



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

ICT testifies at European Parliament's hearing on EU-China human rights dialogue

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The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) briefed Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) on the dire human rights situation in Tibet during a meeting of the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights this week.

The meeting, which took place on 4 December, focused on the state of the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue - whose latest round took place on 16 June and was preceded by a [side-visit to the Tibet Autonomous Region](#).

Ineffective dialogue

"Despite the European External Action Service (EEAS)'s efforts, it is clear that the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue process has not provided meaningful results," EU Policy Director Vincent Metten stressed in his testimony, arguing China's human rights abuses have on the contrary intensified in recent years.

He called on the EU to consider reviewing the dialogue and exploring more assertive ways to press China on its human rights record. "The EU should prioritize real, measurable improvements in human rights rather than continuing ineffective dialogues that produce little to no tangible outcomes. The stakes for Tibetans, Uyghurs, Hongkongers, and all Chinese dissidents are too high for complacency," he said.

Worsening human rights situation in Tibet

Metten stressed that this review of the dialogue – which has been repeatedly [called for by civil society organizations, including ICT](#) in recent years - is especially urgent given the scale and severity of China's human rights abuses.

In Tibet, the Chinese government's assimilationist policies indeed not only violate the fundamental rights of Tibetans, but it also threatens Tibet's ancient culture and their survival as a distinct people Metten said, citing the coercive boarding schools system that alienates Tibetan children from their language and traditions; the forced resettlement of Tibetan nomads and rural population; and China's interferences in the succession of the Dalai Lama.

Metten also pointed to China's hydropower dam spree in Tibet, which poses a significant risk not only to the Tibetan civilization and environment but also negatively impact 1,8 million people downstream.

Advanced copies of [ICT's new report "Chinese Hydropower: Daming Tibetan culture, community and environment"](#), published on 5 December, were distributed to MEPs.

Replying to a question on China's transnational repression, Metten finally emphasized the need of a common European definition and stronger cooperation to protect Uyghurs, Tibetans and other victims.

Following is the full text of Vincent Metten's statement.

European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights

4 December 2024

Statement by the International Campaign for Tibet

Dear Chairman and Honorable Members of the Committee,
Thank you for inviting our organization to speak today.

A - A Critical Evaluation of the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue

We commend the efforts made by the EEAS to consult civil society organisations ahead of the dialogue, and their persistence to engage with their Chinese counterparts on human rights issues. ICT acknowledges the EU's determination to secure an official visit to Tibet in the margins of the dialogue and appreciates the fact that the EU expressed its concerns to China about the repressive policies imposed on the Tibetan people and the need to preserve and respect their fundamental rights, including their rights to select their own religious leaders.

However, after 39 rounds of dialogue and despite the EEAS efforts, it is clear that this process has not provided meaningful results and that there are significant concerns that need to be addressed urgently.

First, it is crucial to acknowledge that the EU's human rights dialogue with China has consistently failed to bring about any substantial change. In recent years, ICT and other organizations have expressed their growing frustration at the lack of concrete outcomes. While the EU continues to use the dialogue to raise its concerns about China's human rights record, - including its ongoing repression in East Turkestan, Hong Kong, Southern Mongolia and Tibet - the Chinese government has indeed remained largely unresponsive and has even intensified its repression further. Beijing does not acknowledge its human rights violations, refuses to allow independent monitoring, and continues to implement repressive policies without consequence. The absence of real political or legislative commitment from China to address these abuses raises serious questions about the utility of the dialogue.

Furthermore, the EU's current approach does not match the severity of the human rights situation in China and Tibet – I will come back to this a bit later. The EU has already suspended human rights dialogues with highly repressive countries such as Russia, Syria, Belarus, and Myanmar, because of their human rights abuses and violations of international law. China, with its documented repressive policies, could be added to this list.

As civil society groups have repeatedly suggested, it may be time for the EU and its new leadership:

- To reconsider the dialogue's effectiveness and consider setting clear, measurable benchmark for success in this dialogue;
- To explore alternatives forms of dialogue with Chinese civil society organizations;
- To deploy more assertive and public diplomatic measures;
- To improve the mainstreaming of human rights into other EU-China policies, in particular in the field of trade and investments;
- To continue to press China to give unfettered access to East Turkestan and to Tibet to foreign diplomats, independent experts and Members of the European Parliament;
- And finally, to sanction Chinese officials who are responsible of serious human rights abuses including in Tibet, east Turkestan, Hong Kong and mainland China under the EU Global Human rights sanctions regime.

B - Human Rights in Tibet: A Threat to Tibetan Culture and Identity

As it stands now, the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue falls short of addressing the gravity of the human rights situation in China. Today, the Tibetan people, the Tibetan culture and the very existence of the name "Tibet" are indeed seriously threatened by the assimilationist policies strategically implemented by the People's Republic of China (PRC), in particular under the leadership of Xi Jinping. Without a significant course change, the continuity of this ancient culture, the integrity of the Tibetan Plateau's environment, and the very survival of Tibetans as a distinct people is no longer guaranteed. Let me give you some examples.

Residential boarding schools

Firstly, up to one million Tibetan children are being systematically alienated from their language and culture in compulsory boarding schools. These educational policies, denounced by many UN human rights experts and bodies as well as by the European Parliament in an urgency resolution in December 2023, separate children from their families, forcing them to enroll in schools that teach dominantly in Mandarin. This program stands to undermine the transmission of Tibetan language and culture and sever Tibetan youth from their roots and identity.

Mass relocation programs

Secondly, according to Chinese government media sources, at least 1.8 million nomads have been settled into sedentary houses under various Chinese government policies. In areas of relocation, displaced Tibetans have not received compensation or assurances of income or employment for the future.

The Chinese government continues to pursue blind and commercial infrastructure projects in Tibet that are designed and implemented without regard for environmental impacts or local community concerns. These projects, which include rail roads, highways, and power grids, combined with

resource extraction projects such as hydropower dams and mining create economic and environmental costs that disproportionately impact Tibetans and the Tibetan plateau.

Our organisation is about to release a report on “Chinese Hydropower: Daming Tibetan culture, community and environment” - some advanced copies are available in the room, please note the report is under embargo until tomorrow 2pm.

Government interferences in freedom of religion

Last but not least, the Chinese government interferes massively in the free exercise of religion and persecutes Tibetans who peacefully oppose this policy. Torture is routinely inflicted to silence, permanently injure, and even cause death when Tibetans are arbitrarily detained for peacefully expressing their opinion or practicing their religion.

Contrary to Tibetan religious norms and in contravention of international human rights standards protecting freedom of religion or belief, Beijing has made clear its intention to control the succession of the Dalai Lama who will turn 90 next year – as it did for the Panchen Lama - and has adopted a number of laws and regulations to legitimize its interferences.

Conclusion

In conclusion, while the EU's commitment to engaging with China on human rights is commendable, it is high time for a reassessment of the methods and effectiveness of the EU-China human rights dialogue.

The situation in Tibet, along with the broader human rights crisis in China, demands stronger action. The EU should prioritize real, measurable improvements in human rights rather than continuing ineffective dialogues that produce little to no tangible outcomes. The stakes for Tibetans, Uyghurs, Hongkongers, and all Chinese dissidents are too high for complacency.

Thank you for your attention.



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