

What kind of government skins alive its own citizens?

I urge our colleagues to read this statement and to keep this egregious abuse of human rights in mind when voting on China's trade status this year.

TESTIMONY OF WANG GUOQI, FORMER DOCTOR AT A CHINESE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY HOSPITAL

My name is Wang Guoqi and I am a 38-year-old physician from the People's Republic of China. In 1981, after standard childhood schooling and graduation, I joined the People's Liberation Army. By 1984, I was studying medicine at the Paramilitary Police Paramedical School. I received advanced degrees in Surgery and Human Tissue Studies, and consequently became a specialist in the burn victims unit at the Paramilitary Police Tianjin General Brigade Hospital in Tianjin. My work required me to remove skin and corneas from the corpses of over one hundred executed prisoners, and, on a couple of occasions, victims of intentionally botched executions. It is with deep regret and remorse for my actions that I stand here today testifying against the practices of organ and tissue sales from death row prisoners.

My involvement in harvesting the skin from prisoners began while performing research on cadavers at the Beijing People's Liberation Army Surgeons Advanced Studies School, in Beijing's 304th Hospital. This hospital is directly subordinate to the PLA, and so connections between doctors and officers were very close. In order to secure a corpse from the execution grounds, security officers and court units were given "red envelopes" with cash amounting to anywhere between 200-500 RMB per corpse. Then, after execution, the body would be rushed to the autopsy room rather than the crematorium, and we would extract skin, kidneys, livers, bones, and corneas for research and experimental purposes. I learned the process of preserving human skin and tissue for burn victims, and skin was subsequently sold to needy burn victims for 10 RMB per square centimeter.

After completing my studies in Beijing, and returning to Tianjin's Paramilitary Police General Brigade Hospital, I assisted hospital directors Liu Lingfeng and Song Heping in acquiring the necessary equipment to build China's first skin and tissue storehouse. Soon afterward, I established close ties with Section Chief Xing, a criminal investigator of the Tianjin Higher People's Court.

Acquiring skin from executed prisoners usually took place around major holidays or during the government's Strike Hard campaigns, when prisoners would be executed in groups. Section Chief Xing would notify us of upcoming executions. We would put an order in for the number of corpses we'd like to dissect, and I would give him 300 RMB per cadaver. The money exchange took place at the Higher People's Court, and no receipts or evidence of the transaction would be exchanged.

Once notified of an execution, our section would prepare all necessary equipment and arrive at the Beicang Crematorium in plain clothes with all official license plates on our vehicles replaced with civilian ones. This was done on orders of the criminal investigation section. Before removing the skin, we would cut off the ropes that bound the criminals' hands and remove their clothing. Each criminal had identification papers in his or her pocket that detailed the executee's name, age, profession, work unit, address, and crime. Nowhere on these papers was there any mention of voluntary organ donation, and clearly the prisoners did not know how their bodies would be used after death.

We had to work quickly in the crematorium, and 10-20 minutes were generally enough to remove all skin from a corpse. Whatever remained was passed over to the crematorium workers. Between five and eight times a year, the hospital would send a number of teams to execution sites to harvest skin. Each team could process up to four corpses, and they would take as much as was demanded by both our hospital and fraternal hospitals. Because this system allowed us to treat so many burn victims, our department became the most reputable and profitable department in Tianjin.

Huge profits prompted our hospital to urge other departments to design similar programs. The urology department thus began its program of kidney transplant surgeries. The complexity of the surgery called for a price of \$120-150,000 RMB per kidney.

With such high prices, primarily wealthy or high-ranking people were able to buy kidneys. If they had the money, the first step would be to find a donor-recipient match. In the first case of kidney transplantation in August, 1990, I accompanied the urology surgeon to the higher court and prison to collect blood samples from four death-row prisoners. The policeman escorting us told the prisoners that we were there to check their health conditions; therefore, the prisoners did not know the purpose for their blood samples or that their organs might be up for sale. Out of the four samplings, one basic and sub-group blood match was found for the recipient, and the prisoner's kidneys were deemed fit for transplantation.

