

that China enjoys the self-confidence to change.

I join with my colleagues in the hope that Wei Jingsheng will be released from prison in the very near future.

Thank you.

URGING THE GOVERNMENT OF CHINA TO RELEASE WEI JINGSHENG—A POLITICAL PRISONER

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I rise today with a simple message, a message to the Government of China to release Wei Jingsheng. Who is Wei Jingsheng? Born in China, Wei Jingsheng is a dreamer, a political activist, a writer, a silenced leader, an inspiration, a nurturing older brother, and one who possesses an unparalleled faith in democracy and its place in modern China. He is the kind of man who if living in America would undoubtedly grace these Halls. But Wei Jingsheng does not live in the United States, he lives in China, where the courage of his convictions have not been appreciated, in fact quite the opposite, Wei Jingsheng has been severely punished.

In speaking out for democracy and reform, Wei Jingsheng has suffered great consequences—consequences including nearly 18 years of solitary confinement, torturous treatment, the lack of medical attention, and numerous other methods known to squelch a man's spirits and weaken his convictions.

Now that we know about his punishment, let us consider Wei Jingsheng's crimes: numerous writings on democracy, a series of letters to China's paramount leader Deng Xiaoping before his death, communicating with foreign journalists, participating in the 1979 Democracy Wall movement, and most recently meeting with John Shattuck, the United States Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor in 1994. Frankly, these do not strike me as crimes, or actions that warrant any sanctions by the state, and most certainly are not at all commensurate with the punishment Wei Jingsheng has endured.

Respect for human rights is an international concept. We only need look to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to see a sample of the international consensus on human rights. While China may resent United States scrutiny on this topic, we do in fact have a legitimate right, as well as a moral obligation, to call for improved conditions. We can and should have a human rights dialog with Chinese leaders, and I encourage the administration to make more opportunities for such high level discussions to take place.

Wei Jingsheng is reported to be near the end of his life—a life of struggle and hardship. His recently published book "The Courage To Stand Alone: Letters From Prison and Other Writings" underscore Wei Jingsheng's struggle to promote democracy in

China. I stand with my other colleagues in the Senate today to encourage the Government of China to immediately release Wei Jingsheng.

WEI JINGSHENG

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I join today with my colleagues in solidarity with a courageous Chinese advocate of human rights, Wei Jingsheng.

Each year, the family and friends of Robert F. Kennedy, and those who honor his legacy present a human rights award in my brothers name. In 1994, Wei Jingsheng won that award.

Except for a brief period in late 1993 and early 1994, Wei has been imprisoned since 1979 because he dared to call for democracy and freedom of expression in his country.

Wei never feared to tell the story of the abysmal conditions imposed on those who dare to speak for human rights, democracy, and freedom of expression in China.

He was an electrician at the Beijing Zoo in 1979, when he earned international praise during the Democracy Wall movement for his courageous essays criticizing the Chinese leadership and calling for democratic reforms.

In his 1978 journal, "Explorations," he publicly exposed the torture of political prisoners. He later wrote one of the most famous essays of the democracy movement, arguing eloquently and powerfully that democracy and free speech were preconditions for China's economic and social growth. In another essay, he challenged China's leader at the time, Deng Xiaoping, saying: "We cannot help asking Deng what his idea of democracy is. If the people have no right to express freely their opinions or to enjoy freedom of speech and criticism, then how can one talk of democracy? * * * Only a genuine general election can create a government and leaders ready to serve the interests of the electorate."

For his refusal to remain quiet, he was arrested in 1979, tried secretly, and sentenced to 15 years in prison—most of which he spent in solitary confinement. He was repeatedly tortured.

In September 1993, Wei was released as part of China's public relations attempt to win the opportunity to host the Olympic Games in the year 2000. Upon leaving prison, Wei immediately resumed his leading role in the democracy movement.

On April 1, 1994, after Wei met with Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights, John Shattuck, he was arrested again and held incommunicado for 20 months. He was formally charged in November 1995 and, after a 1 day trial, was convicted of "engaging in activities in an attempt to overthrow the Chinese Government."

Wei is now in a prison cell serving a 14-year sentence. His health is poor, his conditions are deplorable, and he is repeatedly tortured.

