



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

European Parliament report on EU-China strategy raises concerns about Tibetans' persecution

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BRUSSELS—The European Parliament adopted today a report on a new EU-China Strategy that expresses concerns about reports of coercive labor programs in Tibet, calls for free access to Tibetan areas for diplomats and journalists, and criticizes China's control of the selection of religious leaders.

The report, initiated by Member of the European Parliament Hilde Vautmans (Belgium, Renew Europe Group), proposes a strategy based on six pillars, the second of which focuses on “Enhanced engagement on universal values, international norms and human rights.”

In this part of the report, MEPs say they are “extremely concerned” about reports of coercive labor programs in Tibet and call on China to comply with its obligations under national and international law to respect human rights, including the rights of ethnic groups in Xinjiang, Tibet and Inner Mongolia.

Most notably, the report calls on the European Commission to express to the Chinese authorities its concern over China's Measures for the Administration of Religious Clergy (Order No. 15), which further increase state control of the selection of religious leaders.

In recent years, the Chinese government has been using such measures and regulations to legitimate and legalize its claim of authority to appoint the next Dalai Lama in contravention of Buddhist religious tradition and the fundamental right of Tibetan Buddhist communities to follow their own spiritual process without government interference.

Vincent Metten, EU policy director of the International Campaign for Tibet, said: *“ICT welcomes this comprehensive report, which tackles the EU-China relations in a broad perspective. We welcome in particular the serious concerns expressed by members of the European Parliament on human rights, and in particular on reports about coercive labor programs imposed on Tibetans, as well as on the People's Republic of China's interference in the selection of religious leaders. This is an important message to China, which is making plans to interfere in the succession of the Dalai Lama.”*

Sanctions and dialogue

MEPs also underline that the consideration and ratification process for the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment cannot resume until China's sanctions against MEPs and EU institutions (including the Sub-Committee on Human Rights and the Political and Security Committee) have been lifted.

The Chinese sanctions, which MEPs consider lacking legal basis and an attempt to deter the EU from continuing its work and action against human rights abuses in China, were adopted after the EU decision in March to use its new Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime against four Chinese individuals and one entity directly responsible for serious human rights violations in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region.

The political relationship between the EU and China has since deteriorated, which could explain Beijing's reluctance to agree on new dates for the next EU-China Summit and annual EU-China human rights dialogue, which last took place in April 2019 in Brussels, more than two years ago.

Several NGOs including ICT have been critical about this dialogue, which has so far failed to improve the human rights situation in China and has been gradually downgraded by the Chinese side over the years (including by reducing the dialogue to one annual round instead of two and China's objection or refusal to provide information about the condition of detention, health situation and status of political prisoners).

ICT and other NGOs have called for the creation of a complementary shadow dialogue including the Chinese diaspora, free and independent NGOs, academics and lawmakers in order to forge a better understanding of the Chinese system and devise better strategies to influence human rights progress in China—the current position of the European Parliament.

Olympics

Last but not least, MEPs reiterate their call, already expressed in a resolution adopted earlier this year, for EU and EU Member State leaders to decline invitations to the Beijing Winter Olympics in 2022 in the event that the human rights situation in China and Hong Kong does not improve and no high-level EU-China Human Rights Dialogue/Summit with a tangible outcome takes place prior to the games.



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