



Ambassador Cho Hyun-dong
Embassy of the Republic of Korea
2450 Massachusetts Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20008

November 21, 2023

Dear Ambassador Cho,

We the undersigned are writing with an urgent request that the South Korean government resist authoritarian pressures from the Chinese government and uphold freedom of artistic expression and access to information to allow the world class [Shen Yun Performing Arts](#) company to perform in South Korea during its upcoming 2024 season.

Many of us have visited South Korea and hold deep respect for the country's culture, people, and hard-won democratic freedoms. We have therefore been dismayed to learn that 13 government-affiliated theaters have apparently bowed to Chinese embassy and consular pressures and rejected applications for Shen Yun to perform, despite its success and sold-out shows in South Korea in 2023.

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is adept at using a wide range of tactics to create leverage and exert political and economic coercion in foreign countries in order to achieve its goals of silencing dissenting voices and controlling the narrative about China and the CCP's repressive rule. As a US-based performing arts company dedicated to the revival of traditional Chinese culture, whose performances also do not shy away from artfully representing current-day religious persecution in China, Shen Yun has long been a target of the regime's transnational repression and censorship attempts.

As you may be aware, this is not the first time that the Chinese government has tried to sabotage Shen Yun performances in South Korea. In 2006, 2009 and 2016, Chinese officials sent letters or visited theaters, using threats of economic reprisals to pressure them to avoid signing contracts with Shen Yun or even to cancel already agreed upon performances. In one of the most dramatic and worrisome incidents, in 2016, a performance in Seoul at the [Korean Broadcasting Service](#) Hall was canceled two days before four scheduled shows, despite thousands of tickets having already been sold. Despite years of obstruction, in 2023, Shen Yun performed successfully throughout South Korea, including sold-out shows at the National Theater of Korea.

Today, South Korea's democratic system and the government's ability to protect both foreign businesses and local audiences from the long arm of the CCP's censorship is being put to the test

again. The August 2023 issue of the local Korean [Chosun Monthly magazine](#) included an in-depth story documenting some of the latest Chinese official attempts targeting local officials.

South Korea is not alone in facing this challenge. According to one count, at [least 80 such incidents](#) of Chinese regime pressure targeting Shen Yun have occurred around the world, with some involving physical violence against performers. Many theaters and officials in countries as diverse as Mexico, Israel, and Denmark have resisted these pressures, allowing Shen Yun to perform to sold-out audiences. Yet South Korea is now at risk of joining the ranks of those who have caved to CCP pressure, harming the country's reputation and setting a dangerous precedent for future Chinese regime interference that undermines free expression and the rule of law.

As government-affiliated theaters across South Korea finalize their performance schedule for the 2024 season, we urge your government, including the President's office, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Culture to use their influence to empower local officials and theaters to resist Chinese government pressure and permit Shen Yun to perform during the 2024 season.

Thank you for your attention.

Respectfully,

- Alan Adler, Executive Director, Friends of Falun Gong
- Nina Shea, Director, Center for Religious Freedom at Hudson Institute
- Dr. Katrina Lantos Swett, President, Lantos Foundation for Human Rights & Justice
- Dr. Jianli Yang, Founder and President, Citizen Power Initiatives for China
- Dr. Sushma Palmer, President and Chair, The Center for Communications, Health & the Environment (CECHE)
- Marco Respinti, Director-in-Charge, "Bitter Winter: A Magazine on Religious Liberty and Human Rights"
- Dr. A. Adityanjee, President of International Commission for Human Rights and Religious Freedom (ICHRRF)
- Professor William Saunders, Director of the Center for Human Rights, the Catholic University of America
- Dave Wallace, President, FAIR Energy Foundation