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June 4, 2020

An Open Letter to American Companies in China:

Today marks the 31st anniversary of the Tiananmen Square massacre. For decades, many around the world thought that growing prosperity would lead the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to liberalize and show respect for human dignity and freedom. Unfortunately, the CCP has only grown more committed to its authoritarian model as the years have progressed, and today, it is poised once again to destroy a peaceful protest movement, this time in Hong Kong.

The fate of Hong Kong hangs in the balance. The CCP is forging ahead with a national security law that will effectively ban protests in Hong Kong and authorize Beijing to use mainland security agencies to target Hong Kongers. This effort comes a year after millions of Hong Kongers took to the streets to peacefully protest attacks by the CCP and its proxies on the basic rights and liberties promised to them under the Sino-British Joint Declaration and the Hong Kong Basic Law. If Beijing enacts the national security law as it has promised to, it will mean the death of democracy in Hong Kong.

American companies like your own have a say in what happens next. The CCP may not care about freedom, democracy, or any of the other things for which we, as Americans, have long stood and fought. But it does care about you. It cares about the business you bring to its shores, and more importantly, about the opportunities your business provides for it to grow its own economy and then use its economic power against others.

Indeed, for decades, Beijing has studied, stolen, and replicated your best practices and products in order to propel its own commercial expansion. It has simultaneously mastered the art of economic intimidation and used its growing economic power to silence the world's nations, corporations, and others while it crushes those it deems a threat to its rule or hegemonic ambitions. None of this would be possible without access to companies like your own, from which it has learned and gained so much.

Although the CCP has grown stronger over the years, it still has a way to go before it can dominate the United States and others seeking to live free from Chinese coercion. That is why your voices matter. The CCP knows that its economic fortunes are still tied to your companies' participation in its markets. If it knows that you may retract that participation in response to the Hong Kong crackdown, then it may yet restrain itself. And some vestige of freedom – some glimmer of hope – might yet live on in that city. This is the power you hold.

In the final calculus, you may be doing business in China. But you are an American company first and foremost. And you have a responsibility to your nation – and indeed, to all free nations of the world – to speak up for what is right. You have an obligation to put principle ahead of profit and to ensure that your actions do not enable the destruction of others’ freedoms. Nowhere is this truer than in Hong Kong, the frontline of the fight against CCP imperialism.

With that in mind, I request your response to the following questions:

1. Have you publicly condemned the CCP’s proposed national security law and other attacks by Beijing and its proxies on Hong Kongers’ basic rights and liberties?
2. If you have not, why have you chosen to remain silent, and do you plan to speak out publicly against the CCP’s crackdown in Hong Kong?
3. Have you reevaluated your presence or activities in China in light of the crackdown in Hong Kong?
4. What other steps are you taking to ensure your company is not complicit in the violation of Hong Kongers’ basic rights and liberties?
5. What additional steps are you taking to stand with the people of Hong Kong?

Time and again, companies like your own have claimed to stand for freedom. Now is your opportunity to align your actions with your words. The CCP’s crackdown in Hong Kong poses an unignorable threat to the values you purport to hold dear. It is time for you to stand with the people of Hong Kong and show that your claims are more than just hollow words.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Josh Hawley
United States Senator