



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

New European Parliament resolution says China's criminal law is being abused to persecute Tibetans and Buddhists

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Brussels, 18 April 2019 – In a resolution adopted at its plenary session today in Strasbourg, the European Parliament has singled out China for its persecution of Tibetans and other ethnic and religious groups and demanded that the Chinese authorities respect their fundamental rights and freedoms.

The resolution, adopted with a large majority of 505 voices (with only 18 against and 47 abstentions) expresses the European Parliament's concerns about the increasing repression faced by many ethnic and religious "minorities" in China, in particular Tibetans, Uyghurs, Kazakhs and Christians. It calls amongst others on China to close the so-called "political reeducation camps" in Xinjiang (known to Uyghurs as East Turkestan) and to "uphold the linguistic, cultural, religious and other fundamental freedoms of Tibetans."

"ICT welcomes this resolution, which sends once again the strong message that China's treatment of Tibetans and other ethnic and religious groups is unacceptable," said ICT's EU Policy Director Vincent Metten. *"It also highlights the gap between the deep interest and support of the elected representatives of European citizens for human rights in China and Tibet, and the discussions at the EU-China level, which continue to prioritize trade and economic relations over human rights concerns."*

The resolution was adopted a week after the 21st EU-China Summit, where despite President Tusk's remarks that human rights were for the EU "as important as economic interests" and that some individual cases were raised with Chinese leaders, human rights issues were largely marginalized. The resolution recalls the importance of the EU raising human rights "at every political level" with the Chinese authorities, which is a much welcome reminder, in particular given the limits of the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue the last round of which brought "no substantial results," despite the [efforts](#) of the European External Action Service.

On Tibet more specifically, the resolution expresses concern that *"China's criminal law is being abused to persecute Tibetans and Buddhists, whose religious activities are equated with 'separatism'; deplors the fact that the environment for practising Buddhism in Tibet has worsened significantly after the Tibetan protests of March 2008, with the Chinese Government adopting a more pervasive approach to 'patriotic education'."*

The European Parliament condemns China's "patriotic education" campaigns, including interferences in the management of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries, and asks the Chinese authorities to refrain from forcibly resettling Tibetan nomads. It also calls on China to immediately release Tibetans detained solely for having exercised their right to freedom of expression, including Tibetan language rights

advocate Tashi Wangchuk and Lobsang Dargye, a Kirti monk who was [arrested in March 2017 after he carried a solo-protest calling for the return of the Dalai Lama to Tibet.](#)

It also reiterates the European Parliament's call for unhindered access to Tibet for EU diplomats, journalists and citizens "*in reciprocity for the free and open access to the entire territories of the EU Member States that Chinese travellers enjoy,*" – a call inspired by the adoption of the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act in the US last year and which was recently [echoed](#) by a number of concerned parliamentarians across Europe on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the Tibetan Uprising of 1959.

During the debate on the resolution, Jo Leinen, Chair of the European Parliament's delegation for relations with the People's Republic of China, called on the European Union to ensure China's respect for the universality and indivisibility of human rights, recognized by the country in the joint Summit statement. Thomas Mann, President of the European Parliament's Tibet Interest Group, said that he hoped that the next Parliament would remain the voice of Tibetans and human rights in the world. "*It is the role of the European continent (...) to show that human rights are non-negotiable,*" added Nathalie Griesbeck, the Chairman of the group.

Concluding the debate, EU High Representative Federica Mogherini shared the assessment of the Parliament and presented the efforts of the European Union to bring positive change for Tibetans Uyghurs and other groups, stressing the importance of coherency and unity of EU institutions, but also of European Union Member States on this issue.

Below is the full text of the resolution, also available [here](#).

European Parliament resolution on China, notably the situation of religious and ethnic minorities (2019/2690(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the situation in China, in particular those of 26 November 2009 on China: minority rights and application of the death penalty, of 10 March 2011 on the situation and cultural heritage in Kashgar (Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region), of 15 December 2016 on the cases of the Larung Gar Tibetan Buddhist Academy and Ilham Tohti, of 12 September 2018 on the state of EU-China relations and of 4 October 2018 on mass arbitrary detention of Uyghurs and Kazakhs in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region,^{[1][2][3][4][5]}
- having regard to the EU-China Strategic Partnership launched in 2003 and to the joint communication from the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 22 June 2016 entitled 'Elements for a new EU strategy on China'(JOIN(2016)0030),
- having regard to the EU guidelines on the promotion and protection of freedom of religion or belief, adopted by the Foreign Affairs Council on 24 June 2013,
- having regard to the joint communication from the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 12 March 2019 entitled 'EU-China – A strategic outlook'(JOIN(2019)0005),
- having regard to the 'Joint statement of the 21st EU-China summit' of 9 April 2019,
- having regard to the EU-China dialogue on human rights, launched in 1995, and the 37th round thereof, held in Brussels on 1 and 2 April 2019,
- having regard to Article 36 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, which guarantees all citizens the right to freedom of religious belief, and to Article 4 thereof, which upholds the rights of 'minority nationalities',

