



June 30th, 2020

Assistant Secretary Robert Destro
Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
State Department
Harry S Truman Building 2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Assistant Secretary Destro,

We write as an informal coalition of 60 organizations and individuals who are scholars, religious leaders, human rights advocates and practitioners to ask you to take emergency measures to ensure open and free access to the internet for those facing a resurgence of human rights abuses in China.

The Chinese government's crackdown on the freedom of Hong Kong's people and its deadly COVID-19 misinformation campaigns pose an urgent threat to global human rights. The Chinese government's "Great Firewall" is actively censoring the free flow of information on the internet. The messages of brave protestors standing for freedom in Hong Kong cannot reach mainland Chinese citizens who are locked in a virtual prison of internet censorship.

Now the CCP is openly flouting its international agreements and acting aggressively to remove the rights guaranteed to Hong Kong. The reach of China's internet oppression now threatens to extend to Hong Kong with the Court of Final Appeal's rulings and the new Chinese draft national security law.

China's persecution of religious groups and the ensuing cover up both rely on its strict internet censorship, whether the targeted group is Falun Gong, Christians, Uyghurs, or Tibetans. Without quick, decisive action to tear down the censorship wall, these same violations will likely dismantle the religious freedom Hong Kong has long possessed.

Despite the Chinese government's efforts, several existing firewall circumvention tools have already provided hundreds of thousands of users with uncensored internet access. We ask you to designate funds for firewall circumvention tools such as Ultrasurf, Lantern, and Freegate that are already on the GSA schedule and so can quickly receive emergency funding. In this way many more people can get accurate information. We support the actions called for in the enclosed letter authored by a leading organization working on ending China's censorship, the Lantos Foundation for Human Rights and Justice.

If you have any questions or need any further information on how you can help tear down the Chinese firewall for potentially tens of millions of people, please reach out to Logan Carmichael at l.carmichael@chinaaid.org. We thank you for your continued work for human rights and for your thoughtful consideration of this emergency need for the freedom of information.

ORGANIZATIONS:

21Wilberforce

Bitter Winter: A Magazine on Religious Liberty and Human Rights in China

Campaign for Uyghurs

CESNUR (Center for Studies on New Religions)

China Aid Association

Christian Freedom International

Church of Scientology National Affairs Office

Citizen Power Initiatives for China

Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers pour la Liberte de Conscience

Defense Forum Foundation North Korea Freedom Coalition

El Salvador Round Table

Falun Dafa Association of Washington D.C.

Global peace foundation/ Kurdistan of Iraq

Happy Science Washington Bureau

Healing For The Nations

Institute on Religion & Democracy

International Bible Conference

International Christian Foundation for Democracy

International Organization to Preserve Human Rights

Iraq Religious Freedom Roundtable

Jubilee Campaign

Justice For All

Law and Liberty International

Lions Gate Communications, LLC

Minh Van Foundation

No Business With Genocide

Open Doors USA

ORLIR (International Observatory of Religious Liberty of Refugees)

Save the Persecuted Christians

South Asia Minorities Alliance Foundation

The Church of Almighty God
Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam
Uyghur Human Rights Project
Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation
West Papua Human Rights Center

INDIVIDUALS (titles and organizations listed for identification purposes only):

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Rev. Joseph Grieboski (Senior Fellow, The Dietrich Bonhoeffer Institute)
Lauren Homer (President, Law and Liberty International)
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Hena Zuberi (Director, Justice For All)