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Zhou Fengsuo looks back at Humanitarian China's journey in 2019 in an interview (full transcript)

Host: *This is the Chen Pokong Fengyun Show and I am special correspondent Wu Yun. Today, we've invited Mr Zhou Fengsuo, former student leader during the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989 and president of Humanitarian China. Welcome, Mr Zhou. We would like you to tell us about **Humanitarian China's work during 2019 and its future plans.***

Zhou Fengsuo: Thank you. It's a privilege for me to have the opportunity to talk about our work during the past year and our future plans. During the past year, human rights in China continued to deteriorate, which brought us huge challenges. The need is great. The most important work Humanitarian China does is to assist prisoners of conscience in China; we provide humanitarian relief to over 100 people annually. This group now consists of a wide range of people, including groups we have been supporting such as human rights lawyers, former Democracy Party members and Tiananmen Square Massacre victims, and some new groups that have emerged this year, for instance, the Hong Kong protesters and those arrested over rights issues that had previously been regarded as relatively minor in China, for instance, labor rights, woman rights and equality. The CCP is becoming increasingly paranoid and treating everyone as an enemy, which results in many different groups being targeted. We do our best to provide humanitarian relief. Our most crucial task is to understand their situation and needs, and to promote international awareness of human rights violations. Humanitarian China works in collaboration with many partner organizations in these areas. Our greatest strength is that we have been providing humanitarian relief to Chinese prisoners of conscience for 15 years. This means that many people know us and trust us. We can reach almost any group and any prisoner of conscience: perhaps more than anyone else. Most of the 100 people we assisted this year are unknown to many. If you are interested, do take a look at the list of prisoners of conscience we have recently published. If you see any name and address missing on the list, please let us know.

Host: *Next, could you tell us about **the statue of Liu Xiaobo?***

Zhou Fengsuo: This year marks the 30th anniversary of the 1989 pro-democracy movement. One of the most important things we did was erecting a statue to Liu Xiaobo. The idea first came to me during his widow Liu Xia's first visit to New York. I met with her and we talked about the fact that Liu Xiaobo, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, had almost been forgotten by the world. Both Xiaobo and I were jailed in Xincheng prison for taking part in

the 1989 movement. Of course, we are very angry at the Tiananmen Square Massacre and we hoped to erect a statue to Liu Xiaobo so that more people know about his story and China's treatment of political prisoners. We wanted to commemorate Liu Xiaobo, mainly because he was one of the most important icons of the 1989 democracy movement. A visiting scholar at Columbia University at the time, he flew back to Beijing to participate in the democracy movement. From then on, he dedicated his life to democracy in China until he died in custody. Also important is that he represented Chinese political prisoners. He had won the Nobel Peace Prize, but despite this, he died of cancer after the CCP refused to release him for medical treatment abroad. His death is one of the most prominent human rights cases and drew attention to China's abuse of political prisoners.

So, this year, we initially made a request to Columbia University [to house a statue to Liu Xiaobo], which would have brought them honor. But they refused; we all know why. They have a Confucius Institute and they take money from mainland China. Later, we erected a bust of Liu Xiaobo at the DOX Centre for Contemporary Art, a famous gallery in Prague. The bust is a piece of world-class artwork. Everyone who sees it feels the spirit of Liu Xiaobo himself and the Chinese democratic movement that he represented. His widow Liu Xia has recently been to DOX to see the bust and she was very moved. The event was broadcast live on Czech National Television when we went to unveil the bust in April this year. I felt that the Czech Republic, especially the city of Prague, has a glorious tradition of resisting autocracy and fighting for freedom. After Soviet tanks rolled into the streets of Prague, the people carried on resisting in various ways, until the signing of Charter 77. All this has brought great encouragement to China's democratic movement. To this day, Prague is also our best ally. The Czech capital has recently canceled a sister city agreement with Beijing and signed a similar sister city agreement with Taipei, a move that deserves applause. We know the CCP has been buying diplomatic allies in an attempt to isolate Taiwan's democratic government worldwide. It has purchased the support of a lot of countries, but not the Czech Republic, which has defied the evil CCP regime and befriended Taiwan, purely due to moral obligations. This is very remarkable. In erecting the Liu Xiaobo bust, we were able to collaborate in fighting against the CCP tyranny.

So, part of what's significant about the sculpture is that it is a recognized image in the West. In the future, we will erect statues of him in different places every year. Columbia University refused our request, but we will find another U.S. university which is willing to permanently house a statue of Liu Xiaobo so that China's democracy movement and human rights will become known to more people.

