

# Abuse of Chinese Women and Children

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Dear Colleague:

President Bush missed an opportunity to spotlight one of China's most widespread and serious human rights abuses, but a very different politician did not.

Steven W. Mosher

President

## Abuse of Chinese Women and Children: Speak No Evil

*By Joseph A. D'Agostino*

President Bush rightly criticized China's Communist dictatorship for its systematic human rights abuses in a speech this week, just before he was due to visit the world's largest nation. Yet, once again, one of the worst and most systematic abuses of all went unmentioned. It is the official policy of the Chinese government to allow only one or two children per family. It is official policy to impose *social compensation fees* of up to ten times average household income on women who exceed their child quota. It is official policy often to deny employment, medical care, education, and other necessities and benefits to husbands and wives who have more children than the authorities deem appropriate.

And as the September 19 Time article *Enemies of the State?*, among others, proves, it remains unofficial policy in some parts of China to round up women by the thousands and

forcibly abort and sterilize them if they are pregnant with second or third children they are not authorized to have. (See below for article link.)

This pervasive system of violating the most fundamental rights of every Chinese woman and man who wishes to have a larger family-aside from those few who can afford to buy off the local population control officials-goes mostly unremarked in the West. Feminist and so-called pro-choice groups don't talk about it, preferring to expend their energies on ensuring that healthy nine-month-old American babies have their brains vacuumed out moments before birth. However, one very prominent feminist has decided to bring it up, as we will discuss later.

In an unacceptable act of omission (or worse), Human Rights Watch didn't even mention the one-child policy when it wrote a November 16 letter to Bush urging him to bring up human rights abuses with Chinese authorities.

Nor did HRW mention it in a longer document on China's human rights abuses to which the letter referred. This longer document has ten categories of human rights abuses, included one on persecution of AIDS activists.

*Activists conducting AIDS information workshops or working with those at high risk of contracting HIV have been harassed or detained at the local level and pornography laws are being used to censor websites providing AIDS information to gay men and lesbians, HRW reports.*

This may be a bad thing, but does it compare to restricting the procreative desires of 1.3 billion people? Does it even compare to the forced abortion and sterilization of 7,000 or so women in Linyi Province this year, as described by Time? Or the millions of abortions committed under duress in China each year?

Is Human Rights Watch blind?

Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton (D.-N.Y.) has seen, and chose to highlight the issue of forced abortion and sterilization in China just before Bush's trip. Some may say that all she has seen is the utility of using China's coercive population control program as a convenient whipping boy to make her seem less extreme on abortion and other family issues. Certainly, there is no doubt that President Bush is much more pro-life and pro-family than Sen. Clinton, who continues to promote abortion-on-demand and other such policies. And her husband did even less about China's abuses when he was President than Bush has done. But she has brought it up now.

\*Since first introduced in 1979, China's one-child policy has evoked strong concern over human rights abuses. These abuses have reportedly included denial of social benefits, fines, detention, destruction of property, forced abortion and forced sterilization. . .,\* she wrote in a November 10 letter to Bush urging him to bring up the issue during his China trip. *In 1995, as a participant in the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, I heard first hand about these practices and spoke against them. . . . [T]he 2004 State Department Country Report on Human Rights Practices suggests. . . continuing use of psychological and economic pressure and threats to force women to terminate pregnancies or undergo sterilization.* She also raised the issue in a speech the same day to the American Bar Association International Rule of Law Symposium.

If Sen. Clinton is serious about trying to get China to alter her policies, she should cease favoring U.S. funding for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which subsidizes China's population control program. Bush has withheld funding from the agency for four years running. The Family Research Council has asked her to join Bush's side on this question. Maybe it can get an answer out of her office on what policies she favors to induce China to change her policies, though I failed to do so.

All this is not meant to minimize China's other human rights abuses. Some observers believe the Internet will finally bring political, religious, and other sorts of freedom where trade and economic growth have failed.

So far, no good. *Even the supposedly all-powerful Internet, which is supposed to liberate through the free flow of information, has been put on permanent hold in Communist China,* wrote Stanley Crouch in the New York Daily News, November 17. \*The big dogs in the party know that the Soviet Union fell, at least partially, because the reality of the world was able to get into the country electronically, where it contradicted so much of what the people were told. Consequently, Google and Yahoo, for instance, filter out the information that China does not want its population to see. Beyond that, China has built one of the biggest and most effective firewalls in the world so as to block out all unwanted computer information. The Iron Curtain has become electronic.\* The words of Sen. Clinton, this nation's most influential Democratic politician, probably won't make it through to many Chinese.

Perhaps Hillary Clinton's foray into criticizing China's one-child policy will lead other feminists and pro-abortion leaders to do the same. I doubt it; they seem not to care about women who choose life.

We pray that they do follow her lead, and that she and they advocate specific policy proposals that could move the Chinese government in the right direction. Human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch should open their eyes. And it would be nice if pro-life and pro-family leaders like President Bush at least mention it publicly. He still has time before his trip ends.

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Time article *Enemies of the State?* on forced abortion and sterilization in China this year:  
<http://www.time.com/time/archive/preview/0,10987,1103579,00.html>

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