

Wishing you a Wonderful New Year and Review of 2017

Monday, 01 January 2018

Dear Friend,

Entering 2018, we wish you a wonderful New Year.

We will continue working with you in helping to bring attention to the many people whom we see as giving the world a spark for hopefulness and love.

2017 can be remembered as the year when China's president Xi Jinping consolidates his China dream beyond the imagination of the dystopian novel Nineteen Eighty-Four.

Thought police are in all China's internet surveillance with the requirement of real name registration. WeChat, the all-in-one messaging calling app is being used by China as a national id that will make any user responsible for its own group chat as the government of China continuously censor speech and expression in pushing for their catch all phrase of "maintaining security". Western corporations became collaborators in censorship when Apple removed VPN apps that allow Chinese in China to bypass China's Great Firewall.

The death of Nobel Peace Laureate Liu Xiaobo in July brought to the world attention that any long term imprisonment by China may in fact be a death sentence. Liu was sentenced to 11 years in prison on Christmas day 2009; detained in 2008, he had less than two years left in his sentence. Yang Tongyan, h f a writer and member of PEN, died in November after being released for medical parole in August for a brain tumor. Yang was sentenced to 12 years in prison in 2006 and was only a few months towards the end of his sentence. In 2014, attorney Cao Shunli ù) died after she was detained in 2013 as she was leaving for Geneva for a review on China's human rights record. This pattern of causing the resultant death of detainees or prisoners in China is alarming. Currently, Visual Artists Guild is concerned that Huang Qi, Å&, a human rights activist who started an early web site "64 Tianwang" since 1998 and imprisoned twice before, is now in danger of dying while in custody. The 8 years sentence in December of blogger Wu Gan 3 æ is certain to result in his health deterioration in the future.

While the world may celebrate China's commitment to the Paris climate accord, few recognizes that in a totalitarian government, the authorities can set their goal for peak emission by 2030 with no regard to how it will impact ordinary citizens. Minister of Environment Protection Li Ganjie's Nrp; order to stop coal use by three million households in 28 cities around Beijing resulted in the destruction of coal stoves of those homes when replacements were mostly not ready during the depth of Beijing's deadly winter. Within the same policy of pollution control, China started to expel its low-end population "Nĩõã" when a fire broke out in late November in Beijing where 19 people died. The forced eviction and demolition of homes for migrant workers on Beijing is part of the government plan to limit population in Beijing in co-ordination with president Xi Jinping's plan for a "beautiful China" Ž} ;as announced during the 19th Congress in October.

Perhaps the most Orwellian nightmare China's government is doing is the collection of biometric DNA of the

people in Xinjiang province where 11 million Uighur Muslims live. With pressure from China, Egypt and other countries have forced the return of Uighur students back to China where they have disappeared. One would wonder whether such data could be used for China's organ trade.

Self-immolation in Tibet continues with seven this year. We must convince the Tibetans that ending one's life will not help to end the repression. Each and everyone of their life is necessary to continue to preserve Tibetan culture and language for the future.

Bringing attention to China's human rights violations will help to give those in China fighting for their rights a ray of hope that the world is watching. China's government may proclaim beautiful policy to the world but the facts of such policy actions will belie the government's declarations. The Chinese Communists Party should review their own disastrous history to truly understand why they continue to fail their people despite such flowery policy such as the Great Leap Forward when over 40 millions died of the biggest man made famine in human history.

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Chair, Visual Artists Guild