



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Mounting concerns over UN High Commissioner visit to China

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WASHINGTON — The International Campaign for Tibet is deeply worried about the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights' upcoming visit to China, as there is serious concern that her visit cannot be considered credible. According to media reports, an advance team from the Office of the High Commissioner arrived in China this week.

ICT, along with more than 60 civil society groups, [publicly appealed](#) to the High Commissioner last week laying out the main expectations and core preconditions to be met.

Kai Mueller, Head of UN Advocacy at the International Campaign for Tibet, said:

"The opacity around the trip makes us deeply worried about the circumstances of the visit. We are concerned that the visit of the High Commissioner will be carefully curated to prevent meaningful access to [political prisoners](#), prisons, internment camps and schools. The nature of the visit and associated COVID restrictions will allow China to heavily restrict access and still present itself as open to the world. In the short-term, the visit may be used as a propaganda tool to discredit the numerous accounts of gross human rights violations in East Turkestan (Xinjiang), Tibet and across China. We are particularly concerned, in this regard, about [statements](#) by the Chinese government opposing any meaningful investigation into the numerous reports of rights violations.

"In the long term, the visit may even embolden China's leaders in their efforts to assimilate all non-Han cultures and identities. China may also use the High Commissioner's visit to reject future requests for access for at least another decade or two.

"The High Commissioner's visit is also sending a dangerous message about the importance of human rights, the very issue she is mandated to protect. The apparent absence of Tibet on her itinerary shows that she is willing to bypass a region that has been [repeatedly ranked the least free region in the world](#) by Freedom House.

"Equally concerning has been the lack of consultation with civil society and ethnic and religious groups such as Tibetans. Affected communities require credible assurance from the High Commissioner that their grievances are being meaningfully addressed with the Chinese government with particular urgency and focus. The preparation of the visit to the People's Republic of China is lacking such assurance.

"The Chinese government, as a result of an ill-prepared and ill-executed visit, may get away with systematic and widespread human rights violations, which will cause considerable harm and damage the credibility of UN human rights institutions."

ICT notes that the High Commissioner has not expressed support for the [unprecedented 2020 call by more than 50 UN human rights experts](#) for decisive measures to protect fundamental freedoms in China. The High Commissioner, in contrast to her predecessors, has also remained silent on the [alarming human rights situation in Tibet](#).

The last UN High Commissioner for human rights who visited Tibet was Mary Robinson in 1998.



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