

December 15, 2018  
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Dear Mr President:

I am concerned about political prisoners. Most world governments have an interest in influencing the US and past policy has tried to keep this influence in our best interests. This has involved avoiding emoluments, refusing to negotiate with kidnappers and avoiding steps for which a reaction in kind would be easy and damaging. I worry that current policies are flouting these norms, weakening US negotiating power and making travel for Americans more dangerous. The Saudi government clearly felt that paying off friends or companies of the President provided a license to kill. The Chinese government clearly took an arrested businesswoman as a political hostage with the entire episode badly undermining US diplomacy. First the warrant was issued based on a purely political attempt to isolate Iran. Next you suggested that her freedom was a possible bargaining chip and emboldened the Chinese government to treat the issue as politics and take two Canadian nationals hostage prompting her release. It is hard to imagine a clearer way to encourage bribery and kidnapping of American nationals around the world.

*Please assure me that you will discourage assassination and political hostage taking.*

I am very proud to be a US resident and a large part of that derives from our worldwid respect.

Sincerely,  
Eric Babson