Once a donor was confirmed, our hospital held a joint meeting with the urology department, burn surgery department, and operating room personnel. We scheduled tentative plans to prepare the recipient for the coming kidney and discussed concrete issues of transportation and personnel. Two days before execution, we received final confirmation from the higher court, and on the day of the execution we arrived at the execution site in plain clothes. In the morning, the donating prisoner had received a heparin shot to prevent blood clotting and ease the organ extraction process. When all military personnel and condemned prisoners would arrive at the site, the organ donating prisoner was brought forth for the first execution.

At the execution site, a colleague, Xing Tongyi, and I were responsible for carrying the stretcher. Once the hand-cuffed and leg-ironed prisoner had been shot, a bailiff removed the leg irons. Xing Tongyi and I had 15 seconds to bring the executee to the waiting ambulance. Inside the ambulance, the best urologist surgeons removed both kidneys, and rushed back to the waiting recipient at the hospital. Meanwhile, our burn surgery department waited for the execution of the following three prisoners, and followed their corpses to the crematorium where we removed skin in a small room next to the furnaces. Since our director had business ties with the Tianjin Ophthalmologic Hospital and Beijing's 304th Hospital, he instructed us to extract the executee's corneas as well.

Although I performed this procedure nearly a hundred times in the following years, it was an incident in October 1995 that has tortured my conscience to no end. We were sent to Hebei Province to extract kidneys and skin. We arrived one day before the execution of a man sentenced to death for robbery and the murder of a would-be witness. Before execution, I administered a shot of heparin to prevent blood clotting to the prisoner. A nearby policeman told him it was a tranquilizer to prevent unnecessary suffering during the execution. The criminal responded by giving thanks to the government.

At the site, the execution commander gave the order, "Go!," and the prisoner was shot

to the ground. Either because the executioner was nervous, aimed poorly, or intentionally misfired to keep the organs intact, the prisoner had not yet died, but instead lay convulsing on the ground. We were ordered to take him to the ambulance anyway where urologists Wang Zhifu, Zhao Qingling and Liu Qiyou extracted his kidneys quickly and precisely. When they finished, the prisoner was still breathing and his heart continued to beat. The execution commander asked if they might fire a second shot to finish him off, to which the county court staff replied, "Save that shot. With both kidneys out, there is no way he can survive." The urologists rushed back to the hospital with the kidneys, the county staff and executioner left the scene, and eventually the paramilitary policemen disappeared as well. We burn surgeons remained inside the ambulance to harvest the skin. We could hear people outside the ambulance, and fearing it was the victim's family who might force their way inside, we left our job half-done, and the half-dead corpse was thrown in a plastic bag onto the flatbed of the crematorium truck. As we left in the ambulance, we were pelted by stones from behind.

After this incident, I have had horrible, re-occurring nightmares. I have participated in a practice that serves the regime's political and economic goals far more than it benefits the patients. I have worked at execution sites over a dozen times, and have taken the skin from over one hundred prisoners in crematoriums. Whatever impact I have made in the lives of burn victims and transplant patients does not excuse the unethical and immoral manner of extracting organs.

I resolved to no longer participate in the organ business, and my wife supported my decision. I submitted a written report requesting reassignment to another job. This request was flatly denied on the grounds that no other job matched my skills. I began to refuse to take part in outings to execution sites and crematoriums, to which the hospital responded by blaming and criticizing me for my refusals. I was forced to submit a pledge that I would never expose their practices of procuring organs and the process by which the organs and skin were preserved and sold for huge profits. They threatened me with severe consequences, and began to train my replacement. Until the day I left China in the spring of 2000, they were still harvesting organs from execution sites.

I hereby expose all these terrible things to the light in the hope that this will help to put an end to this evil practice.

