



A speech by
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Sixteenth Congressional District of Pennsylvania



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Honoring Chinese dissident and Nobel Peace Prize Winner Liu Xiaobo and calling on the Chinese Government to improve its egregious human rights record

Thank you all for coming and thank you to Human Rights Commission Co-chairman Frank Wolf for organizing this important press conference.

We join here today with both joyful and saddened hearts.

We celebrate the fact that Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo has been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, but we mourn the fact that he remains in prison because of his commitment to freedom and human rights.

Liu has been a true hero – defending those who cannot defend themselves and lending voice to those who have no voice.

He has worked tirelessly to protect human rights, but has been repeatedly detained, sent to re-education through labor camps, placed under house arrest, and monitored by the Chinese Government.

For years, he has withstood the brutal intimidation tactics of the Government and has continued to fight for freedom.

In 2008, he helped draft the Charter 08, calling for greater freedom of expression, respect for human rights, and free elections.

But because of his role in drafting and circulating the Charter, he was arrested and sentenced to 11 years in prison, a term that he continues to serve.

Liu's long, arduous, and peaceful struggle for human rights has made him most deserving of this award, and we pause today to recognize and honor his life's work.

However, we also take this opportunity to call on the Chinese Government to respect the basic human rights of its people and to release Liu from prison.

Unfortunately, the Chinese Government's response to the Nobel Prize Committee's decision was shameful.

News about the award was censored, the Foreign Ministry issued a statement calling Liu a criminal, his wife was placed under house arrest, and events commemorating the award were raided.

In addition, China declined to attend the Nobel Peace Prize Ceremony for the award.

I am saddened that the Chinese Government has responded by rejecting the Committee's decision to honor this individual who represents the courage and dedication of the Chinese people.

And as we gather here today, we recognize not only Liu's peaceful struggle for freedom, but also the struggle of Chinese human rights activists across the country.

It is my hope that China will soon learn to embrace the courage and determination of its people, and I look forward to a day when it will stand alongside of citizens who are working to protect human rights in China and around the world.