



## INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

### UN human rights chief visit to China must include Tibet: ICT

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The International Campaign for Tibet welcomes the recently announced visit to China this year by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet. At the same time, we urge the high commissioner to visit Tibet and to raise the human rights situation of the Tibetan people in her meetings with Chinese leaders.

The Chinese government regularly denies UN and foreign officials access to Tibet, a historically independent country that China annexed in 1959. Tibet is effectively isolated from the world and is often described by foreign journalists as being more difficult to access than North Korea.

Despite repeated requests by previous high commissioners, the last visit to Tibet by someone in that role was by Mary Robinson in 1998. In the 22 years since, human rights in Tibet have severely deteriorated.

“The human rights situation in Tibet is troubling with systematic and widespread repression being the daily normal,” said Kai Mueller, head of ICT’s UN Advocacy Team. “Tibet, like Xinjiang, is subject to deeply discriminatory policies and totalitarian measures of control, particularly in religious and cultural spheres. Tibet has also been the testing ground for what we are witnessing today in Xinjiang.”

One former UNHCHR chief has said Tibet’s “deep underlying issues need to be addressed.”

Bachelet should raise the systematic violation of Tibetan religious freedom, as highlighted by the continued detention of the Panchen Lama, one of the most important figures in Tibetan Buddhism, who has not been seen in public since Chinese authorities abducted him and his family in 1995 when he was just six years old.

Furthermore, Bachelet and her team should discuss with Chinese officials the more recent sentencing of Tashi Wangchuk, who is in prison merely for standing up for Tibetans’ right to study their mother tongue, Mueller added.

In her regular update to the Human Rights Council in Geneva on Feb. 27, Bachelet announced plans to travel to China this year, including Xinjiang (known to Uyghurs as East Turkestan), and requested “unfettered access” for her advance team to prepare for such a visit.

“Access to Tibet is extremely restricted and the region cut off from independent observers, diplomats and journalists. It is of utmost importance that the region is opened up for unfettered access. If such access is granted consistently, this would facilitate transparency and accountability and ultimately the protection of human rights,” Mueller said.



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