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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

June 3, 2013

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I was pleased to hear the announcement of your meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping June 7-8 at Sunnylands in Rancho Mirage, California. The direct relationship you build with your Chinese counterpart is a critical aspect to our nation's successful engagement with China. I trust that your previous engagements with Xi prior to his becoming President, as well as Vice President Biden's hosting of him in February 2012, will help ensure that this first bilateral engagement as heads of state will set the tone for subsequent years of a productive relationship.

The breadth of the relationship that has developed between the United States and China is truly impressive. Our financial, trade, security, environmental, cultural, tourism, and ethnic links are each important to some part of American society, and are matched by the attentions of my colleagues in the Senate, each responding to his or her constituents. One bond that unites all Senators in their engagement with China is concern regarding the Chinese government's lack of respect for universal human rights.

The Chinese government can, and must, do more to address abuses suffered by its citizens, many of which have been carried out by officials who seem free to act outside China's legal structures. It troubles me that Liu Xia, wife of imprisoned democracy advocate Liu Xiaobo, can be kept for years now under extrajudicial house arrest in her apartment in Beijing. Equally concerning is the case of Gao Zhisheng, the activist defense lawyer reportedly abducted by security agents and kept incommunicado for almost three years before Chinese authorities announced that he had been tried at an unannounced hearing and sentenced to imprisonment. I am also concerned by the regular incarceration of Falun Gong adherents in labor camps without any trial or opportunity for defense. Finally there is the ongoing situation of the relatives of human rights advocate Chen Guangcheng, including his nephew Chen Kegui, sentenced to prison after defending his home from intruders searching for Chen Guangcheng, and other family members, harassed and beaten for their relationship with Chen Guangcheng. The Chinese government promised that the abuses suffered by Chen Guangcheng and his family would be investigated, but far from doing that, authorities there have only broadened their persecution. We must hold China to its pledge.

I know that you share my concerns and that I can count on you to raise these issues with President Xi next week. China has shown increasing obstinacy in responding to the international community's human rights concerns. Our response must not be frustration and despair, but rather to increase our attention and make clear to China's leaders that these issues cannot be

pushed aside by security and economic concerns, but only removed through genuine changes and support for the rule of law.

I look forward to hearing the results of your discussions with President Xi, and stand ready to work with you on this, or any other issue, regarding our important relationship with China.

Best Regards

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Robert Menendez". The signature is stylized with a large, looping "R" and a trailing flourish.

Robert Menendez