



To:

Mr Donald Tusk  
President of the European Council

Mr Jean-Claude Juncker  
President of the European Commission

Ms Federica Mogherini  
High Representative for Foreign Affairs / Vice-President of the European Commission

March 13, 2019

**Re: The EU, China, and Human Rights**

Dear President Tusk,  
Dear President Juncker,  
Dear High representative / Vice-President Mogherini,

We write regarding the ongoing discussions among European Union (EU) member states about EU-China relations, and ahead of the forthcoming series of EU-China dialogues, culminating in the EU-China Summit to be held in Brussels on April 9. At a moment when China poses threats to human rights domestically and internationally, it is essential that the EU take action to defend international human rights norms and institutions.

Since last year's Summit, President Xi's government continues its assault on human rights across China. Credible estimates suggest that more than one million Turkic Muslims are being arbitrarily detained across Xinjiang, simply on the basis of their identity, and outside of any legal process. Outside the camps, Xinjiang authorities surveil and control every aspect of life, imposing severe restrictions on their freedom of religion, and on the rights to freedoms of expression, association, and movement. In Tibet, authorities have intensified political education and imposed restrictions on informal community groups.

Across the country, lawyers, journalists, perceived critics, and human rights defenders continue to endure arbitrary detention, imprisonment, and enforced disappearance. Legal reform has not simply stalled but reversed, erasing many of the last two decades' gains with respect to placing constraints on state power. Beijing has invested heavily in rapid expansion of a high-tech surveillance state, giving it ever-greater control over society. Chinese authorities tightened control in advance of the 60<sup>th</sup> "Tibetan National Uprising Day" on March 10, including closing the Tibet Autonomous Region for two months to foreign tourists.

Chinese leaders' turn against the universality of human rights is also increasingly visible through China's foreign policy. In a chilling indication of its longer-term agenda to weaken key human rights institutions, in March 2018, China succeeded in advancing a resolution at the Human Rights Council, focusing on its vision for "win-win cooperation," while omitting any role for independent civil society, any mention of accountability, and other core parts of the Council's mandate.

Beyond its own borders, Beijing has pressed other governments, including several EU member states, to forcibly return asylum seekers to China. It has also stepped up harassment of diaspora communities worldwide. Not only does Beijing continue to arbitrarily detain EU citizens, including Gui Minhai, but it is now also prosecuting two Canadian citizens on charges of stealing state secrets – one of the most serious charges under Chinese law – in apparent retaliation against Ottawa over a diplomatic dispute. Throughout the year, China pressed ahead with its "One Belt, One Road" initiative, which lacks mechanisms for due diligence, consultation with affected communities, or labor rights, including in EU member states.

It is clear that the Chinese government poses a threat to human rights around the world, and to the EU as a critical institutional defender of human rights. The tough negotiations the EU and its member states have ahead of every session of the United Nations Human Rights Council, or in relation to any human rights statement that concerns China, are ongoing indications of this difficulty. Perhaps more emblematic is the fact that as we approach the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the June 1989 Tiananmen Square bloodshed, Beijing has provided no accountability for the killings, enforced disappearances, or imprisonment of Tiananmen activists, but rather continued persecution of the memory and speech about the crackdown.

In order to affirm the EU's foundational principle of promoting human rights, to continue to press for positive change in China, and to send an unambiguous message to Chinese leaders through this upcoming series of meetings, we urge you to:

- Along the lines of the EU's statement to the High Level Segment of the Human Rights Council, press China to allow meaningful access to Xinjiang for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and other UN representatives;

- Publicly and privately press before, during, and after the Summit to secure the release of Gui Minhai, Huang Qi, Wang Quanzhang, Guligeina Tashimaimaiti, Ilham Tohti, Tashi Wangchuk, and Lee Ming-che.
- Consistent with its response to an inadequate bilateral human rights dialogue in Beijing in July 2018, the EEAS should again promptly publish a frank assessment of the forthcoming human rights dialogue. Until such time as the Chinese government engages in the dialogue in good faith, the EEAS should continue to consider a “shadow” dialogue with independent Chinese civil society. Acknowledge that, despite commendable efforts by the EEAS, the EU-China human rights dialogue has failed to produce tangible results, and that the dialogue should complement, not substitute, higher-level talks on human rights with Chinese authorities;
- Identify specific human rights issues the Chinese government needs to address as a strategic priority for the EU and its member states, starting with the closure of “political education” camps in Xinjiang, abolition of the death penalty, and an end to the persecution of human rights defenders;
- Insist on the ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 21 years on from China’s signature of the Covenant; and
- Commit to publicly marking the 30th anniversary of the Tiananmen Square crackdown in June 2019, and the anniversary of Liu Xiaobo’s death in July 2019.

