



The Conservative Party Human Rights Commission

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AN INQUIRY INTO CHINA'S CONFUCIUS INSTITUTES AROUND THE WORLD

March-June 2018

CALL FOR EVIDENCE

The Conservative Party Human Rights Commission will hold an inquiry into China's Confucius Institutes and their influence around the world, particularly in relation to their potential impact on academic freedom, freedom of expression or other human rights.

The inquiry will involve the screening of a documentary film, '[In the Name of Confucius](#)', on Tuesday 5 June 2018 beginning at 5.15pm in the Attlee Suite, House of Commons, followed by an oral evidence hearing/panel discussion, to which we will invite experts to appear as witnesses. In addition, the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission issues an open invitation for written submissions.

Written submissions can be sent to Benedict Rogers, Deputy Chair of the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission, at benedictrogerscphrc@gmail.com, any time by 18.00 GMT on **Friday 1 June 2018**.

There is no specific length required, although we would suggest no more than five pages unless absolutely necessary. Submissions should focus on specific examples of the ways in which academic freedom, freedom of expression and other human rights and freedoms are affected by Confucius Institutes, include recommendations for what the United Kingdom could do to address any issues, and should include contact details and institutional affiliation where appropriate.

The Conservative Party Human Rights Commission will, based on evidence received in writing and in the hearing, produce a report, to be published later in June 2018.

Context and Scope of the Inquiry

According to an official Chinese government website, there are now 500 "Confucius Institutes" around the world - with the aim of 1,000 by 2020. In 2015, their budget was \$310 million, and from 2006-2015 China spent \$1.85 billion on Confucius Institutes. These institutes are stated to exist to teach Chinese language and promote Chinese culture – a Chinese equivalent of the British Council, American Centres or the Alliance Francaise. Unlike their western counterparts, Confucius Institutes are directly funded and directed by the Chinese government, and embedded within universities around the world.

This inquiry will examine to what extent Confucius Institutes give China influence in academic institutions around the world, and what the implications of such influence are. It will seek evidence as to the extent to which Confucius Institutes are a positive influence, providing resources for Chinese language and culture, and to what extent they may restrict or threaten freedom of expression, critical thinking and democratic values. The inquiry will seek evidence addressing the allegation made by some that Confucius Institutes exist to spread the Chinese Communist Party's propaganda and to silence dissenting voices. We will examine the reasons for the decision taken by some educational authorities to terminate relationships with Confucius Institutes. An increasing number of educational institutions around the world have cut their links with Confucius Institutes, including the University of Chicago and the Toronto District School Board.

The film *In the Name of Confucius* focuses on Canada, but the issues it raises are applicable worldwide. In Britain, there are at least 29 Confucius Institutes, attached to major universities such as Edinburgh, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Nottingham, Cardiff and University College London. There are also 127 Confucius 'classrooms' in schools around the United Kingdom. In an op-ed for the Times Higher Education supplement in 2015, the President of Imperial College, Alice Gast, expressed her wish for the UK's universities to be "China's best partners in the West". The UK ranks first among European countries in welcoming this Chinese influence – a point celebrated in China's state media as marking a "Confucius revolution".

This inquiry will ask the fundamental question: Are Confucius Institutes a benign and even positive presence, enhancing better understanding and cooperation with China, or a negative influence, threatening and restricting freedom of expression and academic freedom? The inquiry will attempt to provide an assessment of the benefits or risks of Confucius Institutes; identify possible solutions to address any such risks; and seek ideas on alternatives for providing Chinese language and cultural education.

We invite evidence from all perspectives and will form our conclusions based on the evidence we receive.

About the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission:

The Conservative Party Human Rights Commission is a body established to highlight international human rights concerns, and thereby inform, advise and enhance the party's foreign policy. Freedom and human dignity should be at the heart of foreign policy and the Commission aims to ensure that the importance of fundamental human rights is kept high on the political agenda.

The Conservative Party Human Rights Commission was set up by the then Shadow Foreign Secretary with Gary Streeter MP as the founding Chairman. The Commission is currently chaired by Fiona Bruce MP, and since its creation the Commission's chairs have included Stephen Crabb MP, Tony Baldry MP and Robert Buckland MP.