

## **HRC47 | Governments, NGOs call for High Commissioner to step up work to protect Uyghurs**

22.06.2021

**Following limited remarks yesterday, ISHR joins with more than 20 organisations to press the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet to initiate monitoring and reporting on the crisis targeting Uyghurs, as well as other key populations in China, especially in light of growing credible assessments of crimes against humanity.**



In a statement today, ISHR on behalf of over 20 civil society organisations called for unequivocal [action by the High Commissioner to monitor and report on the human rights situation in China](#). The violations targeting Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims, the groups underlined, have been determined by [Amnesty International](#) and [Human Rights Watch](#) to constitute crimes against humanity.

‘The Special Procedures and treaty bodies have repeatedly, for the last five years, raised serious concerns about the human rights situation in China,’ said Sarah M Brooks, ISHR programme director.

‘But despite these efforts, little has changed. More is needed.’

The gravity of the situation was underlined also by a joint statement delivered by Canada, on behalf of more than 40 states, earlier today. Listing a range of concerns about treatment of Uyghurs, those governments pressed China to allow ‘immediate, meaningful and unfettered’ access to the region for the High Commissioner.

Raphael Viana David, ISHR programme officer, added: ‘We heard from the High Commissioner on Monday in [her update to the Council](#) that she continues to negotiate modalities for a visit. But we cannot emphasise enough the message from civil society: access is not a prerequisite for accountability.’

The weight of evidence and the gravity of allegations of crimes against humanity against Uyghurs demands that the High Commissioner commence remote monitoring and public reporting immediately.

Additionally, the Canadian-led statement urged Chinese authorities to implement concrete recommendations on the situation in Xinjiang made by the UN’s experts on racial discrimination during their 2018 review.

Says Brooks, ‘Civil society has clear asks of the High Commissioner, and stands ready to be an ally in this - despite the clear risks of reprisals. All that remains is for High Commissioner Bachelet to step up - China’s cooperation must not be misinterpreted as a precondition for doing her job.’

The full statement can be [accessed here](#) and viewed below. It received support from the following organisations: Amnesty International\*, Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)\*, Cairo Institute for Human Rights Studies\*, CIVICUS\*, Campaign for Uyghurs, China Aid Association, Clean Clothes Campaign, CSW (Christian Solidarity Worldwide)\*, DefendDefenders (East and Horn of Africa Human Rights Defenders Project)\*, Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, Human Rights Watch\*, International Bar Association - Human Rights Institute\*, International Campaign for Tibet, International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)\*, International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)\*, International Tibet Network Secretariat, Lawyer's Rights Watch Canada\*, René Cassin, the Jewish voice for human rights\*, Safeguard Defenders, Students for a Free Tibet, The Rights Practice, Tibet Initiative Deutschland e.V., Tibet Justice Initiative, Uyghur Human Rights Project, Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project, World Uyghur Congress.

Organisations followed by an asterisk have ECOSOC consultative status with the UN.

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## Statement at 47th session of the UN Human Rights Council

### ITEM 2: INTERACTIVE DIALOGUE WITH THE HIGH COMMISSIONER

Delivered by: Sarah M Brooks

Madame High Commissioner,

ISHR delivers this statement on behalf of a number of international, regional and national-level organisations and networks. The full list will be sent to the Secretariat.

As you must be aware, the human rights situation in China, and especially in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, remains dire. Major research reports published by [Human Rights Watch](#) and [Amnesty International](#) in the last two months independently reach the conclusion that the Chinese government is committing crimes against humanity against its Turkic Muslim population. The international community, this Council, and your Office cannot remain silent.

We support the efforts of the UN human rights mechanisms to raise concerns, and recognize that the Special Procedures and treaty bodies have done so, repeatedly, for the last five years. We request that you, Madame High Commissioner, urgently strengthen remote monitoring and initiate public reporting on the human rights situation across China, focusing especially on Uyghur and Tibetan regions and Hong Kong.

This is essential to providing objective, independent and concrete information to all stakeholders, and to seeking constructive solutions to protect vulnerable populations from further violations.

In your last update to this Council, you pointed to the curtailment of fundamental rights and civic freedoms in the name of national security, which is focused especially in Tibetan and Uyghur regions; you pointed to restrictions on free speech and detentions linked to the Covid-19 response; the investigation of protesters in Hong Kong; and arbitrary criminal charges, detention and unfair trials of lawyers, journalists and human rights defenders.

In the months since, little has changed. More is needed.

We acknowledge your call – now almost three years ago – for unfettered access to ‘all regions of China’. We emphasise that access is not a prerequisite for effective monitoring, public reporting and accountability. Ongoing negotiations should not delay urgently needed action.

Civil society stands ready to be an ally in your efforts to better understand, document and engage on the situation in China. However, we underline the high likelihood of reprisals against defenders and others, both in the country and in exile.

Human rights violations across China, Uyghur and Tibetan regions, as well as in Hong Kong, have become increasingly severe over the last years, while Chinese authorities have consistently denied meaningful access to the region. The victims and communities urgently need increased resources and innovative responses from you, your Office, and the United Nations as a whole.

Thank you.

ISHR