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**Letter to the editor
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As our Prime Minister makes his first official visit to China, the PMO released today a statement that says “the two sides agreed...to promote and protect human rights consistent with international human rights instruments”. This is ironic as Mr. Harper’s own government has abruptly cut funding to Kairos, an organization that supports some of the most marginalized communities overseas and upholds the very Canadian principles of human rights that Mr. Harper is promoting in China. Kairos received support from the CIDA for the past 35 years and was reassured that their latest proposal is in line with CIDA’s priorities – only to have its funding cut at the eleventh hour. Could one reason be that Kairos has been outspoken about Canadian mining practices, the ecological impact of the Alberta tar sands development, and human rights violations in Columbia? Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) cannot be as effective as they are without the freedom to bring to light inconvenient truths that affect lives and livelihoods in Canada and abroad. What is at stake here is more than one agency losing its funding; it’s about enabling civil society to have a dissenting voice, and more importantly, giving voice to the voiceless.

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