**
- **Undertake a review of the role and priority of human rights for the United States in the U.S.-China relationship.**
- **Develop an integrated strategy built on three pillars: Issue integration, whole-of-government approach, and language based on self-interest.**
- **Publicly recognize the role of human rights defenders and establish guidelines for embassy officials to support them.**
- **Modify U.S. approach to the human rights dialogue and the economic dialogue to improve outcomes.**
- **Map new Chinese leadership for human rights footprints.**
- **Expand and coordinate whole-of-government human rights messaging in China to track integrated approach and language defined by the new strategy.**
- **Review existing U.S. government funded programs in China.**
- **Institute human rights coordination process with European allies.**
- **Meet with members of Congress and human rights groups in Washington.**

# How to Integrate Human Rights into U.S.-China Relations

## PLACE OVERALL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE IN THE WHITE HOUSE

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Direct the national security adviser to establish a White House-led and managed process to review the role of human rights in the U.S.-China relationship and develop a comprehensive, integrated strategy that advances human rights through other issues on the agenda.
- Include all executive branch agencies that have Chinese counterparts in the process.
- Issue guidelines for implementation of the strategy to executive branch agencies.
- Complete strategy and issue guidelines by July 1, 2013.
- Maintain White House oversight of the strategy's implementation.

### DETAILS

Traditionally, the Department of State, through the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL), has had the primary responsibility for promoting human rights in China. However, the White House continues to be the focal point for shaping the broad outlines and direction of U.S. policy toward China. Policy shifts or reordering of priorities must begin in the White House and have the engagement of the president and his staff or they will not happen. Placing overall responsibility for the human rights issue and the integrated strategy in the White House, rather than in the State Department, signals a presidential commitment to a more aggressive and expanded human rights strategy and a higher priority for the issue.

The State Department's DRL bureau has begun the process of reaching out to other agencies to assist their efforts to promote human rights in China. Expanding the number of agencies beyond the four that are currently involved—Department of State, Department of Labor, Department of Justice, U.S. Trade Representative's Office—strengthens the whole-of-government approach, which is a key element of the integrated strategy.

The State Department should continue to be the lead agency for implementing the strategy. However, it strengthens the State Department's ability to obtain cooperation from other agencies when the White House leads the process to develop the strategy and oversee its implementation.

The integrated strategy, as discussed below, requires all agencies that engage with China to view those issues through the prism of human rights. For most agencies, this will be a new and different way of discussing and resolving problems with Chinese officials. Therefore, it is essential that the White House disseminate the strategy and issue guidelines for its implementation. Both should be completed within the first six months of the second term, by July 1, 2013, to make it clear to all agencies within the executive branch that this is an early, high priority for the president.

## UNDERTAKE A REVIEW OF THE ROLE AND PRIORITY OF HUMAN RIGHTS FOR THE UNITED STATES IN THE U.S.-CHINA RELATIONSHIP

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Assess progress to date on the human rights situation in China with an agreed upon set of indicators.
- Survey and consult with civil society and human rights defenders in China, where possible, in this process.
- Reexamine the relationship between human rights and other issues on the agenda and the assumption that human rights are promoted at the expense of other issues.

- Reexamine U.S. leverage over China, challenging the assumption that it has decreased.

## DETAILS

This review is a necessary precursor to the development of a new human rights strategy that will hold out the promise of more progress and engender the support of the American and Chinese people, human rights groups and defenders, and members of Congress. There is little disagreement among these groups that China needs to do more to respect human rights, but there is no agreement over what constitutes “progress.” Different indicators lead to different conclusions, and different conclusions lead to different views of how effective the administration’s strategy is. The Obama Administration needs to identify its indicators, incorporate them into its strategy, and make them public.

With China’s power rising and the scope of the U.S. relationship with China broadening, two assumptions have taken root among American policymakers. The first is that of a zero sum game—that progress on human rights comes at the expense of other issues that are often viewed as more critical. The Obama Administration’s experiences with China and the Chen case suggest otherwise. The administration’s efforts in the first two years to avoid antagonizing Chinese leaders did not result in progress on critical issues. Secretary Clinton’s tough approach in the Chen case no doubt irritated Chinese leaders. They retaliated by withholding written responses to the case list submitted in the previous Human Rights Dialogue. But they did not walk out. They permitted Chen to leave the country. Chinese leaders calculated the totality of their interests in the overall relationship.

The second assumption is that U.S. leverage over China has decreased. To a certain extent this is true. The United States needs China more than in the past and China is in a stronger position to control the relationship. However, the United States is not without leverage. The U.S. economy and military remain stronger. Reassertion of American power and presence in Asia can affect China’s interests and desire for dominance in the region. China wants U.S. trade and investment, technological know-how, and a stable relationship because they advance Chinese interests and China’s legitimacy as a

member of the international community. The relationship, in and of itself, is leverage which can be used to advance all American interests, and should be used to do so on human rights, too.