Host: Great. Could you tell us about *the activities commemorating the 1989 democracy protests?*

Zhou Fengsuo: During the first half of 2019, we mainly focused on events commemorating the 30th anniversary of the 1989 democracy movement and Tiananmen Square Massacre. Looking back, our plan was carried out as scheduled. Humanitarian China held the first world-class event to pay tribute to the 1989 movement and the victims of the Massacre. It took place at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York, one of the world's most impressive cathedrals. Many famous artists came. Attendees included well-known Chinese writers, Liao Yiwu, Ma Jian and Huang Xiang, and former student leaders such as Zhang Boli and Wang Dan. About 500 local English-speaking people came too. This was the first major commemorative event to be held 30 years after the movement and the massacre. Of course, for us, the 30th anniversary is a very important landmark. Many of our generation will feel as if we have entered our old age. This is also an important part of our continuous fight against the CCP, to remember and not to forget. Therefore, holding the commemorative event is not just about history, but also part of the fight in terms of "who controls the past controls the future". We have more opportunities to collaborate with other international NGOs on the East Coast. I hope we can do similar things in the future.

Host: Next we'd like you to tell us about *the Liberty Sculpture Park and the Tiananmen Square collection of artifacts and artworks.*

Zhou Fengsuo: Liberty Sculpture Park has been our most important project this year and will remain a focus in the next five to ten years. In collaboration with multiple democracy groups, sculptor Chen Weiming has been the main driving force in setting up the Park in the desert on a large plot along I-15, between Los Angeles and Las Vegas, about two hours from Los Angeles. Two sculptures have been built this year: the number "64" representing June 4th, the date of the massacre in 1989, and the Tank Man. These are the first sculptures dedicated to the massacre, erected by Chinese democracy activists overseas. With the desert backdrop, they are visually striking. And the desert symbolizes our situation: we have been largely isolated and helpless in our effort to pursue democracy in China. This [Sculpture Park] is like a base for us.

We are planning to build a June 4th memorial museum within five years and a large statue of the Goddess of Democracy in ten years. China is currently in a very dark place. With its indoctrination and intimidation of its citizens, the CCP government seems to be capable of anything. It appears to be powerful abroad too, with its infiltration through high-tech and spread of its tyranny.

We will most definitely not give up hope of a democratic China. Liberty Sculpture Park is an eminent physical presence outside of China, which shows the world that there is a group of people in the US who will never forget and will always keep the flame alive. So, this is most important for us in the future.

Next year, we will also build a monument dedicated to Hong Kong's democracy movement. This is the most important event that has happened during the second half of 2019. Hong Kong is at the frontline of fighting against the CCP. We will have an important memorial in June 2020, which is due to be completed around the next anniversary of June 4th. We have some preliminary thoughts, for example, maybe a Lennon Wall or some statues, but nothing has been decided. If you are watching this and have a suggestion, we'd love to hear from you.

In preparation for the planned June 4th Memorial Museum, we have started collecting artifacts and artworks relating to the events in 1989. The biggest part of our collection is some artworks that have been preserved in New York for 30 years. After Humanitarian China had acquired this collection, Chen Weiming exhibited the artworks on a national tour. They are now stored near the Liberty Sculpture Park. In the future, when the June 4th Memorial Museum has been built, they will be on display there. Some friends have sent in donations of historical objects, such as tents used on Tiananmen Square in 1989 and lots of images and articles. All of these will become part of the June 4th Memorial. We hope to receive more June 4th artifacts and artworks when the Museum is open.

Host: *Could you tell us about **the events Humanitarian China hosted in Taiwan?***

Zhou Fengsuo: This year Humanitarian China took its work outside of the US. I've mentioned our commissioning of the bust of Liu Xiaobo and having it unveiled and on display in Prague. Other important events have been held in Taiwan. Firstly, to mark the 30th anniversary of the Tiananmen protests and massacre, an international conference was held in Taipei, Taiwan. The host was actually the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China. But as you know, there is no way for events like this to be held in Hong Kong and many of us could not enter Hong Kong, which was why it took place in Taipei. The conference was reported by up to 100 international media outlets based in Taiwan, creating great interest, because in fact, there haven't been many such high-level and influential events in Taipei. Therefore, it received great attention. We were very pleased that all sectors of Taiwan society showed enthusiasm for the commemoration of the 30th anniversary of June 4th and for the Chinese democracy movement. This

goes back to 30 years ago, when the KMT was in power, many Taiwan people supported the Chinese pro-democracy movement.

