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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

May 21, 1998

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your letter regarding China and the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

I share your view that vigorous support for human rights must continue to be a key element of our relationship with China. Human rights were a focal point of my discussions with President Jiang during the Washington Summit in October, and they will be a key part of our discussions during my visit to China this summer.

I am also committed to the public dimension of human rights advocacy, and I recognize the important role that the United Nations Human Rights Commission and other international fora can play in ensuring scrutiny and encouraging reform.

Our position on a China resolution at the Human Rights Commission, and our decision to forego a resolution this year, were guided by our desire to promote positive changes in China. Prior to our decision, we consistently indicated our willingness to forego a resolution so long as the Chinese took measures to address important human rights concerns. In particular, we stressed the significance of dissident releases and action by the Chinese on the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. We believe the significance of the Political Covenant goes beyond the human rights obligations to which signatories pledge adherence, as the Covenant also requires that governments prepare detailed and periodic reports that will be subject to scrutiny by both the United Nations Human Rights Committee and the public.

On March 12, 1998, the Chinese announced their intention to sign the Political Covenant. This announcement came after China's signing of the International Covenant on Economic and Social Rights, as well as the release on medical parole of Wei Jingsheng and several other dissidents.

These measures informed our decision to forego a resolution this year, as did our expectation that there would be further dissident releases. As you know, the Chinese recently released Wang Dan, who has traveled to the United States. We will continue to press for additional prisoner releases.

Despite these measures, the Chinese record on human rights remains far from satisfactory, and we will identify and speak out forcefully about abuses. This was clearly demonstrated, for example, by Ambassador Bill Richardson's strong Geneva statements on human rights in China. Besides forceful public advocacy, we will pursue our human rights agenda with China through a variety of other means, including promotion of rule of law programs and both official and unofficial dialogues on human rights.

Thank you again for sharing your views with me on these critically important issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Bill Clinton", with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke at the end.

The Honorable Jesse Helms
Chairman
Committee on Foreign Relations
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510-3301

980602

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

May 21, 1998

Dear Senator Ashcroft:

Thank you for your letter regarding China and the United Nations Commission on Human Rights.

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Thank you again for sharing your views with me on these critically important issues.

Sincerely,

A

Bar Clinton

The Honorable John R. Ashcroft
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510-2504

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Also sent to all on attached list.

The Honorable John R. Ashcroft
United States Senate
316 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-2504

The Honorable Sam Brownback
United States Senate
303 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-1604

The Honorable Susan M. Collins
United States Senate
172 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-1904

The Honorable Alfonse M. D'Amato
United States Senate
520 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-3202

The Honorable Lauch Faircloth
United States Senate
317 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-3305

The Honorable Russell Feingold
United States Senate
716 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-4904

The Honorable Jesse Helms
United States Senate
403 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-3301

The Honorable Tim Hutchinson
United States Senate
245 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-0403

The Honorable James M. Inhofe
United States Senate
453 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-3603

The Honorable Connie Mack
United States Senate
517 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-0904

The Honorable Charles S. Robb
United States Senate
154 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-4603

The Honorable Paul David Wellstone
United States Senate
136 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510-2303

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

ID 9801786

REFERRAL

DATE: 01 JUN 98

MEMORANDUM FOR: WH STRIPPING DESK

DOCUMENT DESCRIPTION: TO: HELMS, JESSE A

SOURCE: PRESIDENT

DATE: 21 MAY 98

SUBJ: REPLY RE CHINA & UN COMMIS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

REQUIRED ACTION: FOR DISPATCH

DUE DATE: 02 JUN 98

COMMENT:

FOR


JOHN W. FICKLIN

NSC RECORDS MANAGEMENT OFFICE