- having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 16 December 1966, signed by China in 1998, but not ratified,
- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
- having regard to the concluding observations of the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination’s review of China,
- having regard to Rules 135(5) and 123(4) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas in its strategic framework on human rights and democracy, the EU pledges that human rights, democracy, and the rule of law will be promoted ‘in all areas of the EU’s external actions without exception’, and that the EU will ‘place human rights at the centre of its relations with all third countries including strategic partners’; whereas this should remain at the centre of the long-standing relationship between the EU and China, in accordance with the EU’s commitment to uphold these very same values in its external action and China’s expressed interest in adhering to them in its own development and international cooperation;

B. whereas China has been successful in lifting 700 million people out of poverty, but whereas since President Xi Jinping assumed power in March 2013, the human rights situation in China has continued to deteriorate, with the government stepping up its hostility towards peaceful dissent, the freedoms of expression and religion, and the rule of law; whereas the Chinese authorities have detained and prosecuted hundreds of human rights defenders, lawyers and journalists;

C. whereas the new regulations on religious affairs that took effect on 1 February 2018 are more restrictive towards religious groups and activities, and force them to fall more closely into line with party policies; whereas freedom of religion and conscience has reached a new low point since the start of the economic reforms and the opening up of China in the late 1970s; whereas China is home to one of the largest populations of religious prisoners;

D. whereas, while an accord was reached between the Holy See and the Chinese Government in September 2018 concerning the appointments of bishops in China, the Christian religious communities have been facing increasing repression in China, with Christians, both in underground and government-approved churches, being targeted through the harassment and detention of believers, the demolition of churches, the confiscation of religious symbols and the crackdown on Christian gatherings; whereas Chinese authorities in some provinces do not allow persons under 18 years of age to attend religious activities; whereas in September 2018 China banned the Zion Church, the biggest house congregation in China with more than 1 500 followers;

E. whereas the situation in Xinjiang, where 10 million Muslim Uyghurs and ethnic Kazakhs live, has rapidly deteriorated, as stability and the control of Xinjiang has been elevated to a top priority of the Chinese authorities, driven by both periodic terrorist attacks in, or allegedly connected to, Xinjiang by Uyghurs and the strategic location of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region for the Belt and Road Initiative; whereas there is information that the Xinjiang camp system has expanded into other parts of China;

F. whereas an extrajudicial detention programme has been established, holding ‘from tens of thousands to upwards of a million Uyghurs’ who are being forced to undergo political ‘re-education’ according to estimates cited by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, without being charged or tried, for undetermined periods of time, and are therefore being arbitrarily detained under the pretext of countering terrorism and religious extremism; whereas a policy of strict restrictions on religious practices and the Uyghur language and customs has been developed in the Xinjiang province;

G. whereas a sophisticated network of invasive digital surveillance has been developed, including facial recognition technology and data collection;

H. whereas the Chinese Government has refused numerous requests from the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (WGEID), the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and other UN Special Procedures mandates to send independent investigators to Xinjiang;

I. whereas the situation in Tibet has deteriorated over the past few years, in spite of economic growth and infrastructure development, with the Chinese Government curtailing a wide range of human rights under the pretext of security and stability, and engaging in relentless attacks against Tibetan identity and culture;

J. whereas the surveillance and control measures in Tibet have been on the increase over the past few years, as well as arbitrary detentions, acts of torture and ill-treatment; whereas the Chinese Government has created an environment in Tibet in which there are no limits to state authority, the climate of fear is pervasive, and every aspect of public and private life is tightly controlled and regulated; whereas in Tibet, any acts of non-violent dissent or criticism of state policies with regard to ethnic or religious minorities can be considered as 'splittist' and therefore criminalised; whereas access to the Tibet Autonomous Region today is more restricted than ever before;

K. whereas an extremely high number of Tibetans, mostly monks and nuns, have reportedly set themselves on fire since 2009 in protest against restrictive Chinese policies in Tibet, and in support of the return of the Dalai Lama and the right to religious freedom in the Aba/Ngaba county prefecture in Sichuan Province and other parts of the Tibetan plateau; whereas no progress has been made in the resolution of the Tibetan crisis in the last 10 years;

1. Is deeply concerned about the increasingly repressive regime that many religious and ethnic minorities, in particular Uyghurs and Kazakhs, Tibetans and Christians face, placing additional restraints on the constitutional guarantees of their right to freedom of cultural expression and religious belief, to freedom of speech and expression and to peaceful assembly and association; demands that the authorities respect these fundamental freedoms;

2. Calls on the Chinese Government to immediately end the practice of arbitrary detentions, without any charge, trial or conviction for criminal offence, of members of the Uyghur and Kazakh minority and Tibetans, to close all camps and detention centres and to release the detained persons immediately and unconditionally;