In the coming weeks, the EU and its member states have multiple occasions to prioritize these urgent human rights concerns at preparatory meetings and at the Summit. Each missed opportunity to articulate specific human rights improvements is a message to China’s leadership – and people across China and the world – that those concerns remain subordinated to other issues.

Thank you for your consideration of these important matters. We look forward to discussing these issues at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Amnesty International

China Aid

Christian Solidarity Worldwide

Frontline Defenders

Gesellschaft für bedrohte Völker

International Campaign for Tibet

International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)

International Service for Human Rights  
International Tibet Network  
Human Rights in China  
Human Rights Watch  
Unrepresented Nations & Peoples Organization  
World Uyghur Congress

Cc:

Mr Frans Timmermans, First Vice-President of the Commission, Commissioner for Better Regulation, Interinstitutional Relations, the Rule of Law and the Charter of Fundamental Rights  
Mr Jyrki Katainen, Vice-President of the Commission, Commissioner for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness  
Ms Cecilia Malmström, Commissioner for Trade  
Mr Johannes Hahn, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy & Enlargement Negotiations  
Mr Neven Mimica, Commissioner for International Cooperation & Development  
Mr Dimitris Avramopoulos, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship  
Mr Pierre Moscovici, Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs  
Mr Piotr Serafin, Head of Cabinet of President Tusk  
Ms Clara Martinez-Alberola, Head of cabinet of President Juncker  
Mr Stefano Grassi, Head of cabinet of High Representative Mogherini  
Mr Ben Smulders, Head of Cabinet of First Vice-President Timmermans  
Mr Risto Artjoki, Head of Cabinet of Vice-President Katainen  
Ms Maria Asenius, Head of Cabinet of Commissioner Malmström  
Mr Michael Karnitschnig, Head of Cabinet of Commissioner Hahn  
Mr Nils Behrndt, Head of cabinet of Commissioner Mimica  
Ms Diane Schmitt, Head of cabinet of Commissioner Avramopoulos  
Mr Olivier Bailly, Head of Cabinet of Commissioner Moscovici  
Ambassadors to the Committee of the Permanent Representatives of the Governments of the Member States to the European Union (COREPER II)  
Ms Sofie From Emmersberger, Chair of the Political and Security Committee  
Ambassadors to the Political and Security Committee  
Mr Filip Grzegorzewski, Chair of the Council's Working Group on Asia  
Members of the Council's Working Group on Asia  
Ms Ciara O'Brien, Chair of the Council's Working Group on Human Rights  
Members of the Council's Working Group on Human Rights  
Ms Helga Schmid, Secretary General of the European External Action Service (EEAS)

Mr Jean-Christophe Belliard, Deputy Secretary General for political affairs, Political Director, EEAS  
Mr Christian Leffler, Deputy Secretary General for economic and global issues, EEAS  
Mr Pedro Serrano, Deputy Secretary General for CSDP and crisis response, EEAS  
Mr Gunnar Wiegand, Managing Director for Asia, EEAS  
Ms Paola Pampaloni, Director, Deputy managing Director for Asia, EEAS  
Ms Lotte Knudsen, Managing Director for Human rights, global and multilateral issues, EEAS  
Mr Marc Giacomini, Director, Deputy Managing Director, Human rights, global and multilateral issues, EEAS  
Mr Eamon Gilmore, EU Special Representative for Human Rights  
Mr Jan Figel, Special Envoy for the promotion of freedom of religion or belief outside the EU  
Mr Antonio Tajani, President of the European Parliament  
Mr David McAllister, Chair of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee  
Co-Chairs of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee  
Mr Pier Antonio Panzeri, Chair of the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights  
Co-Chairs of the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights