

[China 1 300+ global rights groups call for international accountability mechanism](#)

09.09.2020

In line with calls by governments and UN experts, ISHR joins more than 300 global NGOs and community groups call for systematic monitoring and reporting on the Chinese government's human rights violations, at home and abroad.



□□□□□□□□

The United Nations should urgently create an independent international mechanism to address the Chinese government's human rights violations, a coalition of more than 300 civil society groups from dozens of countries said today.

The signatories stressed the need to address rampant human rights violations across China, including in Hong Kong, Tibet, and Xinjiang. They also highlighted the impact of China's rights violations world-wide, including targeting human rights defenders, global censorship and surveillance, and rights-free development, with ensuing environmental degradation.

'This global coalition joins together with 50 UN experts and dozens of governments to demand an end to China's impunity at the UN Human Rights Council,' said John Fisher, Geneva director at Human Rights Watch. 'The UN needs to act on the growing chorus of voices calling for China to be held accountable for its rights abuses.'

The groups' call echoes an [unprecedented statement by more than 50 UN human rights experts](#), who in June 2020 detailed the Chinese authorities' serious rights violations and called for 'decisive measures to protect fundamental freedoms in China'.

'China's disdain for human rights no longer affects only its citizens—its support to dictators and efforts to rewrite international standards are making the work of defending human rights harder than ever', said Sarah Brooks, Asia Advocate at the International Service for Human Rights. 'This joint statement, for the first time, unites organizations from around the world standing up for their own communities'.

In their statement, the coalition highlighted China's efforts to distort the mandate of the UN Human Rights Council by persecuting activists from China who use UN mechanisms to seek redress, and opposing initiatives to bring scrutiny of serious rights violations and international crimes in countries around the world. China typically rejects UN consideration of its human rights record as 'gross interference'.

'China has systematically [persecuted rights defenders in reprisal](#) for their cooperation with UN human rights operations—torture, enforced disappearance, imprisonment, stripping licenses from lawyers', said Renee Xia, director of [Chinese Human Rights Defenders](#). 'The UN system should no longer tolerate such treatment'.

The coalition echoes the UN experts' calls for a special session of the Human Rights Council to evaluate the range of violations by China's government, and an impartial and independent UN mechanism focused on China. The groups also urge UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet to take responsibility for publicly addressing China's sweeping rights violations.

'The international community can no longer sit back and allow the Chinese authorities to trample on human rights at home and abroad', said Joshua Rosenzweig, the head of Amnesty International's China team. 'Without decisive action now, things will only get worse. It is urgent for UN member states to work together and ensure that violations committed by Beijing are officially monitored and meaningfully challenged.'

'No State should be above the law'.

You can read the full letter below:

An open letter to: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet, UN Member States

We, the undersigned organizations, join together to call for an international mechanism to address the Chinese government's human rights violations, and urge you to take decisive action to achieve this goal.

On 26 June 2020, an unprecedented 50 United Nations experts called for "decisive measures to protect fundamental freedoms in China." They highlighted China's mass human rights violations in Hong Kong, Tibet, and Xinjiang, suppression of information in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, and attacks on rights defenders, journalists, lawyers and critics of the government across the country.

Our organizations are also concerned about the impact of China's rights violations world-wide. China has targeted human rights defenders abroad, suppressed academic freedom in countries around the world, and engaged in internet censorship and digital surveillance. We deplore China's promotion of rights-free development and the ensuing environmental degradation at the hands of government-backed extractive industries, as well as the racist treatment of people in China, or by Chinese state actors in other parts of the world.

We are dismayed at China's efforts to distort the mandate of the UN Human Rights Council by promoting "cooperation" over accountability, and opposing initiatives to bring scrutiny of serious rights violations and international crimes in countries around the world. It has used its seat on the UN's NGO Committee to baselessly deny accreditation to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), while accrediting government-organized NGOs (GoNGOs). It has sought to deny access to human rights defenders to UN premises, denounced speakers on NGO side events as "terrorists," and threatened delegates to deter them from attending UN side events on rights violations, including abuses in Xinjiang.

When the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Special Procedures, and dozens of states urged China to comply with international human rights standards, China contended that they were "improper remarks" that "grossly interfered" with China's sovereignty.

A state that tries to hold itself above any kind of scrutiny presents a fundamental threat to human rights. That China—a state with extraordinary global power—expects such treatment affects us all.

We therefore endorse the call by UN experts for a Special Session of the Human Rights Council to evaluate the range of violations by China's government, and to establish an impartial and independent UN mechanism to closely monitor, analyze, and report annually on that topic. We urge the UN Secretary-General to appoint a Special Envoy, consistent with his Call to Action on Human Rights, and we call on the High Commissioner for Human Rights to fulfil her independent mandate to monitor and publicly report on China's sweeping rights violations. We support the call that UN member states and UN agencies use all interactions with Chinese authorities to insist that the government comply with its international human rights obligations.

We write in the spirit of global solidarity and partnership, urging that you act swiftly to counter and remediate grave human rights violations committed by Chinese authorities. No state should be above the law.

Illustration: ISHR
