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Congressional Human Rights Caucus
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

CO-CHAIRMEN

Tom Lantos (CA)
John Edward Porter (IL)

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

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Gary Ackerman (NY)
Les Aspin (WI)
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OFFICE

Ford Building, Room H2-590
Washington, D.C. 20515
(202) 226-4040

MEMO

TO: Congressional Human Rights Caucus
Executive Committee

FROM: Rachel Lostumbo, Alex Arriaga, and Heidi Gaasch

RE: 1992 Agenda
February 14, 1992

Introduction

Services

Forums in hearing format, briefings, rallies, receptions, art exhibits, members and staff meetings with visiting dignitaries and human rights activists, letters to appropriate officials, human rights information for members' offices, tracking system, legislation list, profiles, annual report, travel packets, school outreach program, prisoner of conscience adoption program, Committee of 21

Newly Instituted Services

Parliamentary Alliance for Human Rights: networking with parliamentarians around the world for concerted international action on human rights

Series of staff luncheons with United Nations representatives

Human Rights Awards Ceremony for members' accomplishments

Upcoming Events

Indigenous People Art Exhibit: Cannon Rotunda, February 18-28

East Timor Meeting for Members with Portuguese Parliamentarians:
1732 Longworth, 4:00, February 19

Haiti Meeting for Members with President Aristide and others: place to be determined, 10:00, March 19

Upcoming events soon to be scheduled: Cyprus, Nationalism in Europe, Kurds, Colombia, etc.

MEMBERS

Glenn M. Anderson (CA)
Chester G. Atkins (MA)
Les AuCoin (OR)
Cass Ballenger (NC)
Anthony C. Beilenson (CA)
Doug Bereuter (NE)
Howard L. Berman (CA)
James H. Bilbray (NV)
Michael Bilirakis (FL)
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Rod Chandler (WA)
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William J. Coyne (PA)
Tom DeLay (TX)
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David Dreier (CA)
Bernard J. Dwyer (NJ)
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Ben Erdreich (AL)
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Martin Frost (TX)
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Congressional Human Rights Caucus

U.S. House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

Background and Purpose of the Caucus

The Congressional Human Rights Caucus has played a vital role in addressing human rights concerns in the U.S. Congress and in making human rights a more visible and important issue on Capitol Hill.

During 1991, all Caucus members participated in congressional activities in support of human rights. Caucus hearings, briefings and press conferences focused on human rights conditions in numerous regions, including China (PRC), Myanmar (Burma), India, Nepal, Tibet, Malaysia, the Philippines, Brazil, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Cuba, Argentina, Peru, Kenya, South Africa, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Israel, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Albania, Romania, Yugoslavia and the USSR. The Caucus also brought attention to the issues of torture of children, "disappearances," and ethnic genocide. Caucus members made appeals on behalf of victims of political, religious, ethnic and racial persecution all over the world.

The Congressional Human Rights Caucus is a bipartisan legislative service organization which was established under the auspices of the U.S. House of Representatives. The Caucus membership consists of 200 Congressmen and Congresswomen representing districts in all parts of the United States.

The Congressional Human Rights Caucus members are motivated by the belief that human rights are indivisible -- that the denial of fundamental freedoms and human rights any where is a threat to free men and women everywhere. Caucus members are identified for their leadership in Congress on behalf of human rights and are united in their support for the observance of human rights throughout the world. The Caucus is a respected voice for human rights and fundamental freedoms around the world and is recognized in countries around the world as an effective fighter on behalf of victims of human rights abuse.

The Congressional Human Rights Caucus was founded in early 1983 by Congressmen John Porter (R-IL) and Tom Lantos (D-CA). Both recognized the need for an umbrella organization open to all Members of Congress. They envisioned an organization that would focus broad bipartisan attention and take action against human rights violations wherever they occur. Since its inception, the Caucus has become the leading voice in Congress for human rights issues.

Human rights are America's legacy to the world. The Congressional Human Rights Caucus is an essential organization upholding and maintaining that legacy.

For more information, contact Alexandra Arriaga or Rachel Lostumbo, Co-Directors of the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, at (202) 226-4040.

Congressional Human Rights Caucus

Co-Chairmen:

Congressmen John Edward Porter and Tom Lantos

PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS: PROGRAMS FOR MEMBERS

MEETINGS WITH HIGH LEVEL DIGNITARIES AND EXPERTS -- The Caucus hosts meetings for its members and for high level dignitaries from foreign governments, international organizations, and the U.S. Administration to discuss human rights issues. In 1991, guests at these informal meetings included: His Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet; Ambassador Richard Schifter, Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs; Professor Fang Lizhi, Li Lu, Lu Jinhua, Liu Binyan, and Shen Tong, some of China's most respected dissidents; Murphy Morobe, Gibson Kuria and Suliman Nu Ali, among Africa's most celebrated human rights activists; and Bishop Laszlo Tokes, "father" of the Romanian Revolution.

MEMBERS FORUMS -- The Caucus provides a forum for its members where they can share information regarding specific human rights problems they have investigated or encountered on fact-finding missions.

CAUCUS HEARINGS, PRESS CONFERENCES, BRIEFINGS, & RALLIES -- The Caucus frequently arranges hearings, press conferences, briefings and rallies on a wide variety of human rights issues that reflect Members' concerns. Caucus members host these events which generally include testimony from human rights victims, U.S. and foreign government officials, and experts in the field of human rights. These Caucus activities help to focus public attention on issues of concern to Members of Congress and their staff.