## DEVELOP AN INTEGRATED STRATEGY BUILT ON THREE PILLARS: ISSUE INTEGRATION, WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT APPROACH, AND LANGUAGE BASED ON SELF-INTEREST

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Set goals and benchmarks to measure progress.
- Integrate human rights into other issues on the agenda by identifying specific areas, particularly in the economic and social sectors, where domestic problems, such as land reform and labor strikes, can only be solved by expanding human rights.
- Implement a whole-of-government approach to enhance integration of human rights into other issues across the full spectrum of the U.S. relationship with China.
- Adopt “win win” language that focuses on China’s needs and interests.
- Seek guidance from Chinese civil society leaders and human rights defenders, where possible.

### DETAILS

Developing a strategy is a cornerstone of the U.S. approach to human rights in China. That strategy must be sensitive to China’s needs and interests. For example, the U.S. government cannot force Chinese leaders to make reforms that, in their view, will undermine their political system. However, China’s leaders have proven that they will embrace change if it advances their country’s needs and interests – even if it means diminishing government control. Focusing on those needs and interests should be at the core of the Obama Administration’s human rights strategy.

As economic modernization has taken place, the expectation of the Chinese people and their understanding of their legal rights have risen. They are demanding transparent and effective governance and



fair resolution of grievances on basic justice issues such as environmental pollution, working conditions, faulty and dangerous infrastructure, forced evacuations from the land, and unfair treatment of ethnic and religious minorities, and they are increasingly trying to exercise their rights through mechanisms such as protests, work stoppages, and micro-blogging. Ever fearful of instability, the government has tried to draw a line, but neither the people nor the leaders know exactly where the line is. Ultimately, China cannot continue to develop without good governance, accountability, and checks and balances.

## ISSUE INTEGRATION

The administration will be most successful when it identifies areas where human rights intersect with economic and social justice issues and where Chinese leaders know there is a problem that they have to solve. These areas need to be identified across the complete relationship between the United States and China, such as environment, agriculture, commerce, and health. By using China's need to resolve problems in these areas, the United States can prod the leadership to expand the role of civil society and create institutions and mechanisms in areas previously seen as off limits.

The Chinese response to the AIDS crisis offers an interesting illustration. Ten years ago, China faced three health threats in a row. The first involved sales of contaminated blood, primarily in rural areas, which led to deaths and violence by rural farmers who were the most affected population. The government's response—to suppress information and deny the problem—was a failure. When the second threat, SARS, hit shortly thereafter, the government publicized death tolls, but continued to suppress information on the extent of the outbreak—a response that only worsened the situation. When confronted subsequently with the AIDS problem, the government, recognizing its mismanagement of the previous health crises, reversed course. It publicly acknowledged the extent of the problem; sought assistance from the Global Fund for AIDS, TB, and Malaria; and accepted its funding requirements including the development of a network of civil society organizations. In this case, the fear that inaction would lead to instability and the need to obtain the international

community's assistance led Chinese leaders to take liberalizing steps. In the process, they legitimized the existence of civil society organizations (CSOs) and allowed information to flow more freely.

Integrating human rights into other issues on the U.S. agenda with China has numerous benefits. It allows the United States to reach out directly to the Chinese people and give voice to their needs, as well as to the needs of human rights activists and defenders. It prevents China's leaders from sidelining the human rights issue. It allows U.S. officials to present a consistent message across the entire spectrum of issues on the agenda, to pursue the human rights issue more aggressively, and to reduce the risks to the relationship that administrations often associate with promoting human rights.

The Obama Administration has broadened the way the U.S. government thinks and talks about human rights by expanding the human rights agenda to include the international community's Millennium Development Goals. Speaking at Georgetown University three years ago, Secretary Clinton emphasized that "supporting democracy and fostering development" were cornerstones of the administration's human rights agenda. The integrated human rights strategy builds on these cornerstones by proposing solutions to development problems that give the Chinese people more rights.

## WHOLE OF GOVERNMENT APPROACH

China's leaders have consistently viewed Western pressure on human rights as interference in China's internal affairs and an irritant in bilateral relations. Nevertheless, they proactively moved years ago to initiate mechanisms such as bilateral dialogues and consultations that isolate human rights and allow them to call interference when others raise the issue. Taking a whole-of-government approach undermines China's strategy. It puts human rights on the agenda of every U.S. agency that interacts with China and makes the discussion of human rights a routine matter.