Today we celebrate the latest publication of his writings, "The Courage to

Stand Alone." Wei has often stood alone against the Chinese Government. But he does not stand alone, and he will not stand alone in the wider world. He will never stand alone, as long as there are those who care about human rights and who are willing to speak out on his behalf. We will go on doing so until Wei is released, all political prisoners in China are released, and the basic human rights he so bravely fights for are enjoyed by all the people of China.

MR. WEI JINGSHENG

Mr. KEMPTHORNE. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss the important issue of political prisoners in China. I want to thank Senators HELMS, MOYNIHAN, KENNEDY, and WELLSTONE for focusing the Senate's attention on this topic.

As we consider United States-China relations, respect for human rights must be at the top of our Nation's agenda. In that regard, today I call on the Government of China to release Mr. Wei Jingsheng from prison so that he may receive the immediate medical care he desperately needs.

Further, I call upon President Clinton to make the release of Mr. Wei Jingsheng, and all Chinese political prisoners, such as the Tibetan prisoners of conscience, a top priority as our Nation discusses our relationship with China.

The first amendment of our Constitution guarantees citizens of the United States freedom of speech, the right of people to peaceably assemble and the right to petition the government for a redress of grievances. Mr. Jingsheng does not have these rights, and so I join my colleagues asking for his freedom.

In the United States of America "We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness."

That all men are created equal. This is one of our Nation's unswerving principles and we have never and should never be willing to, as President John F. Kennedy stated in his inaugural address, "permit the slow undoing of human rights to which this nation has always been committed." And, as my colleagues know, there is a tragic lack of respect for human rights in China, which is why we are making these statements today.

Mr. Wei Jingsheng's courage and conviction should be a beacon to all of us. He has received the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award and I would like to quote Senator Robert F. Kennedy:

Some men see things as they are and say "why?"

I dream things that never were and say "why not?"

Mr. Jingsheng has that courage to ask "why not." So today, Mr. President, I rise and ask the Government of

China: Why not—why not release Mr. Wei Jingsheng.

WEI JINGSHENG

Mr. FEINGOLD. Mr. President, I rise today to call for the immediate release of Wei Jingsheng, China's most prominent political prisoner.

Wei Jingsheng is no stranger to harsh unjust treatment. He has spent all but 6 months of the last 18 years in prisons or in labor camps, often in solitary confinement. Now serving his second sentence of 14 years for the crime of peacefully advocating democracy and human rights, Wei Jingsheng is terribly ill. His expected release date is 12 years from now—the year 2009—and that is assuming he lives that long.

At 46 years of age, Wei suffers from life-threatening heart disease, he cannot lift his head, and he complains of severe back pain. His requests for medical attention have gone unfulfilled and all indications are that he has not seen a doctor in more than a year.

A former electrician at the Beijing Zoo, Wei has been one of the strongest voices of China's democratic movement. In recognition of his efforts, Wei was named the 1994 Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award laureate and, every year since 1995, Members of Congress have nominated him for the Nobel Peace Prize.

While in prison serving his first sentence, Wei was allowed to write letters on certain topics to his family, prison authorities, and China's leaders. Because most of these letters urged democratic reforms, they were seized by authorities and never sent. Wei was later able to retrieve them and release them publicly, and they have now been translated and published as a book. Today, May 13, is the publication date of this book, "The Courage To Stand Alone: Letters From Prison and Other Writings." This book states what is obvious to Wei and should be clear to Americans: China needs democratic freedoms. Unfortunately, China's leaders continue to show a flagrant disregard for human rights.

In 1994, over the strenuous objections of those of us concerned over China's atrocious and repeated violations of international standards of human rights, the administration delinked granting of most-favored-nation trade status to China to improvements in its human rights record. The administration argued then that through constructive engagement on economic matters, and dialog on other issues, including human rights, the United States could better influence Chinese behavior. That was a mistake.

Let those who support constructive engagement visit the terribly ill Wei Jingsheng in his prison cell, and ask him if developing markets for toothpaste or breakfast cereal will help him win his freedom or save his life. I do not see how closer economic ties alone will somehow transform China's authoritarian system into a more demo-

cratic one. Unless we press the case for improvement in China's human rights record, using the leverage afforded us by the Chinese Government's desire to expand its economy and increase trade with us, I do not see how conditions will get much better.

