

THE RUTHERFORD INSTITUTE

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INTERNATIONAL OFFICE
CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE
Budapest, Hungary

September 7, 2006

The Honorable George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Via U.S. Mail and Facsimile (202-456-2461)

Dear Mr. President:

It is time for you to *personally* speak out against the grave human rights abuses taking place in China, Iran and other troubled regions of the world right now.

On August 24, 2006, after a trial that lasted just two hours, blind civil rights activist Chen Guangcheng was sentenced by Chinese authorities to four years and three months in prison for the alleged crime of “damaging property and organizing a mob to disturb traffic.” Human rights advocates have reported that the charges against Chen were fabricated in order to retaliate against him for his vocal opposition to China’s inhumane practice of forced abortions and sterilizations.

According to published news reports, 34-year-old Chen was placed under house arrest after talking to *Time* magazine about some forced abortion cases he was investigating in Linyi County, Shandong. Writing in April 2006 about Chen’s efforts to aid thousands of Chinese villages, *Time* reporter Hannah Beech stated:

Last year officials initiated a forced abortion and sterilization campaign against women in Shandong province who were deemed ineligible to bear another child under China’s strict family-planning policy. Even though national regulations prohibit such brutal measures, no one except Chen was willing to confront local officials, who may have felt that lowering the number of extra births would help their political careers.... At least two women had been forced to abort their babies just days before their due dates.

Chen’s efforts to expose the plight of the women of Shandong had led him to speak with *Time* magazine about the issue. However, within hours of his meeting with *Time*, Chen

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was placed under a house arrest that lasted from September 2005 to March 2006. *Time* reported that during the period of his house arrest, “thugs routinely showed up at Chen’s house to rough him up.” Chen was formally arrested in June 2006. On the eve of his trial, according to news reports, all of Chen’s lawyers were detained and barred from the courtroom, leaving Chen to contend with a government-appointed public defender who did little to protect his client.

Officials within your administration have rightly condemned Chen’s imprisonment and called on Chinese authorities to release him. Yet their timid rhetoric has failed to communicate a sense of urgency in keeping with the severity of Chen’s situation. As Assistant Secretary of State Ellen Sauerbrey stated in remarks to the *Washington Post*, “For China’s own reputation, our hope is just that if we keep a focus on the issue, that China will recognize that it is in their best interest to release this gentleman from jail.”

Clearly, the time for diplomatically speaking through your representatives has passed. The urgency of Chen’s plight demands that you personally speak up for Chen and others like him who are being persecuted for daring to speak truth to power. In an interview with *Time* magazine prior to his arrest, Chen stated, “Someone has to fight for people with no voice. I guess that person is me.” Chen is giving us a valuable lesson in democracy. However, he should not, and must not, be the lone voice in the wilderness speaking out against such acts of injustice and wrongdoing.

Mr. President, as America’s voice to the international community, you have a moral obligation to personally speak out against the egregious human rights abuses presently taking place in China, especially as they relate to the issue of forced abortions.

In 1979, the People’s Republic of China instituted a Planned Birth Policy, also known as the “one-child policy,” which limits urban couples to having one child in an effort to control China’s population growth. The Chinese government has since announced its intentions of continuing its one-child policy through the 2006-2010 five-year planning period. And as Chen has shown, despite the fact that coercive measures may be illegal in China, they are still being put into practice. For example, China has been accused of meeting its population requirements through bribery, coercion, forced sterilization, forced abortion and infanticide, with most reports coming from rural areas. It has also been reported that women as far along as 8.5 months pregnant are forced to abort by injection of saline solution into the womb, killing the baby and causing the mother great mental and physical pain.

Thus, your administration’s decision to withhold U.S. funds from the United Nations Population Fund to China as a result of forced abortions is a step in the right direction. However, more must be done by you personally.

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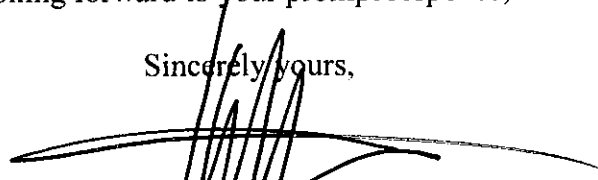
The French philosopher Albert Camus wrote that “the world expects of Christians that they will raise their voices so loudly and clearly and so formulate their protest that not even the simplest man can have the slightest doubt about what they are saying. Further, the world expects of Christians that they will eschew all fuzzy abstractions and plant themselves squarely in front of the bloody face of history. We stand in need of folk who have determined to speak directly and unmistakably and come what may, to stand by what they have said.”

As a professed Christian and as President of the United States, you have a moral duty to raise your voice loudly against injustice and wrongdoing, whether it takes place within the United States or beyond our borders. We are a world in need of a leader with the moral courage and strength of his convictions to take a personal stand against injustice and for what is right.

Thus, I urge you, especially as you begin to consider what you would have your legacy to be, to follow Chen’s example of speaking truth to power by taking a vocal stand right now for the dignity of all humans and the sanctity of human life and personally condemning China’s practice of forced abortions and its imprisonment of Chen Guangcheng.

I respectfully urge you to take immediate action in speaking out on these urgent matters before any more time elapses. Looking forward to your prompt response, I remain,

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John W. Whitehead". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping horizontal stroke across the middle and several vertical strokes above it.

John W. Whitehead
President

cc: U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice
The Honorable Zhou Wenzhong, Embassy of the People’s Republic of China
Kofi A. Annan, United Nations Secretary-General
Ms. Louise Arbour, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
The Honorable Richard G. Lugar, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr., U.S. Senate
The Honorable Chuck Hagel, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Lincoln Chafee, U.S. Senate
The Honorable John E. Sununu, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Barbara Boxer, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Russell Feingold, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Rick Santorum, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Sam Brownback, U.S. Senate
The Honorable Henry Hyde, U.S. House of Representatives
The Honorable Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, U.S. House of Representatives