

CHINA/EU: Uyghurs in China: Position of EU High Representative/Vice-President Mogherini

Parliamentary question (09.10.2018)

Under President Xi Jinping, Muslims in China are seeing their freedoms shrink dramatically. Experts and activists say that as he consolidates power, Xi is waging the most severe systematic suppression of religious minorities in the country since religious freedom was written into the Chinese constitution in 1982.

In the most extreme example, an estimated 1 million Uighurs and other members of Muslim minority groups in the country's North West have been arbitrarily detained in indoctrination camps, where they are forced to denounce Islam and profess loyalty to the Communist Party.

Is the VP/HR aware of the situation?

Will the VP/HR raise this issue with the Chinese counterparts in their next discussions?

Can an update be provided on any action currently being taken to raise this issue through diplomatic channels?

Source: <https://bit.ly/2P54B1e>

Answer of VP/HR Mogherini (26.11.2018)

1. The EU is extremely concerned about the situation in Xinjiang, especially regarding the expansion of political re-education camps. The deterioration of the human rights situation in China, especially related to freedom of religion and belief, and the rights of persons belonging to minorities is a major concern.

2. The EU has raised its concerns regarding freedom of religion and belief, the rights of persons belonging to minorities, and the situation in Xinjiang on several occasions

at the bilateral level. During the 36th round of the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue held in Beijing on 9-10 July 2018, the repression against Uighurs and the situation in Xinjiang were discussed. I also addressed these issues at the European Parliament in two speeches delivered respectively on 11 September 2018 and 4 October 2018. The latter was focusing exclusively on the situation in Xinjiang and was delivered on my behalf by Commissioner Bienkowska. Most recently, the HR/VP Spokesperson delivered a statement on 26 October 2018 referring to the gravity of the situation and calling on China to implement the recommendations enclosed in the UN Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

3. The EU and Member States are also conveying their concerns to the Chinese government at the multilateral level. In June and September 2018, the EU delivered two statements at the UN Human Rights Council under the Item 4 raising EU's concerns regarding the deterioration of the human rights situation in China and referring to Xinjiang. A number of Member states have addressed recommendations to China during the Universal Periodic Review of China which took place on 6 November 2018.

4. More generally, the EU attaches great importance to the respect of freedom of religion or belief and expression, as well as the rights of persons belonging to ethnic minorities, and will continue to raise this issue as appropriate.

Source: <https://bit.ly/2BBVXnP>

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CHINA: Judgement day for China in Geneva



The Universal Periodic Review of the state of human rights in China at the United Nations saw several major countries publicly denounce the CCP and a major demonstration in front of the Palais des Nations, with Muslim Uyghurs, Tibetan Buddhists, members of The Church of Almighty God, and Bitter Winter, united in exposing the Chinese persecution of all religions.

By Marco Respinti

Bitter Winter (07.11.2018) – <https://bit.ly/2JNEr2a> – Every five years, the United Nations Human Rights Council holds a Universal Periodic Review of each member state's human rights record. On Tuesday, November 6, it was the turn of China – a world record holder when it comes to the violation of human rights and religious persecution.

As expected, China had a very rough day. Australia, UK, Canada, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, France, Iceland, Ireland, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United States focused on “transformation through education” camps, where one and a half million inmates, two thirds of them Uyghur Muslim where one and a half million inmates – two thirds of which are Uyghur Muslims and the rest are Tibetan Buddhists and members of religions declared illegal or banned – are subject to inhumane treatment and psychological pressure to induce them to abandon their faith.

China had dispatched to Geneva Le Yucheng, the Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs. He offered an arrogant but unconvincing defense of the “transformation through education” camps, claiming that they “free the minds of people affected by extremism.” Mr. Le's speech verged on the ridicule when he explained that the camps offer “free-of-charge vocational training with a diploma after exams to those who had been coerced or lured by extremist groups.” But the speech was also sinister and threatening, as Mr. Le stated that the alternative to the camps would be “suppressing and wiping out” entirely the “extremists,” which in Chinese jargon means physically eliminating them.

To make Mr. Le and the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) rough day worse, hundreds gathered in front of the Palais des Nations, the second iconic symbol of the United Nations after the New York headquarters, to express their disappointment and anger, and call on international organizations to stop the persecution and slaughter in China.



The event was organized by the World Uyghur Congress (WUC), the largest organization of the Uyghur diaspora. Representatives of other persecuted ethnic groups and religions were also invited to participate. So, starting at early birds' time from Palais Wilson, on the shore of Lake Lemman, enveloped in the mist and numb of a cold morning, a procession of national flags and photographs of CCP victims set out orderly and peacefully to reach the Palais des Nations. Uyghurs, Tibetans, Inner Mongolians, exiles in Taiwan, human rights activists from Hong Kong, members of The

Church of Almighty God, and Catholics shouted slogans against the CCP and President Xi Jinping.