The State Department has periodically asked other agencies to raise a human rights case in interactions with the Chinese. The whole-of-government approach goes beyond these occasional interventions. It invests

responsibility for the promotion of human rights across the executive branch and is an indispensable element of the integrated human rights strategy proposed here. That strategy can only be successful if every agency, as well as the White House, looks at specific issues on its agenda with China through a human rights prism.

The Obama Administration has taken some steps to bring other agencies besides the State Department into the human rights issue. Representation at the annual Human Rights Dialogue has been expanded and the State Department's DRL bureau has set up an interagency working group. The administration should build on this foundation to implement fully the whole-of-government approach, not only in formal dialogues but also in interactions throughout the year with Chinese officials and agencies.

## INTEREST-BASED LANGUAGE

When then Chinese President Hu Jintao was in Washington last year, he talked about “win-win progress through cooperation” in the U.S.-China relationship. This is the language that needs to be adopted to advance human rights under the integrated strategy. Arguments for action need to be calibrated to China's needs and interests, what the Chinese people are demanding, and how resolving these issues benefit other specific U.S. interests as well.

The Obama Administration has rightly recognized that “words matter” when dealing with the Chinese. For example, rather than demanding that China live up to the obligations it has assumed by ratifying international human rights instruments, administration officials have argued that respecting universal rights and freedoms is in China's interest, both at home in terms of stability, and in the international arena where China seeks respect and legitimacy. Framing the human rights issue in terms of needs and interests is critical to progress.

## PUBLICLY RECOGNIZE THE ROLE OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AND ESTABLISH GUIDELINES FOR EMBASSY OFFICIALS TO SUPPORT THEM

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Publicly recognize the role of human rights defenders in China and establish a set of guidelines to be used by U.S. officials in China for supporting them and advancing their work.
- Publicly state the types of support human rights defenders can and cannot expect from the U.S. embassy and consulates.
- Continue to cite specific cases by name in public statements, as appropriate.

### DETAILS

Integrating human rights and targeting economic and social justice areas does not mean that the Obama Administration should walk back U.S. efforts to stand with human rights activists and defenders. To the contrary, advocacy in these cases is an essential part of a comprehensive, integrated human rights approach. However, in handling these cases with Chinese officials, the language used and the evidence cited to make the case are important. Rights advocates who have succeeded in obtaining the release of political prisoners do not refer to them as “political prisoners.” Rather, they work with Chinese laws and reporting to make the case for release.

The U.S. embassy and consulates in China would also be strengthened by the release by the Department of State of guidelines for how the U.S. missions can and should engage human rights defenders. Tools for engagement include invitations to embassy functions, visits to human rights defenders in their places of work (such as law offices and churches) as welcomed by the defender, and opportunities to facilitate meetings of defenders from other countries.

## **MODIFY U.S. APPROACH TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS DIALOGUE AND THE ECONOMIC DIALOGUE TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Set benchmarks for progress and expand agency representation in the annual Human Rights Dialogue.
- Make assistant secretary of state for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor a full participant in the economic portion of the U.S.-China Strategic and Economic Dialogue.
- Consult with Chinese NGOs and human rights defenders, as appropriate, before the Human Rights Dialogue, and report to them afterward on progress.

### **DETAILS**

The utility of the annual Human Rights Dialogue has been questioned because little progress seems to result from it. Some have argued that they should be abandoned. Human Rights First disagrees. Abandoning these dialogues would send the wrong signal—that the United States has downgraded the importance of human rights.

Rather, these dialogues are a particularly important venue for raising cases of political prisoners and obtaining written responses from the Chinese on cases that had been raised at the preceding dialogue. In this year's dialogue with the United States, the Chinese refused to respond in writing to the 2011 list, reportedly because of the Chen Guangcheng case. However, they also refused to provide written information on cases in some of the bilateral dialogues with other Western countries. The dialogues provide the United States and its allies with leverage. Chinese leaders want them to continue because they demonstrate that China is willing to discuss the issue. The Obama Administration should use the leverage embodied in this dialogue by setting benchmarks and clearly signaling to the Chinese that the United States will revisit the utility of the dialogues if they continue to be unproductive.

The agencies represented at the annual dialogues should be expanded to reinforce the idea that human

rights are a priority across the entire U.S. government. Similarly the assistant secretary for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor should be a full participant in the economic dialogue with China to reinforce the emphasis on liberalizing human rights as a solution to economic issues in China.

## **MAP NEW CHINESE LEADERSHIP FOR HUMAN RIGHTS FOOTPRINTS**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Under the supervision of the National Security Staff, immediately begin a process of reviewing statements and records of the seven new members of the Politburo's Standing Committee for indications of positive attitudes toward liberalization and change.
- Identify and build bridges to those individuals likely to be open to the resolution of internal problems in China through expansion of human rights.

