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Bush Asked to Press China on Jailed Activist

By JOHN POMFRY
Washington Post Foreign Service

BEIJING, Oct. 16—More than 30 members of Congress wrote to President Bush on Thursday to urge him to raise with China's president the case of a U.S. resident who has been held for the past 19 months and who is believed to have been tortured.

Bush will meet with President Hu Jintao on the sidelines of the Asian-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum in Thailand next week. A U.S. diplomat said Bush was expected to bring up the case.

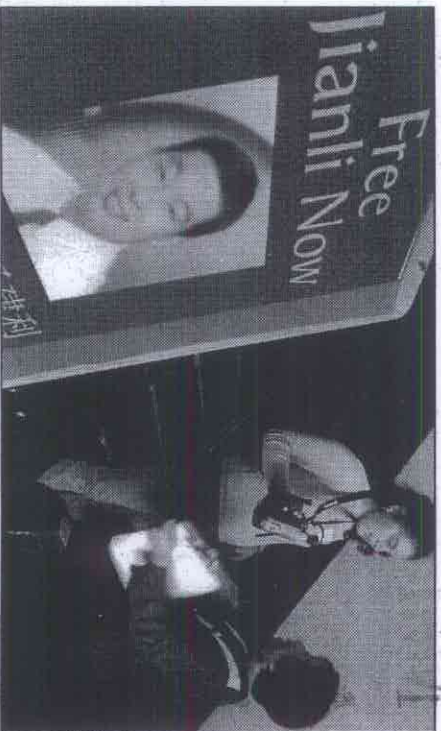
The detainee, Yang Jianli, a democracy activist, was arrested in April 2002 in southwestern China while traveling on a false passport. He was held incommunicado by Chinese security services for 16 months. Yang was tried by a Chinese court on Aug. 4. At the trial, the prosecutor requested two more months to collect evidence against him. A verdict is expected in November.

The U.S. failure to persuade China to allow Yang to return to his wife and 8-year-old son, both U.S. citizens living in Massachusetts, is just one in a series of human rights-related issues facing the administration, including some pledges the Chinese have broken, the U.S. diplomat said on condition he not be identified. Both the House and Senate unanimously passed resolutions in recent months calling for Yang's release.

U.S. officials said China had failed to live up to promises made during bilateral talks in December, including a pledge to invite U.N. human rights investigators to examine allegations that China jails people without giving them due process of law, restricts freedom of religion and allows torture in prisons. U.S. officials said China also promised to allow a U.S. commission on religious freedom to visit. But that trip was postponed after China refused to allow the group to travel to Hong Kong, where churches helped organize mass anti-government protests this

summer. Partly because of these pledges, the Bush administration decided not to introduce a resolution criticizing China at the annual session of the U.N. Human Rights Commission in April. The United States had introduced a resolution every year for most of the past decade. Yang was arrested while secretly contacting striking workers in China. In violation of Chinese law, Yang was held incommunicado for months, prompting his older brother, Yang Jianjun, to journey frequently to Beijing to conduct futile

searches for him. Yang's attorney in the United States, Jared Genser, and Yang's wife, Christina Fu, said there are indications that Yang was tortured while in detention. For the first seven months in custody, they said, Yang was held in solitary confinement in a 8-foot-by-8-foot cell, was not allowed to leave his cell for exercise and was not given anything to read. "By any measure this is cruel and unusual punishment," said Genser, who runs Freedom Now, a U.S.-based group that helps prisoners of conscience. "This is torture."



Christina Fu, right, spoke to a guest before a benefit dinner last month in Brookline, Mass., for her husband, Yang Jianli, shown on poster.

BY MICHAEL DWYER—ASSOCIATED PRESS