

Media Advisory

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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WHAT: Congressional Hearing on Human Rights Abuses in China

Gagging the Lawyers: China's Crackdown on Human Rights Lawyers and Its Implications for U.S.-China Relations

Convened by Congressional-Executive Commission on China ([CECC](#))
[Senator Marco Rubio, Chairman](#) | [Representative Christopher Smith, Cochairman](#)

Over the past four years, the Chinese government has carried out an extensive campaign to silence political dissent, curtail civil society, and ensure ideological loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party from various sectors of society, including business leaders, bloggers and social media users, university professors, and journalists. One of the most vicious aspects of the campaign has been the use of detentions, arrests, torture, televised confessions, and enforced disappearances to punish lawyers and legal advocates who have defended various victims of the Chinese government's human rights abuses, including religious adherents, petitioners, artists, and reporters. On July 9, 2015, an unprecedented, sweeping, nationwide crackdown began in which over 300 human rights lawyers, legal professionals, and human rights advocates were detained, summoned for questioning, or disappeared. This intensified targeting of the Chinese legal community came to be called the "709" crackdown.

Through the testimony of a legal expert and individuals with firsthand knowledge of alleged repression at the hands of the Chinese government, the Commission will examine the foreign policy implications of China's campaign to silence human rights lawyers in light of President Xi Jinping's stated commitment to establish the rule of law in China. The Commission will also examine the chilling effect of the July 2015 crackdown, the lawyers' motivation for taking on politically sensitive cases, and the responses of many of their spouses and family members, who have been emboldened in their own advocacy despite ongoing intimidation and harassment.

WHO: Testimony from [Terence C. Halliday, Ph.D.](#), Research Professor, and Co-director of the Center on Law & Globalization at the [American Bar Foundation](#) and co-author (with [Sida Liu](#)) of the book "[Criminal Defense in China: The Politics of Lawyers at Work.](#)"

Halliday will address key questions on the crackdown on Chinese activist-lawyers that have emerged from his empirical research:

- What led up to China's most severe crackdown against lawyers in July 2015? What triggered the crackdown?
- Why are lawyers targeted? Why does China fear lawyers?
- What motivates lawyers to take the great risks involved in defending clients on the most sensitive issues? Where do they get their courage?
- Is there any significance in the fact that many notable activist lawyers targeted in the crackdown are Protestant Christians?
- How can the outside world, governments and publics, make a difference?

WHERE: Wednesday, June 28, 2017
Capitol Visitor Center
HVC-210
2:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. (EDT)

ACCESS: Hearing is open to the public.

Hearing can be viewed via live [Webcast](#)

ABOUT THE AMERICAN BAR FOUNDATION

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