



JOINT PUBLIC STATEMENT

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EU and China must put human rights at the top of the EU-China summit agenda

At today's European Union (EU)-China summit in Brussels, Amnesty International, International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), Human Rights Watch and International Campaign for Tibet call on EU and Chinese leaders to ensure that human rights are at the top of the agenda in discussions at the summit and beyond.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of China-EU diplomatic relations. Today's summit should be an opportunity to develop a critical partnership which can concretely improve the human rights situation for people in China. With the adoption of the EU Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy in 2012, the EU and its member states committed to place human rights at the centre of all external action. In line with that commitment, they must act to respect, promote and protect universal human rights in diverse aspects of the EU-China relationship, including security, trade, investment opportunities and other political cooperation.

There is no time to waste. The EU and its member states must urgently address mounting repression of dissent and freedom of expression and association in China, as increasing numbers of human rights defenders have been and continue to be harassed and detained. In particular, the past year has seen a broad government crackdown on civil society in connection with the pro-democracy demonstrations in Hong Kong and the 25th anniversary of Tiananmen Square, as well as ongoing obstruction of the legitimate and vital work of numerous non-governmental organisations (NGOs). New repressive laws, including the proposed National Security Law and Anti-Terrorism Law, contain overly broad definitions of "terrorism" and "extremism" that allow the authorities to prosecute minorities, including in Tibet and Uighur areas, along with human rights defenders and government critics. Another proposed law on NGOs may have far-reaching impact on their activities and funding, which would be a serious setback both for key human rights projects funded by the EU and its member states, as well as for beneficiaries of these organisations, who are often at the forefront of tackling important social issues. In addition, serious concerns remain about the death penalty, torture and ill treatment, and other human rights violations in China.

The summit takes place one week ahead of the 80th birthday of the Dalai Lama. Despite the current unstable situation, celebrations have already started in Tibet. The EU and its member states must call on China to refrain from violently repressing these celebrations and to respect freedom of religion and cultural rights of Tibetan people as a matter of urgency.

In view of the deteriorating human rights situation in China, the EU and its member states urgently need to advance a more strategic, coordinated, public and pro-active approach on human rights in China. While quiet diplomacy has its place, explicit public positioning on human rights concerns from the EU and its member states will be vital for China's embattled human rights defenders and its civil society more widely.

The EU's 2012 Strategic Framework on human rights and democracy commits the EU and its 28 member states to place "human rights at the centre of its relations with all third countries including strategic partners" and to raise "human rights issues vigorously in all appropriate forms of bilateral dialogue, including at the highest level." If in face of these gravely concerning human rights abuses, the EU and its member states fail to speak out and ensure substantive discussions on human rights, they will undermine their own foreign policy including the commitment to place human rights at the centre of relations with all third countries, including strategic partners. Furthermore, a compromise on raising human rights issues at this summit will also damage the EU's own efforts to promote the universality and indivisibility of human rights.

To this end, we call on the EU, its member states, and China to:

- Ensure that their cooperation is grounded in the universality of human rights, the international human rights commitments undertaken by both sides and the commitment to progress towards the achievement of the highest standard of human rights protection
- Mainstream human rights concerns at all levels of their relationship, both today and at all high level meetings, not only at human rights dialogues and meetings with an explicit human rights angle
- Take action to ensure all cooperation aims for concrete commitments and outcomes to advance human rights, including on individual cases of detained human rights defenders
- Ensure that Chinese and European civil society voices are given genuine consideration in future summits and exchanges, including, but not limited to, the human rights dialogue, sectoral discussions and more generally in the people-to-people pillar
- Evaluate the impact of all sectors of EU-China cooperation in Europe, China and globally, in order to prevent negative outcomes and actively promote and protect human rights

Key resources:

Amnesty International, "EU must not compromise its human rights policy for China," 22 June 2015.
http://www.amnesty.eu/content/assets/Letters2015/B1688_EU-China_summit_17062015.pdf

Amnesty International, "EU and China must put human rights at centre of dialogue," 17 April 2015.
http://www.amnesty.eu/content/assets/Letters2015/B1674_HR_in_EU_China_Strategic_Dialogue_17042015.pdf

Human Rights Watch, "Letter on European Union-China Summit," 24 June 2015.
<http://www.hrw.org/news/2015/06/24/human-rights-watch-letter-european-union-china-summit>

Human Rights Watch, "Hang Together: Why the EU needs to Confront China on Rights," 29 April 2014.
<http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/04/29/hang-together-why-eu-needs-confront-china-rights>

International Campaign for Tibet, "EU Member States must raise Tibet at next EU-China Summit," 26 June 2015.
<http://www.tibetpolicy.eu/eu-member-states-must-raise-tibet-at-next-eu-china-summit/>

International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), "The draft Overseas NGO Management law must be substantially revised," 3 June 2015.
<https://www.fidh.org/International-Federation-for-Human-Rights/asia/china/china-the-draft-overseas-ngo-management-law-must-be-substantially>

International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), "Open letter to Chinese and EU leaders: After forty years, do human rights have a place in China-EU strategic ambitions?" 27 June 2015.
<https://www.fidh.org/International-Federation-for-Human-Rights/asia/china/eu-china/open-letter-to-chinese-and-eu-leaders-after-forty-years-do-human>