



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on May 4, 2012

China Says It Is Willing to Allow Pro-Life Dissident to Leave Country

Following a firestorm of negative media and intense criticism from international human rights groups over its behavior, Communist China has apparently decided that it will let pro-life dissident Chen Guangcheng leave the country. [Fox News](#) reported that Chen, who two days earlier had been coerced by Chinese officials to leave the U.S. Embassy by threats against his family, will be permitted “to travel abroad and pursue a fellowship offer from a U.S. university, the State Department said Friday.”



State Department Spokeswoman Victoria Nuland indicated May 4 that the Chinese government was expected to accept travel applications for Chen and his family, and that the U.S. would give “priority attention” to Chen’s requests to come to the U.S.

As reported by [The New American](#), Chen left the U.S. Embassy on May 2, a week after escaping from house arrest, “only after Secretary of State Hillary Clinton had intervened and Chen had been assured that he and his family would be safe. U.S. officials involved with the negotiations between Chen and Chinese officials said Chen had emphasized that he wanted to stay in China with his family, and to continue his studies at a university in that country.”

But almost immediately several sources close to Chen said that the Chinese pro-life leader had been forced out of the embassy and both he and his family were in danger in China. Further, Chen himself indicated that U.S. State Department officials appeared to want him to leave the embassy.

Following a day of intense media scrutiny over the situation, and a hastily called congressional investigation headed by U.S. Representative Chris Smith (R-N.J.), China reluctantly changed its tack, saying it would allow Chen to leave the country.

Clinton, who was in Beijing for a scheduled meeting (which some observers speculated was the reason the U.S. pushed for Chen to leave the embassy in the first place), issued a statement saying she was “encouraged” by the rapid developments on Chen’s behalf. “Over the course of the day, progress has been made to help him have the future that he wants,” Clinton said. But given China’s record of reprisals against Chinese citizens who oppose the government — along with its dishonesty, threats, and violence toward Chen and his family — many human rights activists were skeptical of the latest “concession” by Chinese officials. “Chen is already not allowed to live like anyone else,” Wang Dan, a student leader of the 1989 Tiananmen Square uprising, told the [Los Angeles Times](#). “We want to see Chen walk out of the hospital and have full freedom to speak and live. Otherwise, whatever the Chinese government says is just nonsense.”

During the emergency congressional hearing May 3, Chen phoned in from a hospital in China to testify that he wants to leave China. “I want to come to the U.S. to rest,” Chen said, according to a translation provided by Reuters. “I have not had a rest in 10 years.” He added that he and his extended family were



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in danger. "I'm really scared for my other family members' lives," Chen said. "[Chinese officials] have installed seven video cameras and are in my house."

Earlier in the day Chen told CNN that he was not disappointed in the U.S. government, which he fully expected to help him leave China. "They made such a great effort," he said of Clinton and the State Department officials who helped him to negotiate with Chinese authorities. "I am very grateful. It was under their great efforts that I got this important agreement." He explained that the communist Chinese government "has promised to guarantee my civil liberties. Is this not a breakthrough?" However, he appeared to be suspicious of China's true intentions, emphasizing that the deal's "implementation is very important. It must be fully implemented, and this has not happened yet." In his remarks to CNN he appealed to President Obama to "do everything you can to get our whole family out."

While complimenting the U.S. officials, Chen expressed his disappointment that none of them remained with him at the hospital to guaranteed his safety, and that he had been unable to communicate with supporters outside of China. "I want them [the U.S.] to protect human rights through concrete actions," Chen told CNN. "We are in danger. If you can talk to Hillary [Clinton], I hope she can help my whole family leave China ... as soon as possible."

On May 2, before the announcement of Chen's impending freedom, Congressman Chris Smith issued a statement challenging the Obama Administration to be more aggressive in its actions on behalf of Chen and his family. "Chen and his associates are at great risk if they stay in China," Smith said in a statement before the congressional hearing. "Even the hospital is a precarious place for this extraordinary human rights hero. The durable solution was, is, and continues to be asylum."

He challenged Clinton to "visit Chen while he is in the hospital — as a direct act of solidarity — and to ensure his safety. And U.S. Embassy officials should re-interview Chen and his family to ensure that comments made under duress or based on misinformation do not result in sending him back to a place where he is tortured and beaten and could easily be killed."

Reggie Littlejohn of [Women's Rights Without Frontiers](#), which has helped Chen in his efforts to expose China's one-child policy and the abortions and sterilizations it forces on women who have more children, said in a May 3 statement that the U.S. "should immediately grant asylum" to Chen and his family. "Chen is hugely symbolic in China, the conscience of the nation," Littlejohn said. "By challenging the one child policy, he has challenged the lynchpin of social control in China. This explains the ferocity of the Chinese Communist Party's reaction to him."

Littlejohn chided the U.S. for its initial handling of Chen in handing him back to China, declaring that State Department officials should have worked instead to usher Chen and his family out of the country. "This would have erased a generation of anti-American propaganda and inspired gratitude, admiration, and trust among the Chinese people," she said. "Instead the U.S. expediently dispatched Chen out the door, shattering our moral credibility before the world and losing the hearts and minds of a generation of Chinese people who share our values."

She added that the "only way to redeem the situation is as clear as it is urgent: Give asylum to Chen and his family — and to He Peirong as well," referring to the Chinese activist responsible for Chen's escape. Bring them to safety in the United States, whatever it takes, on Hillary Clinton's plane."

The State Department issued a statement saying that along with China's decision to release him, Chen had been offered a fellowship by an American university — reportedly the New York University Law



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School — and that he would be accompanied to the U.S. by his wife and two children. The Chinese government indicated that it would expedite all the applications to allow the family to leave the country.



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