

Bob Dole



NEWS

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER

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HARRY WU

HUMAN RIGHTS CRUSADER'S IMPRISONMENT AN AFFRONT TO ALL FREEDOM-LOVING PEOPLE; U.S. AT CRITICAL CROSSROADS WITH CHINA

By now most of America knows of the unjust detention of Harry Wu by the People's Republic of China. Harry Wu is an American citizen and human rights crusader. Since June 19, 1995, he has been detained in China. Consular access to detained American citizens is required to be granted within 48 hours under the terms of a 1982 agreement with China. But China did not grant access to Mr. Wu until July 10 -- 21 days later. On July 9, Harry Wu was charged with offenses which could carry the death sentence.

Harry Wu was traveling on a valid American passport, with a valid Chinese visa. There seems little doubt that he was targeted by the Chinese government for his outspoken and brave efforts to describe Chinese human rights abuses. Mr. Wu himself suffered almost two decades of imprisonment in the Chinese gulag. His continued imprisonment is an affront to all freedom loving people.

Our relationship with China is at a critical crossroads. Our relations with China are at the lowest point in years, and the list of disputed issues is long: proliferation, human rights, Taiwan and trade. We must, however, choose our course carefully. As Henry Kissinger said this morning before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee: "The danger of the existing roller coaster towards confrontation to both China and the United States is incalculable." I share Dr. Kissinger's concern over the dangers of a full-scale confrontation.

But just as we must not casually move toward a conflict that serves neither country, we cannot remain silent in the face of outrageous conduct. The most fundamental duty of government is to protect the rights of its citizens -- and Harry Wu is an American citizen. I urge the Chinese to release Harry Wu, and remove this latest flashpoint in our relations.

A major United Nations Conference on Women is scheduled for September in Beijing. I agree with the bipartisan view recently expressed by my Republican colleague from Kansas, Senator Kassebaum, and the Democratic Congressman from Indiana, Lee Hamilton, when they suggested the United Nations should quit wasting scarce resources on conferences that spend much and achieve little.

I understand the administration plans to send a senior delegation, including two Cabinet officers. In my view, it would be wrong for the United States to participate in the United Nations Womens Conference at any level or in any fashion as long as Harry Wu is held. This morning, along with Speaker Gingrich, Chairman Helms, Chairman Gilman, and Helsinki Commission Co-Chairs Senator D'Amato and Congressman Chris Smith, I sent a letter to President Clinton urging a U.S. boycott of the U.N. Women's Conference as long as Harry Wu is detained. In my view, that is the least this government can do to try to show our displeasure with China's action. It is also the only prudent course in light of the State Department's briefing that they could not guarantee the safety of Americans travelling to the conference.

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