

that China enjoys the self-confidence to change.

I join with my colleagues in the hope that Wei Jingsheng will be released from prison in the very near future.

Thank you.

URGING THE GOVERNMENT OF CHINA TO RELEASE WEI JINGSHENG—A POLITICAL PRISONER

Mr. DODD. Mr. President, I rise today with a simple message, a message to the Government of China to release Wei Jingsheng. Who is Wei Jingsheng? Born in China, Wei Jingsheng is a dreamer, a political activist, a writer, a silenced leader, an inspiration, a nurturing older brother, and one who possesses an unparalleled faith in democracy and its place in modern China. He is the kind of man who if living in America would undoubtedly grace these Halls. But Wei Jingsheng does not live in the United States, he lives in China, where the courage of his convictions have not been appreciated, in fact quite the opposite, Wei Jingsheng has been severely punished.

In speaking out for democracy and reform, Wei Jingsheng has suffered great consequences—consequences including nearly 18 years of solitary confinement, torturous treatment, the lack of medical attention, and numerous other methods known to squelch a man's spirits and weaken his convictions.

Now that we know about his punishment, let us consider Wei Jingsheng's crimes: numerous writings on democracy, a series of letters to China's paramount leader Deng Xiaoping before his death, communicating with foreign journalists, participating in the 1979 Democracy Wall movement, and most recently meeting with John Shattuck, the United States Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor in 1994. Frankly, these do not strike me as crimes, or actions that warrant any sanctions by the state, and most certainly are not at all commensurate with the punishment Wei Jingsheng has endured.

Respect for human rights is an international concept. We only need look to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to see a sample of the international consensus on human rights. While China may resent United States scrutiny on this topic, we do in fact have a legitimate right, as well as a moral obligation, to call for improved conditions. We can and should have a human rights dialog with Chinese leaders, and I encourage the administration to make more opportunities for such high level discussions to take place.

Wei Jingsheng is reported to be near the end of his life—a life of struggle and hardship. His recently published book "The Courage To Stand Alone: Letters From Prison and Other Writings" underscore Wei Jingsheng's struggle to promote democracy in

China. I stand with my other colleagues in the Senate today to encourage the Government of China to immediately release Wei Jingsheng.

WEI JINGSHENG

Mr. KENNEDY. Mr. President, I join today with my colleagues in solidarity with a courageous Chinese advocate of human rights, Wei Jingsheng.

Each year, the family and friends of Robert F. Kennedy, and those who honor his legacy present a human rights award in my brothers name. In 1994, Wei Jingsheng won that award.

Except for a brief period in late 1993 and early 1994, Wei has been imprisoned since 1979 because he dared to call for democracy and freedom of expression in his country.

Wei never feared to tell the story of the abysmal conditions imposed on those who dare to speak for human rights, democracy, and freedom of expression in China.

He was an electrician at the Beijing Zoo in 1979, when he earned international praise during the Democracy Wall movement for his courageous essays criticizing the Chinese leadership and calling for democratic reforms.

In his 1978 journal, "Explorations," he publicly exposed the torture of political prisoners. He later wrote one of the most famous essays of the democracy movement, arguing eloquently and powerfully that democracy and free speech were preconditions for China's economic and social growth. In another essay, he challenged China's leader at the time, Deng Xiaoping, saying: "We cannot help asking Deng what his idea of democracy is. If the people have no right to express freely their opinions or to enjoy freedom of speech and criticism, then how can one talk of democracy? * * * Only a genuine general election can create a government and leaders ready to serve the interests of the electorate."

For his refusal to remain quiet, he was arrested in 1979, tried secretly, and sentenced to 15 years in prison—most of which he spent in solitary confinement. He was repeatedly tortured.

In September 1993, Wei was released as part of China's public relations attempt to win the opportunity to host the Olympic Games in the year 2000. Upon leaving prison, Wei immediately resumed his leading role in the democracy movement.

On April 1, 1994, after Wei met with Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights, John Shattuck, he was arrested again and held incommunicado for 20 months. He was formally charged in November 1995 and, after a 1 day trial, was convicted of "engaging in activities in an attempt to overthrow the Chinese Government."

Wei is now in a prison cell serving a 14-year sentence. His health is poor, his conditions are deplorable, and he is repeatedly tortured.

Today we celebrate the latest publication of his writings, "The Courage to

Stand Alone." Wei has often stood alone against the Chinese Government. But he does not stand alone, and he will not stand alone in the wider world. He will never stand alone, as long as there are those who care about human rights and who are willing to speak out on his behalf. We will go on doing so until Wei is released, all political prisoners in China are released, and the basic human rights he so bravely fights for are enjoyed by all the people of China.

MR. WEI JINGSHENG

Mr. KEMPTHORNE. Mr. President, I rise today to discuss the important issue of political prisoners in China. I want to thank Senators HELMS, MOYNIHAN, KENNEDY, and WELLSTONE for focusing the Senate's attention on this topic.

As we consider United States-China relations, respect for human rights must be at the top of our Nation's agenda. In that regard, today I call on the Government of China to release Mr. Wei Jingsheng from prison so that he may receive the immediate medical care he desperately needs.

Further, I call upon President Clinton to make the release of Mr. Wei Jingsheng, and all Chinese political prisoners, such as the Tibetan prisoners of conscience, a top priority as our Nation discusses our relationship with China.

The first amendment of our Constitution guarantees citizens of the United States freedom of speech, the right of people to peaceably assemble and the right to petition the government for a redress of grievances. Mr. Jingsheng does not have these rights, and so I join my colleagues asking for his freedom.

In the United States of America "We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness."

That all men are created equal. This is one of our Nation's unswerving principles and we have never and should never be willing to, as President John F. Kennedy stated in his inaugural address, "permit the slow undoing of human rights to which this nation has always been committed." And, as my colleagues know, there is a tragic lack of respect for human rights in China, which is why we are making these statements today.

Mr. Wei Jingsheng's courage and conviction should be a beacon to all of us. He has received the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award and I would like to quote Senator Robert F. Kennedy:

Some men see things as they are and say "why?"

I dream things that never were and say "why not?"

Mr. Jingsheng has that courage to ask "why not." So today, Mr. President, I rise and ask the Government of