

January 31, 2022

Senator Dick Durbin  
Chairman  
Committee on the Judiciary  
711 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Chuck Grassley  
Ranking Member  
Committee on the Judiciary  
135 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Durbin, Ranking Member Grassley, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

We write as Chinese human rights activists, pro-democracy movements, national security experts, and members of persecuted religious communities to share our deep concerns with Apple's use of its monopolistic dominance and its collusion with the Chinese government to stifle freedom of expression in China. As the Committee considers legislation to rein in the abuses of tech firms, we encourage it to help dissenting voices and efforts to offer privacy and security tools in China through protecting the right to sideload, as included in the Open App Markets Act.

The Chinese Communist Party maintains its grip on power and its regional expansionism through operating the most sophisticated censorship and surveillance apparatus in history. China suppresses nearly all dissent using its notorious 'Great Firewall' internet filtering system and through the cooperation of domestic and foreign companies that are willing to block and remove accounts, content, and applications at the unchallenged request of Chinese authorities.

Few American companies are as subservient to the Chinese government as Apple. Apple willingly censors dissenting voices and independent media for all in China and Hong Kong using its control over App Store. As the New York Times, human rights organizations, and members of this Committee have thoroughly documented, Apple has blocked thousands of applications for iOS users in China and Hong Kong at the request of Chinese censors.<sup>1</sup> Apple's decade-long track record cooperation with Chinese censorship is sweeping and stunning, including through its blocking of:

- HKmap.live, a coordination tool used by protestors bravely standing up to China's attempts to destroy Hong Kong's independence and democracy;
- Bible and Quranic apps, including the Olive Tree Bible study guide;

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://appcensorship.com/> <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/17/technology/apple-china-censorship-data.html> <https://www.leahy.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Apple%2011212017.pdf>

- Radio Free Asia and Voice of America, Congressionally-funded independent media organizations that provides news in Chinese, Uyghur, and Tibetan languages; and,
- Anti-censorship services, including apps funded by Congress, designed to bypass the Great Firewall to provide unfiltered and secure access to information, social media, and news.

While Apple claims to be a defender of human rights in the West, Apple has deliberately placed Chinese citizen's lives in the hands of the Chinese government for profit, knowing the grave consequences. As the Congressional-Executive Commission on China and others have warned, Apple hosts the private data of its Chinese users in data centers controlled by the Chinese government without the safeguards that would prevent spying, including weakening its access controls and encryption.<sup>2</sup> As a result, Chinese citizens are unable to access independent news, practice their faith, or express themselves freely without real fear of the brutal repression of the state.

While our organizations have decades of expertise fight back against China's repression, Apple's complete dominance over iOS blocks us from offering tools to bypass censorship, prevent spying, and promote democracy. Our pleas and campaigns for Apple to do the right thing have been ignored by Apple's leadership. If we were allowed to provide apps outside of the censored App Store, also known as sideloading, we would be able finally offer Chinese communities with tools to defeat the Great Firewall, such as Ultrasurf, Psiphon, and FreeGate. The Open App Markets Act's protections for sideloading would help us open up the world to hundreds of millions more Chinese people living under repression aided by Apple.

As the Senate Judiciary Committee considers the Open App Markets Act, we encourage it stand firm on behalf of freedom of expression and human rights in China through protecting our right to offer a lifeline to dissidents, religious communities, and all those harmed by the Chinese Communist Party.

Sincerely,

Organizations:

Uyghur Human Rights Project  
China Change  
Citizen Power Initiatives for China  
The Hong Kong Watch  
Regional Tibetan Association of Massachusetts  
Tibetan Association of Indiana  
Atlanta Tibetan Association  
Boston Tibetan Association  
Tibetan Association of Vermont  
Tibetan Association of Idaho  
Tibetan Association of Ithaca  
Tibetan Community of New York and New Jersey  
Sound of Hope Radio Network

---

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.cecc.gov/sites/chinacommission.house.gov/files/documents/Transcript\\_0.pdf](https://www.cecc.gov/sites/chinacommission.house.gov/files/documents/Transcript_0.pdf)

Dialogue China  
Democratic Party of China

Individuals:

Jianli Yang  
Founder and President of Citizen power Initiatives for China & Tiananmen Survivor and former political prisoner of China

Cai Xia  
Editor-in-Chief of Yibao, Former Professor of the CCP Central Party School

Nanyang Li  
Visiting Fellow at Hoovers Institutes, leading Chinese human rights activist, daughter of Li Rui, a former secretary of Mao Zedong

Calvin Yu  
Chinese civil society organizer, philanthropist

Deyu Wang  
Persecuted Chinese Christian

Daniel Gong  
Human rights activist

Lydia Li  
Independent scholar and human rights activist

Liang Wang  
Chinese artist and human rights activist

Ming Wu  
Human rights activist, Member of the Chinese New Citizens' Movement

Davis Zeng  
Analyst, CitiBank, human rights activist

Shan Jiang  
Member of the Chinese New Citizens' Movement, human rights activist

Shengchun Luo  
Wife of the detained Chinese New Citizens' Movement leader Ding Jiayi

Pinghui Wu  
Chinese human rights activist

Ni Wang

Chinese human rights activist

Wayne Hong  
Concert Manager, Chinese human rights activist

Qi Xue  
Independent scholar, Chinese human rights activist

Jeanette Tong  
Chinese human rights activist

Hai Lin  
Medical scientist, Chinese human rights activist

Anna Chen  
Victim of Chinese religious persecution, Chinese human rights activist

Amy Ma  
Chinese Muslim activist

Shaoping Wu  
Human rights lawyer

Matt Trueman  
Activist

Amir George  
Pastor

Mike Mo (Hong Kong)  
Former District Legislator of Hong Kong, Hong Kong student leader

Joey Siu (Hong Kong)  
Director, the Hong Kong Watch, Hong Kong student leader

Yu Hsin (Hong Kong)  
Hong Kong journalist

Harry Fu  
Chinese human rights activist

Rui Liu  
Chinese human rights activist

Wenwen Song  
Chinese human rights activist

Senfen Wei  
Chinese human rights activist

Liping Huang  
Director of Citizen Power Initiatives for China

Hong Zhou  
Chinese human rights activist

Jia He  
Chinese human rights activist

Rory O'Connor  
Founder of Athenai Institute

John Metz  
Director of Athenai Institute

Jing Zhang  
Chinese human rights activist

Sufi Laghari  
Executive Director at Sindhi Foundation

Lianchao Han  
Expert on Chinese Internet censorship and surveillance