



October 24, 2024

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

I am writing to you as the president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC). The ERLC represents the public policy interests of the Southern Baptist Convention, the largest Protestant denomination in the United States, with over 45,000 churches and nearly 13 million members.

In light of the recent suspension of international adoptions by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), we wish to express our deep concern for the approximately [300 American families](#) currently in the adoption process who have already been matched with children in China. Since the beginning of international adoptions between the U.S. and China in 1992, more than [80,000 children](#) have found loving homes in the U.S. However, the recent decision by the CCP to halt foreign adoptions is a monumental setback for vulnerable children and families eager to welcome them into their homes. This abrupt change has left American families matched with children—[nearly all of whom](#) have physical or mental disabilities—in a state of uncertainty and heartbreak.

As Southern Baptists, we believe every child is made in God's image and holds immeasurable worth and value. We see adoption as a tangible display of the gospel, a picture of our adoption into the Kingdom of God. The Southern Baptist Convention has a longstanding [commitment](#) to caring for vulnerable children, and we recognize the value of providing loving, Christ-centered homes to children who do not have one. The recent adoption suspension represents a concerning disregard for the welfare of these children, reflecting a broader trend of prioritizing state control over individual rights.

For these families, who have invested an incredible amount of time, resources, and emotional energy into the adoption process, the implications of this suspension are devastating. Many of these families have not only been matched with their adoptive children for several years but have previously hosted them in their homes on visits to the U.S., sent care packages, and been in regular communication with these children. This change not only harms American families who have invested so much, but it brings immeasurable emotional harm to these already vulnerable children, who still believe that someone is coming for them. Instead, they are being forcibly abandoned.

In addition to these children who have already been matched with adoptive families, we are also concerned about the fate of the estimated 100,000 children currently in Chinese orphanages. Many of these children have mental or physical challenges that require high levels of care and are unlikely to be



adopted domestically in China. [Research](#) has continually shown that a child's emotional and developmental well-being likely may suffer without the stability of a permanent family. Without the lifeline of intercountry adoption, these children are likely to languish in orphanages without the love and care they need.

While we are concerned about the fate of all of these children in China, we urge you to prioritize at the highest level a resolution for the 300 American families previously matched with children in China. It is essential for the State Department to advocate for these families, ensuring they have a pathway to complete their adoptions and provide permanent homes for the children they have lovingly pursued for many years. We encourage the State Department to leverage all channels to bring about a successful conclusion that respects the needs of American families and children in China. High-level engagement is vital in navigating this complex issue and finding a way forward that aligns with our shared commitment to protecting vulnerable children.

Thank you for your attention to this critical issue. We trust and pray that you will prioritize identifying a pathway that affirms the dignity of these vulnerable children and supports American families in their journey to adoption.

Respectfully,

F. Brent Leatherwood
President
Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission
Of the Southern Baptist Convention

cc:

The Honorable Joseph Biden
President of the United States of America

The Honorable Nicholas Burns
Ambassador of the United States to the People's Republic of China

His Excellency Xie Feng
Ambassador Extraordinary & Plenipotentiary of the People's Republic of China to the United States