



Written by [William F. Jasper](#) on October 10, 2014

Hong Kong: Congressional Leaders Urge Obama to Support Freedom

As demonstrators in Hong Kong began their 12th day of protests, a bipartisan U.S. congressional commission issued its annual report on human rights and the rule of law in the People's Republic of China and has called on the Obama administration to reinstitute congressional briefings on human rights in Hong Kong. In response, Communist China has slammed the commission for "interfering in China's internal affairs."



On October 9, Democratic Senator Sherrod Brown of Ohio and Republican Congressman Chris Smith of New Jersey, co-chairmen of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, released their [CECC 2014 Annual Report](#) and also [a letter](#) they had sent to President Barack Obama, urging him to implement recommendations of the commission.

"China must honor its commitments to allow Hong Kong to maintain its separate system and to hold democratic elections starting in 2017," Brown said, upon releasing the report. "Hong Kong's stability rests in its relative freedoms and rule of law."

"The freedom genie cannot be stuffed neatly back into the Communist bottle," said Rep. Chris Smith. "Beijing can accept this fact, work within the promised 'One Country, Two Systems Model' and be lauded for its leadership, or Beijing can use force and repression again to stifle peaceful dissent and reform, losing the trust of the people of Hong Kong, neighboring countries, and the international community at large."

The Hong Kong demonstrations, which drew tens of thousands of protesters to the streets, began on September 28 in response to announcements by the Communist authorities that the 2017 election for Hong Kong's chief executive would be limited to three candidates nominated by a pro-Beijing committee.

The Red Chinese government slammed the CECC report on October 10, condemning the Hong Kong demonstrations as illegal and demanding that the CECC "stop interfering and stop damaging China-US relations."

CCTV (China Central Television) [reported](#) on October 10 that Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei said no one should interfere in China's internal affairs. It also said that Hong Lei "slammed the report as a distortion of facts." According to CCTV, Beijing's official line on the Hong Kong demonstrations, as delivered by Hong Lei, stated:

The central government firmly opposes any illegal activities that disrupt the rule of law and social stability in Hong Kong. We support the Hong Kong authorities handling it according to law. Hong Kong's affairs are China's internal affairs. Hong Kong is China's special administrative region. No foreign government, institution, nor individual has the right to interfere. The report issued by this



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US body distorts the facts, and is a deliberate attack on China. We express our extreme dissatisfaction about it, and demand this committee stop interfering and stop damaging China-US relations.

The Hong Lei statement echoed that of China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi, during his visit last week in Washington, D.C. "Hong Kong affairs are China's internal affairs," Wang said during the visit. "All countries should respect China's sovereignty."

The Chinese Foreign Ministry's invoking of "the rule of law" to justify its current policies in Hong Kong demonstrates the stark differences in meaning ascribed to the same term by different parties. The CECC report and the Sen. Brown/Rep. Smith letter to President Obama also reference "the rule of law" — but obviously define it differently than do the Communist Party rulers in Beijing.

"The Congressional-Executive Commission on China was created by Congress in 2000 to monitor and report on two key aspects of this relationship: human rights and the development of the rule of law in China. Concrete progress on these issues will directly benefit both countries," states the CECC cochairmen's letter to the president. "China's compliance with international human rights standards and international and domestic rules on trade, labor, and the environment will level the playing field, and increase the freedoms, protections, and safety of people on both sides of the Pacific. It will also promote greater trust and cooperation between our two countries. Human rights and rule of law should remain a cornerstone of our policy toward China."

The letter to President Obama continues:

The Commission plays a unique role in formulating U.S. policy toward China. The Commission's structure, consisting of a bipartisan group of Senators, House Members, and senior-level Administration officials, is intended to foster cooperation between the legislative and executive branches and to promote bipartisan attention to human rights and rule of law with China. By legislative mandate, the Commission produces and publishes a comprehensive annual report on these issues every October that includes recommendations for legislative or executive action.

One of the recommendations of the newly released report concerns Hong Kong specifically. It states:

Members of Congress and the Administration should renew the reporting requirements of Section 301 of the United States-Hong Kong Policy Act of 1992, paying particular attention to the development of democratic institutions in Hong Kong and China's obligations under international treaties and agreements, and should ensure developments in Hong Kong are featured in other reports related to China. Members of Congress and the Administration should increase support for Hong Kong's democracy through statements and meetings at the highest levels and visits to Hong Kong. Hong Kong issues should be raised in meetings in Beijing with central government officials given their overriding role in deciding questions of Hong Kong's political development.

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