In fact, the harsh prison conditions and lack of medical attention provided to Mr. Wei demonstrate that, after nearly 4 years, dialog and constructive engagement have made no impact on Chinese behavior. We should make it clear that human rights are of real—as opposed to rhetorical—concern to this country. Until Wei Jingsheng and others committed to reform in China are allowed to speak their voices freely and work for change, American-Chinese relations should not be based on a business-as-usual basis. I hope the administration will do everything possible to demand the immediate release of Wei Jingsheng and urge Chinese authorities to provide him with access to medical care that he urgently requires.

CALLING FOR THE IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF WEI JINGSHENG

Mr. D'AMATO. Mr. President, I rise today to call for the release of Wei Jingsheng who has been imprisoned for almost 18 years under the harshest of circumstances in China. Mr. Wei was first jailed in 1979 for advocating democratic reform in China. Can you imagine? The free exchange of such ideas which we take for granted every day in the United States cost Mr. Wei his freedom.

Mr. Wei was released in 1993 in an act which curiously coincided with an upcoming vote by the International Olympic Committee on China's application to host the Olympic games in the year 2000. China's bid for the Olympic games was unsuccessful and shortly thereafter Mr. Wei was imprisoned again. He is not scheduled for release until 2009. This overtly politically motivated move is unconscionable.

Through these years of personal terror Mr. Wei has frequently been held in solitary confinement. He was been the victim of cruelty and mistreatment which had a serious effect on Mr. Wei's health. I am told that Mr. Wei is suffering from heart disease but does not have access to proper medical care. This treatment is simply wrong.

The People's Republic of China wants to assume the status of a responsible nation in the world community. And yet they continue to subjugate the people of Tibet. As a case in point, I spoke earlier this year on the floor about Ngawang Choephel, a former Fulbright scholar at Middlebury College and a friend of the United States, who is serving an 18-year prison term for supposed espionage activities.

The People's Republic of China wants to assume the status of a responsible nation in the world community. And yet they continue to subjugate their own people as well. Mr. Wei is a case in point. The State Department in its an-

nual human rights record for 1996 hit the nail on the head. It said that China "continued to commit widespread and well-documented human rights abuses, in violation of internationally accepted norms, stemming from the authorities' intolerance of dissent, fear of unrest, and the absence or inadequacy of laws protecting basic freedoms."

Mr. President, Mr. Wei has suffered enough. The people of Tibet have suffered enough. The people of China have suffered enough. It is time for a change. We must work for that change in areas we can influence. And let's start by calling for the release of Mr. Wei.

THE UNJUST IMPRISONMENT OF WEI JINGSHENG

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, today it is my unhappy duty to note the continued imprisonment of Wei Jingsheng by the Government of China. In an attempt to silence his bold voice for democracy, Mr. Wei has been jailed in solitary confinement or forced to work in a labor camp for all but 6 months of the past 18 years. As a result of his mistreatment, he suffers from a life-threatening heart condition and cannot lift his head due to a neck injury. Today I join my colleagues to call for his immediate and unconditional release, and urge the Government of China to provide him with medical attention.

Mr. Wei's commitment to democracy and freedom despite such mistreatment is a testament to the strength of the human spirit and the power that words hold over the human soul. He was first jailed in 1978 after founding an independent magazine and daring to call for democracy. Despite the hard conditions of prison life, Mr. Wei refused to abandon his beliefs. Over the next decade, he wrote many letters—some to his family telling of his daily life, others to the leaders of his nation urging them to take immediate steps toward democracy. Virtually all were confiscated by prison authorities and never sent. Released as a result of international pressure in 1993, Mr. Wei immediately resumed his advocacy of democracy despite all that he had suffered. Within 6 months he was sentenced to another 14 years in prison. Today Chinese officials consider his writings so threatening that he is constantly monitored by criminal inmates whose job it is to ensure that he puts no words down on paper.

Despite these measures, Mr. Wei's words have echoed throughout China and the world. In 1989, demands for his release helped to stir the demonstration in Tiananmen Square. He also has been honored with the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award, the Sakharov Prize for Freedom, and been nominated many times for the Nobel Prize for Peace.

I am confident that the Chinese Government's attempts to silence Mr. Wei will not succeed. Mr. Wei's letters,