

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

October 18, 2019

Mr. Tim Cook  
Chief Executive Officer  
Apple  
1 Infinite Loop  
Cupertino, CA 95014

Dear Mr. Cook:

We write to express our strong concern about Apple's censorship of apps, including a prominent app used by protesters in Hong Kong, at the behest of the Chinese government.

Late last year, you were widely quoted as saying, "At Apple, we are not afraid to say that our values drive our curation decisions." For those of us who support the promotion of basic human rights and dignity, it was refreshing to hear a tech titan say that priorities were more important than profits. So you can imagine our disappointment to read that Apple had removed HKMap, a crowdsourced mapping app widely used by Hong Kong residents, from the App Store this week.

Hong Kong residents have, as you know, been protesting now for months, defending their promised autonomy and in support of greater participation in their civic life. Hong Kong's authorities have aggressively moved against these protestors with the support of the Chinese government. In the face of this brutal repression, tools like HKMap let peaceful demonstrators share locations to avoid and help to keep peaceful protestors out of harm's way.

HKMap is by no means the only app that Apple has censored in China. According to the non-profit organization GreatFire, Apple has censored at least 2200 apps in China, which include Virtual Private Network apps used to circumvent China's Great Firewall, and apps made by and for oppressed ethnic minorities, including the Uyghur and Tibetan communities.

You have said publicly that you want to work with China's leaders to effect change rather than sit on the sidelines and yell at them. We, too, believe that diplomacy and trade can be democratizing forces. But when a repressive government refuses to evolve or, indeed, when it doubles down, cooperation can become complicity.

The Chinese government is growing more aggressive in its attempts to dictate terms to U.S. corporations, as last week's headlines involving Apple, the National Basketball Association, and Activision Blizzard make clear. Cases like these raise real concern about whether Apple and other large U.S. corporate entities will bow to growing Chinese demands rather than lose access to more than a billion Chinese consumers.


In promoting values, as in most things, actions matter far more than words. Apple's decisions last week to accommodate the Chinese government by taking down HKMaps is deeply concerning. We urge you in the strongest terms to reverse course, to demonstrate that Apple puts values above market access, and to stand with the brave men and women fighting for basic rights and dignity in Hong Kong.

Sincerely,




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Ron Wyden  
United States Senator



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Marco Rubio  
United States Senator



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Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez  
Member of Congress




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Tom Malinowski  
Member of Congress



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Tom Cotton  
United States Senator



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Ted Cruz  
United States Senator



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Mike Gallagher  
Member of Congress