Once at the Palais des Nations, many speakers took turns, representing the communities that crowded the square with their flags and signs, defying cold weather and, after a while, even rain. While banners and signposts wreathed in the wind, after the Uyghur and Tibetan national anthems were played, Mr. Omer Kanat, executive president of the WUC, took the floor.



Sister Sofia
Wu from The
Church of
Almighty God

Then Mr. Dolkun Isa, president of the WUC, followed, among others, by Mr. Jampa Tsering Samdho, a Tibetan parliamentarian in exile; Ms. Kristina Olney of the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation in Washington; Sister Sofia Wu from The Church of Almighty God; Mr. René Longet, a former member of the Swiss Parliament and its group for Tibet; Mr. Dolgion Hatgin, president of the People's Party of Inner Mongolia; and Mr. Vincent Metten of the International Campaign for Tibet.

But, more or less out of the program, several Uyghur speakers,

victims who escaped persecution in the “transformation through education” camps, also offered their testimonies. A sign, exhibited by a middle-aged Uyghur woman, composed and dignified in her grief, asked, “Where is my sister?” Adding ironically, “She is a medical doctor, she does not need vocational training.” The allusion is to the CCP’s claim that the camps where, in fact, people are tortured and die, offer “vocational training” to “victims” of religious extremism.

Sister Sofia Wu reminded the crowd that, just as it happens with Uyghurs and Tibetans, thousands of members of The Church of Almighty God are tortured in the Chinese jails and camps, and dozens have died in custody in highly suspicious circumstances.

Bitter Winter was also invited to attend the event. I traveled to Geneva to offer words of greeting, solidarity, and friendship to the rally. I believe that this Tuesday was a great and memorable day. Walking among Buddhists, Muslims, and Christians, all united and marching together for liberty and human rights is not an experience one has every day. To hear the Uyghurs shouting “Free Tibet!”, the Buddhists asking for freedom for the Muslims, and the Christians invoking peace for all faiths was a unique experience. This was not the language of some closet utopian, but a loving experience, forged in the blood shed by all the communities represented at the event.

Many of those marching in Geneva believed the CCP was guilty of terrorism and genocide. Will they be heard by the U.N.? Now, a troika composed of representatives from Hungary, Kenya, and Saudi Arabia—the three countries selected for the task by the Human Rights Council—will prepare a report with recommendations to China, to be completed on November 9.

Some U.N. diplomats are skeptical about the outcome of the process. But perhaps the final recommendations are not even the most important part of the Universal Periodic Review. The summary by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights composed from the documents submitted by NGOs will remain. It denounced the “transformation through education” camps, the atrocities against the Uyghurs and the Tibetans, and the persecution of the religious groups the regime has banned as xie jiao (“heterodox teachings,”), noting in particular that “during 2014-2018, the Chinese Communist Party’s monitoring, arrest, and persecution had caused at least 500,000 Church of Almighty God (CAG) Christians to flee their home, and several hundred thousand families had been torn apart.”

China can manipulate the information and use its weight to make some documents “disappear” from the U.N. website, as it happened last week. But the Universal Periodic Review has switched on the light, and many crimes the CCP hoped to keep quietly committing in the darkness have now been publicly revealed. I am proud to have been part of this extraordinary day, where Bitter Winter promised to all persecuted minorities in China that it will continue to be a voice for the voiceless and to publish news, documents, and testimonies about the persecution affecting all religions in China.

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CHINA: Civil society deeply concerned by removal of key stakeholder information by the UN OHCHR for upcoming UPR of China

UNPO (05.11.2018) – <https://bit.ly/2RCIQrr>

November 5, 2018

We, the undersigned, express deep concern over the removal of valuable stakeholder information by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) for consideration by UN member states ahead of the 3rd Cycle Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the People's Republic of China.

The UPR process, undertaken through the UN Human Rights Council, explicitly welcomes constructive contributions from civil society to address human rights challenges and promote

universal human rights norms. All of the undersigned groups submitted reports through the OHCHR's online platform before the deadline of March 29, 2018 as individual organizations or as joint submissions to be considered by states in the preparation of their recommendations, and by the OHCHR in its official summary of information from civil society.

We are, however, dismayed by the fact that at least seven submissions were completely removed from consideration from the final document intended for UN member states to draft recommendations for China's review.

The OHCHR – tasked with compiling stakeholder information into a summary document – initially released a Stakeholder Summary dated September 3, 2018. The document listed 85 individual submissions including from the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) and Demosistō as well as 42 joint submissions including from the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) and Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center (SMHRIC); another that included the UNPO and several Tibet groups; and another submission from Hong-Kong-based groups that also included Demosistō.

