

Fredrik Reinfeldt,
Prime Minister of Sweden,
Presidency of the EU

24 November 2009
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Dear Mr Reinfeldt,

Subject: EU – China summit

The EU- China Summit in Nanjing on 30 November will reportedly focus on further strengthening the EU-China strategic partnership. However the EU risks becoming a far less influential partner in this relationship if it fails to use this forum to address China on its refusal to abide by its international human rights obligations, even when the eyes of the world are upon it.

The strong publicity of the US President's visit to China last week included recognition that President Barack Obama called for mutual respect of universal rights in speeches and press conferences in Shanghai. However many dissidents in China expressed disappointment that these few references during the official visit were not strong enough, and were not followed up on. Meanwhile, security forces kept dozens of lawyers and activists under house arrest or under surveillance during the official visit and prevented them from having any contact with foreign journalists reporting on the events.

On the 19 and 20 November, in the days following President Obama's visit, and while the legal experts seminar and the officials level meeting of the EU-China human rights dialogue was taking place in Beijing, Amnesty International received reports of an increase in the use of repressive tactics towards many human rights lawyers and activists in China. As academics, civil society representatives and government officials from China and the EU discussed, among other issues, access to justice on the morning of 19 November, elsewhere in Beijing, in Haidian district, Jiang Tianyong, a lawyer, was blocked by police at the gate of his home, as he was walking his daughter to school. Jiang had just returned from the US two days earlier. Jiang was held for 13 hours and questioned by police in Yangfangdian district police station near his home in Beijing. The police did not provide him with any documentation authorizing his detention. When Jiang challenged the lawfulness of his detention the police told him that he was held for "attacking the police". Police also questioned his seven year-old daughter at school while he was in custody. He was released later that day, but the police told him that "the issue is not ended yet". On the morning of 20 November, at least six police officers were stationed at the gate to Jiang's house.

The alarming extent of harassment and intimidation of human rights defenders is just one of the issues that Amnesty International supports the discussion of, at official level within the twice yearly EU-China dialogue on human rights. The administrative detention of hundreds of thousands of people, including the "re-education through labor" detention system; the systemic problem of torture by law enforcement personnel; widespread political and religious repression, and China's execution annually of more prisoners than the rest of the world combined, are some of the other deeply concerning issues that are routinely raised.

However as long as human rights violations are not discussed in a meaningful way at the highest level, at the EU-China summit, the EU's message that mutual respect for human rights and rule of law is an essential component of any partnership with a third country will remain an empty statement. China will continue - reasonably - to assume that since human rights concerns are not mentioned at head of state level, they are not a genuine priority for the EU.

Amnesty International urges you to use this EU-China summit, which takes a place on the eve of major structural changes in the way the EU conducts foreign policy, to set the standard for coherence in the substance of EU foreign policy going forward. Respect for human rights should genuinely be placed at the core of all foreign policy decisions, to give meaning to the treaty commitments to doing so.

Yours sincerely,



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CC: Jose Manuel Barroso, President, European Commission
Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Commissioner for External Relations
Baroness Ashton, Incoming High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
Song Zhe, Ambassador of China to the EU,
Serge Abou, Head of delegation of EC to China