TRIBUTE TO THE MOUNT HOPE HOUSING COMPANY, INC.

HON. JOSÉ E. SERRANO

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 28, 2001

Mr. SERRANO. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the Mount Hope Housing Company, Inc. (MHHC) as they celebrate their 15th anniversary today.

The Mount Hope Housing Company, Inc. was formed in 1986 as a part of intense organizing efforts of residents and community groups in the Mount Hope neighborhood in the South Bronx. Focusing first on the pressing need for the availability of affordable housing, Mount Hope completed one of the first housing tax credit projects in the United States in 1986 and to date has rehabilitated over 1,400 housing units. As a result of this intense and

comprehensive effort, one in six residents of the Mount Hope neighborhood lives in a building operated by the MHHC.

Since its founding, the MHHC has continued to enhance its abilities and expand its services to the community. In 1994, the MHHC opened a thrift shop. One year later, the Mount Hope Primary Care Center opened. And in 1996, the New Bronx Employment Service was inaugurated, followed by the Neighborhood Housing Service/MHHC Home Maintenance Training Center in 1998. And now MHHC is planning to develop a community center that will house programs for area youth like a Boys and Girls Club, affordable child care and a state of the art center for computer training.

Mr. Speaker, the Mount Hope Housing Company, Inc. is another fine example of a community organization dedicated to empowering Bronx residents and revitalizing the community, using a comprehensive, self-sustaining and long-term approach. Its success reminds all of us of the contributions local organizations have made to improving the lives of citizens in their respective communities.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in paying tribute to the Mount Hope Housing Company, Inc. and in wishing them continued success.

CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY OF
DAVID HOFFMAN

HON. MIKE THOMPSON

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 28, 2001

Mr. THOMPSON of California. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to request that the testimony given by David Hoffman, President of Internews in Arcata, CA, be submitted into the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD. Mr. Hoffman's valuable testimony before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Foreign Operations is as follows:

TESTIMONY TO THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON FOREIGN OPERATIONS, EXPORT FINANCING, AND RELATED PROGRAMS BY DAVID HOFFMAN, PRESIDENT, INTERNEWS

Electronic media are the most powerful force for social change in the world today. As Americans, we live and breathe in the information age. Media are central to our economy, our culture, our political system and our everyday lives.

But in many countries around the world, free media can by no means be taken for granted. In Russia, President Putin has prosecuted Victor Gusinsky, whose influential television network has been critical of the government. In Ukraine, Prime Minister Kuchma has been accused of ordering the murder of a dissident journalist. In China, the government selectively censors Internet web sites that challenge the official version of events. In Iran, dozens of newspapers have been banned and their editors thrown in jail. In Zimbabwe, journalists have been beaten and jailed. In Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, independent television stations have been suppressed.

And of course, former President Milosevic used state media as a propaganda weapon to foment hatred and violence in the Balkans. But with US government funds, Internews and other NGOs were able to provide critical support to independent broadcasters in Serbia that formed the nucleus of opposition to the Milosevic regime. In Serbia and many

countries around the world, independent media have been on the front lines in the fight for freedom and democracy.

With significant funding from USAID, Internews helped developed 1500 independent, non-governmental broadcasters in 23 countries. During the past ten years, we have also trained 16,000 media professionals.

IMPORTANCE OF OPEN MEDIA

In all these countries we have learned that open media are essential for holding free and fair elections, for exposing corruption and human rights abuses, for allowing the free exchange of ideas. American support of uncensored news outlets, therefore, should be at the top of our foreign policy agenda.

America's goal should be the development of a global "electronic commons" where everyone can participate in the global marketplace of goods and ideas, where everyone has access to multiple sources of information, where government regulation of the media is kept to a minimum, where the poor, minorities, women and every group that has been disenfranchised in the past will have a voice.

INDEPENDENT MEDIA IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD

This Committee and this Congress can be proud of their support for open media in the former Soviet Union, in the Balkans and most recently in Indonesia. But there are large areas of the world where open media have yet to take hold. In Africa, in particular, independent media are just in their infancy. We encourage the Committee to continue and expand its support of open media in developing countries.