The World Uyghur Congress (WUC) was provided only passing mention in two citations at the end of the document and the Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP) was cited within the text of the original document, though both were not listed as contributors.

Shortly after the first Stakeholder Summary was posted, however, it was removed from the OHCHR's website for several

weeks. Citing “technical reasons”, on October 16 the OHCHR re-issued an updated version of the report (version dated October 10). However, this version incorporates critical changes that do not appear to be technical in nature. The updated document removed citations of reports from TCHRD and Demosistō as well as three separate joint submissions (noted above), and removed all references to reports from the WUC and UHRP.

The concerned organizations reached out individually to the OHCHR with concerns from October 22-26; in response, OHCHR officials wrote: “As a subsidiary body of the United Nations General Assembly, the HRC and the UPR Working Group (UPR WG), must adhere to the official United Nations position and terminology as reflected in relevant General Assembly resolutions and within the context of the UN Charter, and therefore, must respect the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of the State concerned.” Further requests to explain in greater detail specific issues with the seven reports went unanswered.

The OHCHR did, however belatedly, issue a Corrigendum document on November 2, including previously removed citations of reports by TCHRD, UHRP, WUC and a joint submission by UNPO and SMHRIC, we remain deeply concerned about the exclusion of stakeholder information in the first place. Furthermore, an individual submission from Demosistō as well as a joint submission focusing on Tibet continue to be left out of all OHCHR documentation for the review. Since the statements and recommendations of delegations participating in the review are drafted weeks in advance, withholding NGO inputs until less than two working days before the review, effectively precludes these inputs from being considered by participating States.

The undersigned organizations all provided relevant information adhering closely to UN principles and those set out by the OHCHR. All of the aforementioned reports detailed the situation on the ground for particular groups within China and were structured to support efforts for reforms necessary to improve the human rights conditions and the implementation of previous UPR recommendations.

While we recognise the indispensable work performed by the OHCHR around the world working on critical issues and facilitating participation and inputs from various groups, we remain very concerned that the removal of these reports gives further credence to well-documented NGO concerns of China's growing influence within the UN human rights system, and the deliberate silencing of critical voices.

As NGOs, we look to the OHCHR to facilitate civil society participation in the UPR process. Any differential treatment or interpretation of processes, criteria or NGO engagement by the OHCHR in the context of reviews of China should be justified promptly and openly.

The process concerns in this case raise important questions for OHCHR to answer:

- Why were the NGO inputs excluded in the first place?
- Why, given that the NGO inputs were available since March 2018, did it take until November for the Office to accept them and issue a Corrigendum?

- What specific concerns have led to the submission from Demosistō and the joint submission on Tibet still being excluded, and why have these concerns not been communicated to the NGOs in question?

- Did the delegation or government of China object to the reports or the NGOs which submitted them?

The undersigned organizations therefore call for greater transparency within the UPR stakeholder compilation process including:

1. Prompt notification of exclusion from UPR, Treaty Body or other human rights reviews.

1. Explanation of terminology used to exclude stakeholder information, including, but not limited to, what constitutes 'politicised' information or fails to respect 'national sovereignty and territorial integrity.'

1. Providing NGOs clear justifications for any concerns, sufficient advance notice, and an opportunity to address any concerns so that their inputs can be duly reflected in the summary of stakeholder submissions.

List of Signatories:

Demosistō

Human Rights Watch (HRW)

International Service for Human Rights (ISHR)

Nonviolent Radical Party, Transnational and Transparty

Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center (SMHRIC)

Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD)

Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO)

Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP)

World Uyghur Congress (WUC)

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CHINA: China's religious liberty violations denounced at the UN's UPR

Every five years, all countries should submit to a review of their human rights record by the United Nations. China's review is November 6, next and the first report highlights its egregious violations of religious liberty.

By Massimo Introvigne

Bitter Winter (17.10.2018) – <https://bit.ly/2RYxHlC> – The Universal Periodic Review is a procedure where every member state of the United Nations should submit every five years to an examination of its human rights situation before the U.N.'s Human Rights Council in Geneva. China's date is November 6, next, and a first important document has been published by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. It is an executive summary of what the High Commissioner regards as the essential findings in the reports NGOs have submitted about China.

The document is necessarily short and deals with all aspects of human rights. However, several of the NGOs' main findings mentioned in the text refer to religious freedom.

About Tibet, the report notes that "China continued its attack on and used torture against Tibetan human rights defenders in line with its denial of self-determination to Tibetans. China enacted policies and practices that actively violate the right to freedom of religion for Tibetan Buddhists. The authorities

used 'Chinese-centric' schools as a mechanism for assimilating Tibetans into Chinese culture."