The most important thing is that later, because of this very good interaction, President Tsai Ing-wen met for the first time with representatives of Chinese democracy activists participating in the anniversary commemoration events in Taiwan, including representatives of former student protesters of 1989. This was also the first time in 30 years that a president of Taiwan openly talked about the topic of June 4th in Taiwan in such a high-profile setting. At the time, I also wrote a message saying that we must work together to safeguard democratic values, whether in Taiwan as a bastion of democracy, in China for the future of democracy, or in Hong Kong for its pursuit of democracy. What binds us together is this common value of democracy.

Later this year, we also held an important event, namely the China Human Rights Lawyers' Day, also called 709 Human Rights Lawyers' Day. Because the '709 Incident' is a case of political persecution by the CCP of human rights lawyers on a large scale. The CCP wanted to intimidate Chinese lawyers through "red terror". By commemorating this incident, we hope that more people will get to know this group of outstanding Chinese human rights lawyers and their great efforts to promote the rule of law in China. Many of them have been imprisoned because of their work. It was the first time that this annual event was held in Taiwan, with the support of many local organizations, with hundreds of people participating in Taipei. Organizations including Taiwan's Judicial Reform Committee and the New School for Democracy provided assistance. The event was very successful, and we were very grateful.

Host: *Lastly, please tell us about your support of Hong Kong's democracy movement.*

Zhou Fengsuo: The most exciting event that took place in the second half of 2019 was, of course, Hong Kong's democracy movement. In fact, during the 30th anniversary commemoration, when I met with friends from the Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China, we talked about this. I realized at that point that this might become very significant. That was in May 2019, when perhaps not many people had paid attention to it. At the time there was a subtle change. A lot of people called the law in question "the fugitive law" and I said we should call it the "China extradition law". The Chinese word "送中"[pronounced *songzhong* in Mandarin] means extradition to China; this incident may turn out to be the start of the ultimate downfall of the CCP, which in Chinese is "送终" [also pronounced *songzhong* in Mandarin]. Just as I predicted, on 9th June, shortly after the June 4th candlelight vigils, one million Hong Kongers took to the

streets, followed by another mass demonstration by two million people. Hong Kong police responded to the protests with thousands of arrests and a lot of tear gas. It has been most encouraging to see Hong Kongers keep fighting for freedom. They managed to force the CCP, an all-powerful tyranny, to withdraw the evil extradition bill, which was a huge victory in itself. Most importantly, the movement is still ongoing in various ways. The flame is still huge even now. We have recently seen unprecedented landslide victory for pro-democracy candidates in district council elections. And up to one million took part in the latest protest organized by the Civil Human Rights Front (CHRF), which is again most encouraging.

As participants of the 1989 democracy movement, we have a duty to support Hong Kongers in every way we can, thereby returning a favor, because the people of Hong Kong have supported China's democracy movement for 30 years. As a way to support them, Humanitarian China has launched a fundraising appeal to support the Hong Kong protesters, mainly by providing them with humanitarian relief. So far we have received about \$25,000; the figure is still increasing. Because Hong Kongers are still fighting, we hope to keep the fundraising appeal open. The need is indeed huge. During our recent AGM, friends from Hong Kong told us that the need is massive in Hong Kong since 6000 have been arrested. Each of the arrested has to bear heavy legal expenses. The 612 Fund, one of the biggest funds, has raised 90m Hong Kong dollars, which sounds a lot of money but isn't enough when divided among 6000 people. And that's just legal expenses. There are many protesters who don't even dare to see a doctor, and who have fled Hong Kong and need to resettle elsewhere. Humanitarian China can provide some practical help.

To start with, we donated 100k Hong Kong dollars to the 612 Fund. We now also donate small amounts to individual protesters to help them settle somewhere safe. This kind of need is huge. We hope to be able to help more in this respect. Our donors are mainly people who have left mainland China and have a passion for the Chinese democracy movement. We've also received Bitcoin donations from mainland China. Compared with the 612 Fund, our funds are very small, like a drop in the ocean. However, it's important for us to support the Hong Kong democracy movement; it's our duty to do so. We hope that more donors are willing to support the Hong Kong protesters this way. Humanitarian China will ensure that your donation gets sent directly to those most in need. That is the standard we have maintained in our work for more than a decade. When it comes to supporting the Hong Kong protesters, we can certainly do the same, and we are already doing it. Thank you.