

HRC46 | China's rights record demands action from UN and solidarity with defenders

01.03.2021

In a statement at the UN Human Rights Council today, a Chinese lawyer teamed up with ISHR to call on governments and High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet to stand up to China and to take concrete steps to hold the Chinese authorities accountable for rights violations.



□□□□□□□□

In a statement delivered today by Teng Biao, a Chinese scholar and human rights lawyer, ISHR drew attention to the many lawyers and other human rights defenders currently held in arbitrary detention, many suffering from torture and mistreatment, merely due to their efforts to build a more rights-respecting society.

Such practices extend across China. Teng Biao highlighted especially the plight of the Uyghurs, as well as Tibetans and Mongolians, who face severe repression on the basis of their ethnic identities, religious beliefs, and traditional cultures.

Sarah M Brooks, ISHR programme director, notes that calls for accountability increasingly reflect a chorus of voices.

'The violations are structural and systemic. It is clear that no one community in China can combat this on its own - that there must be solidarity with and among all those whose human rights and fundamental freedoms suffer at the hands of the Chinese authorities'.

The statement also urged action by UN human rights chief Michelle Bachelet, whose efforts to negotiate a visit to the country have been stymied by pandemic-related travel restrictions and the unwillingness of the Chinese government to meet her request for unfettered access, including to Xinjiang.

Brooks adds, 'After more than two years of spinning their wheels on a visit, the High Commissioner and her team, and the governments at the Human Rights Council, need to shift gears to take decisive action, including by establishing an independent international monitoring mechanism on human rights in China'.

Despite outreach by NGOs and victims to the OHCHR, Teng is the first Chinese human rights defender to speak directly to Bachelet. He concluded his statement with a simple, unequivocal request: 'Madame Bachelet... you must do all you can to ensure an end to the Chinese authorities' impunity'. The full text of ISHR's statement to the Human Rights Council is below.

For interviews, please contact:

Teng Biao (EN/ZH) at +1 617 396 6099 or [tengbiao89\[at\]gmail.com](mailto:tengbiao89[at]gmail.com)

Sarah Brooks (EN/FR) at +41 78 659 7337 or [s.brooks\[at\]ishr.ch](mailto:s.brooks[at]ishr.ch)

Read the full statement below, [click here](#) to download it, or watch it here:

I am a scholar and human rights lawyer from China. Because of my human rights work, I was targeted by the government, kidnapped, detained and tortured. At this very moment, many of my friends find themselves in jails, mistreated by the authorities for standing up for human rights. Gao Zhisheng, Xu Zhiyong, Ding Jiaxi, Ilham Tohti, Wang Yi, Geng Xiaonan... the list goes on. Meanwhile, citizen journalists like Chen Qiushi, Fang

Bin, and Zhang Zhan are still in police custody today for trying to investigate and report on the COVID pandemic.

In Xinjiang, more than a million Turkic peoples are held in concentration camps, subject to torture and sterilisation, by a government intent on destroying their ethno-religious identity. My Uyghur friends tell me that every Uyghur they know has at least one family members who has been in the camps. The Chinese Communist regime is also brutally repressing Mongolian and Tibetan cultures.

It's clear to see: no matter the commitments the Chinese government has made to human rights, they are not reality. A whole range of systemic rights violations exists, and has become normalised, and even exported, such as in the disappearance of foreign nationals. When this kind of a government succeeds, once again, at gaining membership in this Council, it risks corroding the Council's role of defending human rights.

I urge governments to work together to confront China for its domestic rights abuses and the threat it poses to international human rights.

Madame Bachelet, I urge you to stand in solidarity with independent Chinese NGOs and rights defenders; to elevate the voices of victims in Xinjiang, Hong Kong, Tibet and elsewhere in the country; and to do all you can to ensure an end to impunity for perpetrators of human rights violations in China, including conducting an independent investigation into the mass detention of Uyghurs.

Photo credit: Teng Biao