It is also reported that "since around April 2016, tens of thousands of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities had been sent to extralegal 'political education centers' where they are held incommunicado indefinitely without charge or trial."

In general, "Chinese law curtailed the freedom of religion through two laws: 1) Regulations on Religious Affairs and 2) Article 300 of the Criminal Code, which only allow state-registered religious organizations to gather.[...] Chinese law denied freedom of religion and belief, as it stipulated in Article 300 of the Chinese Criminal Code that being active in groups listed as a 'xie jiao' was a crime punished by imprisonment from three to seven years or more." An example of the application of these laws is that "during 2014-2018, the Chinese Communist Party's monitoring, arrest, and persecution had caused at least 500,000 Church of Almighty God (CAG) Christians to flee their home, and several hundred thousand families had been torn apart."

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Laïcité and religious freedom: A coalition of NGOs questions France at the United Nations



CAP/ LC HRWF (15.01.2017) – In a side-event following the Universal Periodic Review of France in Geneva this Monday 15th January, several NGOs and an international law expert have called upon President Emmanuel Macron and his Prime Minister to revise the financing of FECRIS (European Federation of

Centers of Research and Information on Cults and Sects) and its member organizations. Under the predecessors of President Macron, FECRIS has benefitted from abusive grants that they have used to disseminate hate speech targeting some minority religious groups in the countries of the European Union and beyond.

The representative of the French NGO **CAP/LC (Coordination des Associations et des Individus pour la Liberté de Conscience)**, Mr. Thierry Valle, highlighted the French policy stigmatizing religious minorities and the human consequences which are often dramatic for the members of these minorities. By financing FECRIS, France contributes to the expansion of this phenomenon in Europe.

On the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, France has to reconsider its policy about religious minorities, he added.

Attorney Patricia Duval, an international law expert, drew attention to the ideological roots of FECRIS.

FECRIS is a French legal association that was created by UNADFI (a French anti-sect organization) in 1994. Its objective is to group together anti-sect groups across Europe which defend families and individuals against 'harmless sectarian organizations' and to represent them in the EU institutions. Although this goal may look laudable, a deep analysis reveals that FECRIS member associations in France

- call sects any religious minority or spiritual movement the beliefs of which are described by FECRIS as deviant from what is "usually considered a religion",
- view the conversion to such beliefs as a psychological subjection, a 'capture of souls' and a violation of human dignity;
- collect testimonies of families or parents of converts

to new religious movements who disagree with their choice to accuse such groups of destroying families,

- compile data based on rumors, prejudices and suspicion that they use to stigmatize the concerned groups,
- have continuously received funding from various French public powers that they use to carry out an ideological crusade.

The lawyer concluded that it was urgent for France to stop sponsoring this sort of activities.

The representative of **Human Rights Without Frontiers** (Brussels), Mr. Willy Fautré, denounced the dangerous liaisons between the (Russian) vice-president of FECRIS, Alexander Dvorkin, and the most radical circles of the Russian Orthodox Church. Whilst France, a secular country, finances FECRIS, its branch in Russia heavily persecutes non-Orthodox religions and carries out missionary activities aiming at bringing 'back home' Orthodox people who converted to other religions.

FECRIS member association in Russia hereby implements Vladimir Putin's ultranationalist policy which under the guise of « spiritual security » aims at eradicating any religion of foreign origin from the « Russian Orthodox Lands ». The ban of Jehovah's Witnesses and peaceful apolitical Muslim movements as well as the imprisonment of several Scientologists are part of this religious purification strategy.

Alexander Dvorkin, in Russia, enjoys disseminating inflammatory narratives and hate speech about Evangelicals, Pentecostals, Baptists, Adventists, the Salvation Army, Mormons, Falun Gong practitioners and even Hindus. Last year, in the capital city of India, Hindus have held a demonstration outside the Russian embassy to protest against the persecution of their religion and burnt an effigy of Dvorkin.

The representative of the **European Interreligious Forum for Religious Freedom (EIFRF)**, Mr Eric Roux, declared: "When a country like France adopts a specific but controversial policy, other countries in the world may think that it is therefore legitimate to follow suit and they usually do worse.

By financing groups like FECRIS, France sends the following message to the rest of the world: 'You can discriminate and persecute religious minorities because it is what we, the cradle of human rights, do'.

Under its newly elected government which seems willing to reform society by focusing on real priorities, France should stop financing and supporting such associations

France should apply its principles of *laïcité* and human rights, protect religious freedom for all, and particularly members of religious minorities.

Version in French of this press release:
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