



Canadian Coalition
on Human Rights in China

Coalition Canadienne
pour les droits humains en Chine

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A2

November 29, 2017

Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing this Open Letter to you, as members of the Canadian Coalition on Human Rights in China,¹ in advance of your upcoming trip to China. We urge you to prioritize human rights concerns in all meetings and exchanges while you are in China, and to take up three recommendations in particular.

- Respect for human rights must lie at the heart of all aspects of the Canada/China relationship.
- Any possible trade deal with China must be subject to comprehensive, independent human rights impact assessments before entering into force and at regular intervals thereafter.
- China must free prisoners of conscience held in the country and, at a time when the Canada/China trade relationship may be expanding and deepening, must free sixteen Canadian citizens and other individuals with close Canadian connections who are unjustly imprisoned in the country.

We wrote to you in August 2016, in advance of your first trip to China as Prime Minister. We noted the concern, shared by all of our organizations, about a concerted, deepening clampdown on human rights lawyers and activists and intensified measures to curtail freedoms of expression, association and assembly in China. We stressed that those were worrying indications of a deteriorating climate for human rights protection in the country. Sadly, fifteen months later, that assessment holds and, if anything, has only deepened.

¹ The Canadian Coalition for Human Rights in China is made up of 15 Canadian organizations dedicated to ensuring there is strong attention to human rights in Canada's relationship with China. This letter is endorsed by the following members of the Coalition: Amnesty International Canada (English & Francophone Branches), Canada-Hong Kong Link, Canada Tibet Committee, Canadian Journalists for Free Expression, Falun Dafa Association of Canada, Federation for a Democratic China, Students for a Free Tibet Canada, Toronto Association for Democracy in China, the Uyghur Canadian Society and the Vancouver Society in Support of Democratic Movement in China.

Trade

At the time of your August 2016 trip we highlighted that any expanded trade relationship with China must not contribute to human rights abuses and that attention to human rights impacts must be an integral part of any negotiation process. In May 2017, our coalition made the enclosed submission as part of public consultations during the exploratory phase of Canada/China trade discussions. We highlighted the importance of subjecting any possible trade deal with China to regular human rights impact assessments. We have been deeply disappointed that this recommendation has not been accepted by your government. We consider it to be of paramount importance and, therefore, we repeat it at this time.

- Before any free trade agreement is finalized and at regular intervals thereafter, it should be subject to a thoroughgoing human rights impact assessment in accordance with principles and approaches developed by UN human rights experts. Detrimental impacts identified through the assessment must be addressed before any deal enters into force or continues to be in force.

Prisoners

Prime Minister, among the many matters of very serious human rights concern for our Coalition over our twenty years of advocacy, and for each of our organizations individually, has been the fact that untold thousands of individuals continue to be unjustly detained in China, as prisoners of conscience and political prisoners, in circumstances in which such fundamental rights as fair trial guarantees and protection against torture are routinely and cavalierly violated.

We regularly compile a list of emblematic prisoner cases of concern to our Coalition, which we urge you and other senior Canadian officials to raise in exchanges with Chinese counterparts. We have enclosed our most recent prisoner list with this letter and reiterate our hope that you will make it clear that Canada expects these individuals to be released.

Furthermore, Prime Minister, at a time when Canada is considering deepening our relationship with China through a possible free trade agreement, it absolutely must be a priority concern for you that a significant number of Canadian citizens and other individuals with close Canadian connections face arbitrary, unlawful imprisonment and other serious human rights violations in Chinese jails; and that some of those cases date back more than a decade. We look to you to advocate forcefully for these individuals to be freed.

We have attached an Annex to this letter, providing the names of sixteen imprisoned Canadian citizens and other individuals with close Canadian connections known to and of concern to our Coalition. We draw your attention in particular to the cases of **Huseyin Celil**, a Uyghur Imam imprisoned since 2006, and **Qian Sun**, a Falun Gong practitioner imprisoned since February 2017, both of whom are Canadian citizens; as well as **Wang Bingzhang**, a democracy activist imprisoned since 2002, who was one of the first Chinese nationals to study at a Canadian university and whose daughter and several other close relatives are Canadian citizens.

Conclusion

Prime Minister, our Coalition is not made up of trade experts and we take no position on the viability or prospect of any possible free trade deal with China. We are, however, human rights experts and that is what unites us in our call that any such deal must put human rights first, including through a rigorous human rights impact assessment process. It is also our expectation that – as Canadian Prime Minister – you will highlight how difficult it will be for Canada to pursue trade negotiations while a broad range of human rights problems persist in China.

Thank you for your attention to our concerns and recommendations. We would welcome an opportunity to meet with you or your officials for further discussions before you travel to China.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alex Neve". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alex Neve
Secretary General
Amnesty International Canada (English branch)
On behalf of the Canadian Coalition for Human Rights in China