TELEGRAMS AND LETTERS TO FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS -- The Caucus organizes letter writing campaigns from its members on behalf of persecuted individuals around the world. The Caucus continually monitors human rights conditions around the world and sends many urgent appeals which carry the names of all Caucus members.

"ADOPTION" PROGRAMS -- The "Adoption" Programs seek to extend a hand of friendship and encouragement to individuals all over the world who are persecuted or incarcerated for their beliefs, color, sex, ethnic origin, language or religion who have not used or advocated violence. Members "adopt" persecuted individuals and write letters of support to them and their families. The Members of Congress call attention to the violation of human rights by sending letters of appeal to the leader of the offending country, initiating congressional action, and utilizing diplomatic channels.

RELIGIOUS PRISONER ADOPTION PROGRAM -- The Religious Prisoner Adoption Program seeks to improve conditions for victims of religious persecution and to ensure that their rights are fully recognized.

PRISONER OF CONSCIENCE OUTREACH -- The Prisoner of Conscience Outreach acts on behalf of all those who suffer persecution or detention because of their personal beliefs, color, sex, ethnic origin, or language who have not used or advocated violence.

THE COMMITTEE OF 21 -- The Committee of 21, founded by Mrs. Annette Lantos and Mrs. Kathryn Cameron Porter, is a coalition of congressional women -- Congresswomen, Senators, and wives of Members of Congress -- who share personal concern for victims of human rights violations. The members and their spouses send letters of encouragement and support to prisoners of conscience and their families all over the world, as well as letters of appeal to the leaders of the violator countries.

SCHOOL OUTREACH PROGRAM -- The Caucus coordinates a school outreach program for its members to visit high schools in their congressional districts and arrange for classrooms to adopt a human rights victim.

STAFF AD-HOC GROUPS -- The Caucus organizes a variety of Staff Ad-Hoc Groups to coordinate human rights activities between Congressional offices. These ad-hoc groups focus either on a geographical region of concern, such as Peru, Tibet, Romania, El Salvador, India, Korea, and Somalia or on topics of concern, such as refugees and cultural genocide. The Caucus periodically invites human rights experts and government officials to address the ad-hoc groups.

CONGRESSIONAL INTERNS FOR SOVIET JEWRY -- Congressional Interns for Soviet Jewry encourages summer interns working on Capitol Hill to take action on behalf of refuseniks, Soviet Jews who are denied permission to emigrate. This is the first issue-oriented organization specifically set up for congressional interns. The Caucus invites speakers to address brown-bag lunches and coordinates letter writing campaigns for members of this group. The interns are encouraged to continue these efforts when they return to their universities.

SUPPORT SERVICES OFFERED TO CONGRESSIONAL OFFICES

HUMAN RIGHTS COMPUTER TRACKING SYSTEM -- The Caucus maintains a computer Tracking System to monitor congressional action on behalf of human rights by recording activities by all 435 Members of Congress. Each entry specifies the nature of the human rights violation, what action was taken, and the names of the Members of Congress who participated. The Tracking System provides congressional offices with current information on individual cases and congressional action.

HUMAN RIGHTS PROFILES OF MEMBERS OF CONGRESS -- Members of Congress receive an annual "Human Rights Profile" of their human rights activities which is based on information in the Human Rights Computer Tracking System. The profile outlines the Member's human rights activities through the year. In addition, records of a Member's human rights activities during any specified time period are available on request.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO CONGRESSIONAL OFFICES AND PROMOTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION Caucus staff provide technical assistance to congressional offices, such as drafting and circulating letters on human rights issues, promoting human rights legislation, providing updates on individual human rights cases, and contacting U.S. and international human rights groups.

BRIEFING SESSIONS OR PACKETS FOR MEMBERS -- The Caucus coordinates meetings for Members with human rights monitors who have regional expertise on human rights conditions in specific countries. The Caucus also prepares briefing packets on human rights conditions all over the world. The packets include information on individual human rights cases as well as general human rights conditions and have covered countries such as South Africa, Chile, Guatemala, Cambodia, Iraq, Romania, the USSR, El Salvador, Yugoslavia, and Nicaragua. These packets are especially helpful to Members travelling abroad and meeting with foreign dignitaries.

LISTING OF HUMAN RIGHTS LEGISLATION -- The Caucus initiated this service to help keep its members up to date on human rights legislation. Caucus members receive a listing of bills on human rights issues which are organized by geographical region and final legislative status. The listing provides the bill number, the name of the principal sponsor, a description of the bill, the number of cosponsors, and the status of the bill.

HUMAN RIGHTS CAUCUS NEWSLETTERS -- The Caucus issues newsletters several times during the year to summarize Caucus activities and spotlight the human rights work of its members. The newsletter focuses on major areas of concern and provides information on current human rights legislation and "Dear Colleague" letters.

HUMAN RIGHTS REFERENCE CENTER -- The Caucus office is located in room 590 of House Annex II and houses the main terminal for the computer tracking system, as well as an extensive library of human rights materials available to staff of Caucus members. These resources are collected from governmental, private, and international organizations concerned with human rights.

CONGRESSIONAL LIAISON -- The Caucus has become an important liaison between Congress and the many governmental, private, and international organizations concerned with human rights.

For more information contact:

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