

## *Human Rights In China*

It has been known since before the 1960's — when Mao Zedong held power — that China has had issues with human rights violations and not protecting their citizens. Yet, even when someone else took power, these violations continued to happen. That mismanagement of basic human rights in regards to China, a highly contested topic, has become a widespread issue that can no longer be ignored. It is imperative a binding international code of rights is created, that everyone agrees to follow, to protect all citizens.

China, and the government of China (the Chinese Communist Party) does a poor job of recognizing a system of basic human rights. When people fight for their rights in America, they are seen as courageous, but in China it is quite opposite. These fighters get imprisoned, and sometimes fall under the category of what Chinese citizens call “enforced disappearance.” Journalists trying to cover topics like human rights or the people fighting for the rights get harassed, and sometimes even detained. “In 2018, the courts handed down lengthy prison terms to a number of prominent human rights activists after protracted and sham prosecutions. In July, a Wuhan court sentenced veteran democracy activist Qin Yongmin to 13 years in prison for “subversion of state power.” Qin, 64, has previously spent a total of 22 years in prison or in “Re-education Through Labor” (World Report 2018).

As an addition, the Chinese Communist Party only recognizes five religions: Buddhism, Taoism, Catholicism, Protestantism, and Islam. If one has a religion that isn't one of those five, it is not legal in China. One cannot pray or practice any religious methods under that religion without facing serious consequences. “Authorities retain control over religious bodies' personnel

appointments, publications, finances, and seminary applications. The government classifies many religious groups outside its control as “evil cults,” and subjects members to police harassment, torture, arbitrary detention, and imprisonment” (World Report 2018). This is a form of censorship, which the government has a heavy hand of.

A lot of things in China are censored to how the government wants, but just enough is left uncensored to give the illusion of freedom to Chinese citizens - something difficult to come by in that country. A binding code of international rights would solve this because each citizen would have freedom like never before, and would help to protect each human right.

Being a woman in today’s society is also difficult, let alone being a Chinese woman. Similar to America, China has a gender wage gap, where a women earns around 77.4% of what a man makes. Chinese women may have the right to vote, but up until 2015 they didn’t have the right to their own bodies and how many children they were allowed to have, but they are still facing violations of their reproductive rights. “In June, China University of Petroleum authorities held Ren Liping, a student who had accused an ex-boyfriend of raping her on campus, for six days in a hotel room after she protested against the university and police for mishandling her allegations” (World Report 2018).

Even if women in China are more willing to speak out against sexual harassment and what is happening to them, getting actual legal help is extremely difficult. Chinese law might make sexual harassment illegal, but the inaction to define what is considered to be sexual harassment makes actual legal cases nearly impossible to win. Being a Uighur women in China is even more difficult.

The Uighur Muslim minority has been facing extremely rough conditions in the internment camps they have been placed in. They have been tortured and murdered, and China is launching a mass campaign of “ethnic cleansing.” Unfortunately, China has denied any of the torture and actual harm of its citizens, instead calling these camps “boarding schools”, “completely voluntary”, and “educational training centers” (New York Times). One might say that, like the internment of Japanese-Americans in the 1920’s, it is for safety and protection that the Uighur are being held in camps. If that were true, then the guns would be facing outside the camps, to protect these citizens, rather than facing inside of the camps to inflict harm. This is on the borderline of genocide, yet the Chinese government seems unfazed and normalizes this cultural extermination.

A binding international code of rights could potentially solve all of these problems. It is created as a binding code so that each country agrees to follow and abide by the rules. If they don’t follow, they would have to face the consequences such as: an economic sanction, other trade barriers like tariffs, or other restrictions on financial transactions. It could be argued that countries wouldn’t want to follow this code, due to the consequences they might face if they break the agreement. This is where soft power backs the need for this agreement. A country who doesn’t agree to follow could potentially be coerced because of the nuclear capability the rest of the countries have. Whatever it takes to happen, needs to happen, and quickly.

Chinese citizens are already feeling the need for freedom, but with the government surveillance it is becoming harder and harder for citizens to realize the human rights violations in their country. It’s becoming harder to understand that this is not how they should have to be treated, and it’s becoming harder to determine right from wrong. The government is striving to

have the best century yet, but failing to take account of what is happening in their country whilst this goes on. China has a long journey ahead of themselves until they reach a point of no longer mistreating and not protecting their citizens, a journey that America needs to stand behind and help. This could all be remedied with the international code of human rights, but until then, it will not be Chinas century, and the West remains with primacy.

Work Cited

Buckley, Chris, and Amy Qin. "Muslim Detention Camps Are Like 'Boarding Schools,' Chinese Official Says." The New York Times, The New York Times, 12 Mar. 2019, [www.nytimes.com/2019/03/12/world/asia/china-xinjiang.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/12/world/asia/china-xinjiang.html).

"World Report 2019: Rights Trends in China." Human Rights Watch, 17 Jan. 2019, [www/world-report/2019/country-chapters/china-and-tibet](http://www.world-report/2019/country-chapters/china-and-tibet).