

EU Parliament Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Human Rights

Hearing: “Exchange of views on Human Rights in China following the last round of EU China Human Rights Dialogue”

2010 July 15

Statement respectfully submitted by ChinaAid

ChinaAid affirms the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue, an investment to discuss the basic values to be protected and promoted in China and in EU-Sino relations. We are grateful to engage with the EU on this important post-Dialogue Hearing.

ChinaAid, a non-profit human rights organization, promotes rule of law in China motivated by the desire for freedom of religion and belief, a freedom which is intricately intertwined with the other fundamental freedoms. It is the protection of these freedoms which brings us together today, superseding different races, backgrounds, and preferences. It is the rule of law that makes these freedoms possible. The protection of human rights, protected by the rule of law, is definitely a goal on which we can all agree; and the question follows, how can this goal best be realized in actuality – on the ground, in the lives of those people who are now suffering under unchecked power? How can obstacles to this goal be overcome?

ChinaAid receives from China and disseminates worldwide the developments of many human rights cases. Certain trends have become apparent from the numerous rights-abuse cases from across China, including prominent cases of Christian Uyghur Alimujiang Yimiti, the Linfen Church case and its ten imprisoned leaders including Yang Rongli, and Wang Dao and the Liangren Church Case – cases in which the victims’ experience and background spans a cross-section of social standing, academic training, genres of business, and levels of international involvement. The common theme is that these cases all reveal the investment of significant and inordinate State resources to continue prosecution and harassment and/or detainment of innocent civilians. We urge you to consider whether such exercise of State power is consistent with the universal values as set forth in international covenants to which China is signatory. We also urge

you to consider whether it might not be in the mutual interest of EU and China for the EU to promote that these State resources – which are now utilized for human rights abuse – be invested instead into sustainable and profitable endeavors, such as academic exchanges, enhanced training of women in rural areas, and on-the-ground health education. Such endeavors could strengthen civil society, because adherence to the principle of the equality is strengthened when the independent, individual potential of even the most vulnerable citizen is affirmed and empowered by the Chinese government and by its international colleagues.

As ChinaAid has monitored the religious freedom situation in China during the past decade, periodic steps forward toward freedom have been seen. However, the status quo – however safe, comfortable, or “hopeful” it may seem – is a dangerous, tightening noose when those of influence and position who hold the rope perceive their actions will not be held accountable by the system. In line with this principle, unfortunately the steps forward have been followed by a leap backward, especially in the advance of public events hosted in China: this is unacceptable. It also fosters uncertainty, instability, and resentment in Chinese citizens, and some internal reticence overseas in how to respond. Why is the immediate goal the suppression of questioning voices, when the cost is so high to the Party in both the short-term and the long-term?

The strengthening of China’s civil society is a basic building block for moving toward greater prosperity and freedom. How can civil society be strengthened in a sustainable way? It is not primarily through funding government programs whose implementers can (without accountability) pick and choose the recipients; but rather to seek out and support those leaders of society, separate from government, who have chosen to *engage with government according to law* in defense of justice especially for the vulnerable and voiceless, despite the risk to their personal safety and career. To be more specific, ChinaAid urges for strengthening the judicial system – the relief valve for just arbitration – especially by supporting rights defense lawyers. It is remarkable that two such brave advocates give testimony at this Hearing today, Mr. Li Subin and Ms. Wu Chenglian.

It is clear that these two legal advocates, as some others in this field of work who have spoken publicly with Western governments, are committed to principles of justice and rule of law which the EU is keen to promote in China, which are consistent with the Chinese Constitution and which international covenants signed by China, and which have already proven a successful path for mediation and dispute resolution for victims of rights abuse in China. It would be regretful if their commitment is only met with silence from the West, which would be our shame. Now that

these two have shown themselves willing to speak with you, please show due diligence to stand with them upon their return to China and with their colleagues, as long as they continue to prove themselves committed to mutual goals of justice and rule of law. To this end, we make the following recommendations:

Recommendations

1. We recommend the President of the EU Parliament Jerzy Buzek and other EU Parliamentary Members meet with human rights defenders and attend gatherings of house churches during their visits to China, and that officials in the EU Mission in China regularly meet with human rights defenders and dissidents, to learn about their situation and to invite them to attend some activities held at the Mission;
2. We urge that President Buzek speak with President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao and urge for the release of Alimujiang Yimiti, Zhang Rongliang, Peng Ming, Dr. Wang Bingzhang, Chen Fengming, Qin Gaiying, and the ten Linfen Church leaders – Yang Rongli, Wang Xiaoguang, Yang Xuan, Cui Jiaxing, Zhang Huamei, Li Shuangping, Yang Hongzhen, Yang Caizhen, Gao Qin, and Zhao Guoai.
3. We also hope that President Buzek will personally and publicly urge for explanation of the legal conviction under which Gao Zhisheng is currently being held, and request that he be allowed to freely meet with EU Mission officials.
4. We recommend that the EU urge and assist the Chinese government to draft a model religious freedom law, the implementation of which is consistent with international standards for human rights and the Chinese Constitution.