### **DETAILS**

In November, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) installed a new leadership, headed by former Vice President Xi Jinping. Seven men will determine the pace and extent of change in China for the next ten years. In his first speech as the CCP's new general secretary and incoming president of China, Xi spoke of improving housing, medical care, education and the environment but gave no hints as to how he or his colleagues view democratic reform.

Under the management of the senior advisor for Asia on the National Security Staff, the Obama Administration should immediately begin a process of mapping each member of the new leadership to make an assessment of which individuals are likely to take a more open approach to the resolution of China's internal problems through expansion of human rights. The U.S Embassy in Beijing, the State Department's East Asia and Pacific Bureau and Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, and other appropriate agencies should be involved in the process.

Once identified, deliberate efforts should be made by U.S. officials to build bridges to these individuals. Mutual

trust is critical to all aspects of the relationship, especially to the promotion of human rights.

## **EXPAND AND COORDINATE WHOLE-OF-GOVERNMENT HUMAN RIGHTS MESSAGING IN CHINA TO TRACK INTEGRATED APPROACH AND LANGUAGE DEFINED BY THE NEW STRATEGY**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Expand public diplomacy efforts to send a clear signal to the Chinese people that the United States government is aggressively promoting human rights and their demands for resolution of basic economic and social justice issues. For example, put Chinese civil society leaders on camera, in print, or on other U.S.-sponsored media.

### **DETAILS**

Pew Research Center polls over the 2009–2012 period show a negative shift in Chinese attitudes toward the United States from a 47% favorable rating in 2010 to a 43% favorable rating in June of this year. Among young people (ages 18–29) and college-educated Chinese, the percentage of those holding positive views of the United States is much higher, 51% and 66% respectively. However, Chinese attitudes toward U.S. foreign policy have become very negative over the last four years, trending down from a 57% approval rating in 2009 to 27% in 2012. Similarly, only 39% of the Chinese people have favorable attitudes toward Americans.

These polls suggest that opinions of Chinese society toward the United States fluctuate, and are a reaction to multiple issues, from who the president is to targeted killings. They also suggest that an intensified effort by the U.S. government to demonstrate to Chinese society that the United States is on their side, and pushing for changes that they want from the government, would pay off. It would also counter sporadic but often effective efforts by the Chinese government to play the nationalism card against the United States when it is irritated by some action or inaction taken by the United States government. The State Department's DRL and Public Diplomacy bureaus should work together to

develop an effective message, as part of the proposed strategic approach.

## **REVIEW EXISTING U.S. GOVERNMENT-FUNDED PROGRAMS IN CHINA**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Led by the assistant secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor and in consultation with USAID, review and assess program effectiveness, areas where programs could be expanded or contracted, and adequacy of funding levels.
- Obtain feedback on these programs from Chinese civil society to gauge the impact on Chinese society.

### **DETAILS**

Recognizing the need to develop a functioning legal system and address civil society needs, China has allowed a variety of assistance programs funded by Western governments and private sector entities. Successive U.S. administrations have funded these programs, many of which have been congressionally mandated. Some observers have argued that these programs are marginally effective, at best.

The Obama Administration should take a fresh look at U.S. government programs to determine to what extent they are vehicles for change, whether changes should be made in the number and types of programs funded and in the areas funded, and whether funding levels are adequate.

## **INSTITUTE HUMAN RIGHTS COORDINATION PROCESS WITH EUROPEAN ALLIES**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Institute an annual process to leverage progress by discussing strategies with allies and coordinating key issues to be at the top of the agenda of every country that has a bilateral human rights dialogue with China.

## DETAILS

In the past, the United States and its European allies met annually in Bern, Switzerland, to promote human rights in China and to prioritize the top issues. The Obama Administration should reinstitute this coordination process. It provides an opportunity to analyze approaches, target objectives, build alliances, and reinforce clarity and consistency of message to the Chinese government.

## MEET WITH MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS IN WASHINGTON

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Educate interested members in House and Senate and international human rights groups about new, integrated strategy and seek supportive actions to advance and echo this strategy. Regular consultation will be important to build political support.

## DETAILS

Bringing interested members of Congress and human rights groups into this effort is absolutely essential to build political support for the new, integrated strategy and to send a strong signal to the government of China that the U.S. government and human rights advocates are united in this effort. Both Congress and the human rights groups, if engaged, can create an important echo chamber for this message and the political support needed to succeed.

# Conclusion

Human Rights First is calling upon the Obama Administration to make an unequivocal commitment to maintain human rights as a mainstream issue on the agenda with China and to promote them aggressively and continuously. It can fulfill this commitment by adopting a comprehensive, integrated approach that advances human rights through the totality of the U.S. government's interactions with China.





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