

The Courage to Stand Alone serves as a testament of resistance to the totalitarian phenomenon so brilliantly dissected in our century by the likes of Hannah Arendt and George Orwell. Wei's letters stand as the literary equivalent of the famous photograph of the lone Chinese individual confronting a column of tanks during the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre.

In his letter of June 15, 1991 Wei writes:

It is precisely because human rights are independent of the will of the government, and even independent of the will of all mankind, that people fight for the realization and expansion of human rights as a natural and unprovoked matter of course. They gradually come to the realization that the more widespread and reliable the protection of human rights is, the more their own human rights are protected. Just as man's understanding of objective truths and objective laws is a gradual process, man's understanding and comprehension of human rights is a gradual process. Just as man's grasp and utilization of objective laws is a progressive process, man's protection of the theory and practice of human rights is a progressive process.

Wei Jingsheng—by his words and conduct—has done much to advance our understanding of human rights in China and throughout the world. I commend "The Courage to Stand Alone" to all Senators, and I look forward to the day when Wei Jingsheng will again be free to stand together with other Chinese dissidents who struggle to bring a measure of democracy to their ancient and long-suffering homeland.

WEI JINGSHENG

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, there are some individuals whose personal courage is almost impossible to fathom, who will be long remembered for the example they set in standing up for what they believed for the sake of all of us. Wei Jingsheng, who is perhaps China's most famous political prisoner, is one such individual. Today I join Senators MOYNIHAN, HELMS, WELLSTONE and KENNEDY in recognizing today's publication of Mr. Wei's collection of letters to Chinese leaders and members of his family, and essays about democracy, "The Courage to Stand Alone: Letters from Prison and Other Writings."

Known as the intellectual leader of the Democracy Wall movement, China's first prodemocracy protest, Mr. Wei has spent nearly all of the last 18 years in prison for his outspoken, unrelenting criticism of China's political leaders and his thoughtful and inspiring writings about the need for democratic change and the rule of law in China. In one essay, Mr. Wei describes the law in China as, "merely a 'legal weapon' that anyone in power can wield against his enemies."

In an effort to convince the International Olympic Committee to award China the 2000 Olympic Games, the Chinese Government released Mr. Wei in

late 1993. The cynicism of that decision was exposed just 6 months later, when he was rearrested and held incommunicado for 20 months, in part for meeting with Assistant Secretary of State John Shattuck. He is currently serving a 14-year sentence.

In addition to the egregious violations of the rights to freedom of expression, due process, and freedom from arbitrary arrest and detention, I am very concerned about Mr. Wei's health. He is suffering from high blood pressure and a heart condition, and has not received the medical attention he needs. He is not permitted to go outside, nor is he allowed physical exercise. I am told that prison authorities have moved other prisoners into Mr. Wei's cell to monitor and limit his political writing. If Mr. Wei serves all of his current 14-year prison sentence, he will be 60 years old when he is released. His health is so fragile it is uncertain whether he will ever get out alive.

Mr. President, Mr. Wei is one of thousands of courageous people who have been thrown in prison, tortured or otherwise silenced in order to squelch any expression for democratic change in China. Despite repeated attempts by our administration to discuss human rights with Chinese authorities, the Chinese Government has continued to insist that internationally recognized human rights are an internal matter. The situation has gotten worse, not better.

I urge all Senators read "The Courage to Stand Alone," and to remember Wei Jingsheng and the thousands of other Chinese citizens who have remained steadfast in support of democracy and human rights, in the face of repression.

RELEASE OF WEI JINGSHENG

Mr. GRAMS. Mr. President, I join my colleagues urging the release of Wei Jingsheng, currently imprisoned in China for his efforts to promote democracy in China. Serving his second long-term sentence, Mr. Wei is seriously ill without access to proper medical care. He has served nearly 18 years in various prisons and labor camps and will not be released until 2009. It is doubtful he will last that long without medical attention.

I hope the leaders of China will grant Mr. Wei's release as an humanitarian gesture that would show the world that China has a commitment to improve the human rights of its citizens.

TRIBUTE TO WEI JINGSHENG

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, I rise today to join my colleagues in urging the authorities in Beijing to provide immediate medical care to Wei Jingsheng and to end his prolonged incarceration in Chinese prison. Granting these requests would not only be an act of official compassion but it would also signal to others that the introduction of economic liberalism—and the re-

markable economic advancements that it spawned—is leading to improvements in internal freedom, human rights practices, and the quality of life in the People's Republic of China.

Responding to our modest requests would be a positive sign that China, as it seeks to be more fully integrated into the global system, is increasingly self-confident about itself, about the image it projects to the rest of the world and about the role it intends to play in the world.

Wei Jingsheng has spent the better part of his adult life in detention, in jail, and in labor camps. Most of his past 18 years have been spent in solitary confinement in unusually harsh conditions. His health has deteriorated badly and he is deprived of most normal privileges available to political prisoners. Those conditions and these deprivations would have broken the spirit of defiance in most human beings. Not so for Wei Jingsheng.

Wei Jingsheng's remarkable prison letters to the Chinese leadership will be published today, May 13. His book, "The Courage to Stand Alone: Letters from Prison and Other Writings," is a splendid testament to the yearning for democracy by a political dissident who has never experienced true freedom in a land and country that has never experienced true democracy or anything approximating an open society. His writings speak to us about the need for democratic reform at a time when China exhibits little internal visible dissent. There is now no visible political dissent in China because political dissidents have either gone into exile, are in prison, or have redirected their energies in new-found entrepreneurial enterprises.

Mr. President, we are here today not only to laud the publication of Wei Jingsheng's book of letters or to urge Beijing to discard its harsh treatment of its leading political dissident, we are here to honor a true democrat. We should honor true democrats and democracy anywhere, and under any circumstances. We can and should promote human rights practices and democracy abroad just as we pursue other important national interests.

Our foreign policy must express both our values and our interests. That is why we must continue to support the development of political and economic reforms abroad while endorsing those democracy-promoting programs undertaken by such non-government organizations as the National Endowment for Democracy [NED] and the Center for Democracy.

Wei Jingsheng's current prison term expires in the year 2009 but his health is reportedly so poor that he may not survive until then. Keeping Wei Jingsheng in prison under such difficult conditions would be a permanent stain on China's claim that it is misunderstood by the rest of the world. To release this man and other prisoners of conscience would bring good will to China and assure the outside world