We would like to share the key lessons that Internews has learned in our nearly twenty years of experience in the field of international media, and make one recommendation for the Committee to consider this year.

First, local indigenous media are the best counterweight to repressive regimes everywhere. They should be supported as an integral part of American foreign policy.

Second, support for local broadcast media is the most effective means for building open, civil societies and healthy market economies in line with democratic ideals. This support needs to be sustained for the long run until stable economies and civil societies are in place.

And third, in the developing world, locally-produced radio programs and other media coverage are unparalleled in their potential to effectively educate mass populations about urgent social problems such as HIV/AIDS.

We would urge the committee to give special attention to this last point.

ROLE OF MEDIA IN COMBATTING HIV/AIDS IN AFRICA

At a time when the incidence of HIV/AIDS has reached catastrophic proportions in Africa, there is an important opportunity to harness the power of local media to reduce the spread of this disease. Over 17 million Africans have died of AIDS since the epidemic began in the late 1970s. In at least eight sub-Saharan African nations, infection levels in the general population are 15% or higher.

Yet local news coverage of this epidemic is often seriously flawed. African journalists do not usually specialize in one particular area, so their knowledge of the issue may be shallow and the language they use may inadvertently further stigmatize victims of HIV/AIDS. As a recent Time magazine cover story concluded, "Ignorance is the crucial reason the epidemic has run out of control."

By training local African journalists in how to cover this issue effectively and responsibly, as Internews has done in Russia and Ukraine, we can reduce the ignorance

and fear that exacerbate the suffering. One of the biggest challenges of the AIDS pandemic is in reaching young audiences with needed information before they become sexually active. By focusing a media campaign on pre-pubescent African children, we can begin to get ahead of the spread of this deadly virus.

Internews therefore requests that this Committee recommend funding in the amount of \$2 million for Internews to implement a media training program to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa.

As elected officials; you know better than most the unequalled power of the media to inform and motivate the public. In Africa and the developing world, nothing is more effective than hearing local people on the radio speaking in their local dialect. If we can educate those voices about the true nature of the HIV virus, we can begin to change the attitudes and practices that have allowed this disease to run out of control.

WOMEN AND MEDIA IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD

Women in the developing world have a special role to play in changing public health practices and on a wide range of social issues.

In his book *Development As Freedom*, Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen illustrates how increased literacy, education, job opportunities, property rights and political representation for women directly translate into reduced infant mortality rates, lower birth rates, cleaner water, reduced crime and overall national economic growth.

If we want to see the less developed countries emerge from the morass of poverty, disease and chronic warfare, there is nothing more important we can do than increase the political and social influence of women. One way to increase the influence of women in the developing world is to open up opportunities for women in the media.

Let us train a new generation of women journalists, producers and media entrepreneurs in Africa. Let us develop the capacity of women's NGOs to utilize the media to deliver their messages. Let us help start new radio programs that address the needs of women. For example, with a grant from USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives, Internews helped develop the first radio program in Indonesia specifically targeted to a female audience. This type of assistance delivered throughout Africa would have the power to transform the continent. A democratic, open media in Africa is both a moral and a political imperative.

ABOUT INTERNEWS

Internews® is an international non-profit organization that supports open media worldwide. The company fosters independent media in emerging democracies, produces innovative television and radio programming and Internet content, and uses the media to reduce conflict within and between countries.

Internews programs are based on the conviction that vigorous and diverse mass media form an essential cornerstone of a free and open society. Internews projects currently span the former Soviet Union, Eastern and Western Europe, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Africa and the United States.

Formed in 1982, Internews Network, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) organization incorporated in California, with offices in 23 countries worldwide. The organization currently has offices in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Kosovo, France, Belgium, Israel/Palestine, Indonesia, East Timor, Thailand,