



**Statement of Rep. James P. McGovern
Chair of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China
and Co-Chair of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission**

**Hearing on “Tiananmen at 30: Examining the Evolution of Repression in
China”**

**Tuesday, June 4, 2019, 10 a.m.-12 p.m.
2172 Rayburn Building**

As prepared for delivery

Good morning and welcome to a joint hearing of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China and the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, hosted by the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

I would like to thank Chairman Eliot Engel, Ranking Member Michael McCaul, and all members of the Foreign Affairs Committee for hosting and participating in this important hearing.

The title of today’s hearing is “Tiananmen at 30: Examining the Evolution of Repression in China.”

The hearing will review the events in China in 1989, the aspirations of the “Tiananmen generation,” and the ongoing censorship and lack of accountability for those seeking answers about the victims of the massacre.

It was 30 years ago this week that an estimated one million Chinese students, workers, and citizens joined the peaceful protests in Tiananmen Square and in over 400 cities throughout China.

The people of China were calling for an open dialogue with government officials about:

- the elimination of corruption;
- the acceleration of economic and political reform; and

- the protection of human rights, particularly the freedoms of expression and assembly.

We remember with sadness the crackdown that followed as the People's Liberation Army was unleashed on its own people.

Some of you in this room were in Tiananmen Square on that day 30 years ago. We know you took great risks. We know you lost friends.

And we know you have sacrificed so much in the years since to advance democracy and support the human rights and dignity of all people of China.

One of the most inspiring images in history is the lone man standing in the street before the line of tanks on Tiananmen Square.

We may never know the name and back story of "The Tank Man," but his act of resistance symbolizes the spirit of Tiananmen that lives on in the hearts and minds of those continuing the struggle in China and abroad.

In China, the Tiananmen Mothers is a group of relatives and friends of those killed in June 1989. At great risk to themselves, they continue to ask for the right to mourn publicly and call for a full, public, and independent accounting of the victims.

Ding Zilin the 82-year old founder of the group, lost her 17-year old son on that day. Chinese authorities reportedly have "traveled" Professor Ding outside of her home in Beijing to intimidate and silence her in advance of the 30th anniversary.

Official surveillance never ends for her as she is followed by Chinese security officers every day. The government fears her memory, her devotion, and her moral standing. She describes the situation of Tiananmen mothers as "white terror and suffocation."

In the years since Tiananmen, the human rights situation in China has worsened. Tiananmen was a key turning point as the country moved from the brink of openness and reform, to new and evolving methods of repression including against the Tibetan and Uyghur peoples.

Some have described a "slow motion Tiananmen happening in Xinjiang" with the ongoing mass internment and surveillance of ethnic Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims.

A better path forward was offered by Nobel Peace Prize laureate and Tiananmen student leader Liu Xiaobo who co-authored Charter 08.

Published on December 10th, 2008, the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, it called for constitutional government and respect for human rights.

Despite official efforts to censor Charter 08, it was eventually signed by more than 10,000 people.

Sadly, Liu Xiaobo spent nearly 16 years in prison and died in state custody in 2017. His eloquence and love for China lives on and inspires others to advocate for a system of government that no longer treats “words as crimes.”

Today in China, the Tiananmen Square Massacre is erased from history books and any mention of it is censored.

Every year in the weeks preceding June 4th, the Chinese government tightens controls to prevent any mention of Tiananmen and heightens surveillance on the survivors, human rights advocates, and their families.

But we know the spirit of Tiananmen is still alive and well.

We know because China’s leaders demonstrate their fear of it every day with their security cameras, censorship, detention centers, and obsession with preventing the people of China from learning the truth.

We know the spirit of Tiananmen is alive and well in Hong Kong where hundreds of thousands of people come together in Victoria Park to hold a candlelight vigil for the victims of the Tiananmen Square Massacre.

In his famous last statement, “I Have No Enemies,” Liu Xiaobo said:

“No force can block the thirst for freedom that lies within human nature, and some day China, too, will be a nation of laws where human rights are paramount.”

I look forward to that day.

This afternoon shortly after this hearing, the U.S. House of Representatives will consider a resolution to remember the victims of the violent suppression of the democracy protests in Tiananmen Square and throughout China.

The resolution calls on the Chinese government to respect the universally recognized human rights of all people living in China and around the world. I urge all of my colleagues in the House to support the resolution.