3. Calls for the immediate release of arbitrarily detained people, prisoners of conscience, including practitioners of Falun Gong and for a stop to be put to enforced disappearances, and insists that all individuals are able to choose their legal representative, have access to their family and to medical assistance, as well as have their cases investigated;

4. Calls on the Chinese Government to immediately release: Uyghurs, including Ilham Tohti, Tashpolat Tiyip, Rahile Dawut, Eli Mamut, Hailaite Niyazi, Memetjan Abdulla, Abduhelil Zunun, and Abdukerim Abduweli; individuals persecuted for their religious beliefs, including Zhang Shaojie, Hu Shigen, Wang Yi, and Sun Qian; Tibetan activists, writers and religious figures who face criminal charges or have been imprisoned for exercising their right to freedom of expression, including Tashi Wangchuk and Lobsang Dargye;

5. Calls for the immediate release of the Swedish national book publisher Gui Minhai and the two Canadian citizens Michael Spavor and Michael Kovrig;

6. Urges the Chinese Government to release the full details of persons disappeared in Xinjiang to their families;

7. Calls on the Chinese authorities to end their campaigns against Christian congregations and organisations and to stop the harassment and detention of Christian pastors and priests and the forced demolitions of churches;

8. Calls on the Chinese authorities to uphold the linguistic, cultural, religious and other fundamental freedoms of Tibetans, and to refrain from settlement policies in favour of the Han people and to the disadvantage of the Tibetans, as well as from forcing Tibetan nomads to abandon their traditional lifestyle;

9. Condemns the campaigns carried out via the 'patriotic education' approach, including measures to stage-manage Tibetan Buddhist monasteries; is concerned that China's criminal law is being abused to persecute Tibetans and Buddhists, whose religious activities are equated with 'separatism'; deplores the fact that the environment for practising Buddhism in Tibet has worsened significantly

after the Tibetan protests of March 2008, with the Chinese Government adopting a more pervasive approach to ‘patriotic education’;

10. Urges the Chinese authorities to implement the constitutionally guaranteed right to freedom of religious belief for all Chinese citizens;

11. Recalls the importance of the EU and its Member States raising the issue of human rights violations at every political level with the Chinese authorities, in line with the EU’s commitment to project a strong, clear and unified voice in its approach to the country, including the annual Human Rights Dialogue, Strategic Dialogue, High-Level Economic Dialogue, and Summit, as well as the forthcoming Euro-Asia Summit;

12. Underlines that while in their joint statement issued after the 21st EU-China Summit, the EU and China reaffirmed that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, the EU should urge China to act accordingly; deplores the fact that at the EU-China Summit of 9 April 2019 urgent human rights concerns once again played a marginal role; takes the view that if and when EU-China summit language is weak on human rights, the Council, the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Commission should decline to include it at all and issue a separate communication on the topic with a meaningful assessment both of the situation and why stronger language could not be agreed;

13. Calls on EU Member States to prevent any activities undertaken by the Chinese authorities in the EU’s territory to harass members of Turkic communities, Tibetans and other religious or ethnic groups in order to compel them to act as informants, to force their return to China or silence them;

14. Calls on the Chinese authorities to allow free, meaningful and unhindered access to Xinjiang province and Tibet Autonomous Region for journalists and international observers, including for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and UN Special Procedures; calls for the EU and the Member States to take the lead during the next session of the UN Human Rights Council on a resolution establishing a fact-finding mission to Xinjiang;

15. Calls on the Chinese Government to guarantee unfettered respect of citizens’ rights in the Chinese Constitution, with regard to Article 4, which protects national minorities; Article 35, which protects the freedoms of speech, the press, assembly, association, procession and demonstration; Article 36, which recognises the right to freedom of religious belief; and Article 41, which guarantees the right to criticise and make suggestions regarding any state organ or official;

16. Urges China to ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;

17. Urges China to give EU diplomats, journalists and citizens unfettered access to Tibet in reciprocity for the free and open access to the entire territories of the EU Member States that Chinese travellers enjoy; urges the EU institutions to take the issue of access to Tibet into serious consideration in the discussions on the EU-China visa facilitation agreement;

18. Expresses its disappointment at the fact that the 37th round of the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue brought no substantial results; regrets, furthermore, that the Chinese delegation did not take part on 2 April in the continuation of the dialogue that provided for an exchange of views with civil society organisations;

19. Urges the VP/HR, the EEAS and Member States to monitor the worrying human rights developments in Xinjiang more intensively, including increased government repression and surveillance, and to speak out against violations of human rights in China both privately and publicly;

20. Calls on the Council to consider adopting targeted sanctions against officials responsible for the crackdown in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region;

21. Calls for the EU, its Member States and the international community to halt all exports and technology transfers of goods and services that are being used by China to extend and improve its cyber surveillance and predictive profiling apparatus; is deeply concerned that China is already exporting such technologies to authoritarian states around the world;

22. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Council, the Commission, the

governments and parliaments of the Member States, and the Government and the Parliament of the Peoples' Republic of China.

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