



To the attn. of:

Mr António Costa
President of the European Council

Ms Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission

17 July 2025

Dear President Costa,
Dear President von der Leyen,

We write to urge you to prioritize human rights in the forthcoming European Union (EU)-China Summit to be held in China on July 24-25. At the recent G7 meeting, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen [spoke](#) of a “new China shock,” and urged that G7 members respond with greater cooperation, resilience and alternative approaches. We believe similar ambition should apply to the approach of the EU and its member states regarding the deepening human rights crisis in China, and that new initiatives be publicly articulated at the forthcoming Summit to build on and go beyond existing commitments set out in the March 2019 [EU-China Strategic Outlook](#).

We appreciate the EU’s longtime support to independent civil society and human rights defenders across China, and welcome public remarks, such as strong [statements](#) at the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council, identifying particular cases of concern. We thank the EU for condemning the arbitrary detention of human rights legal activists [Xu Yan and Yu Wensheng](#), who were detained en route to meeting with EU officials. In September 2022, then-High Representative and Vice President Josep Borrell helpfully [echoed](#) the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights’ (OHCHR) concern that Chinese government policies in the Uyghur region “may constitute international crimes, in particular crimes against humanity.” We acknowledge the recent – the fortieth – round of the [EU-China human rights dialogue](#).

Yet these EU and member states’ initiatives have not deterred Chinese authorities’ wholesale assault on human rights since President Xi Jinping assumed power in 2012. He and other officials are confident in their impunity for widespread [arbitrary detention](#), [forced assimilation](#), [forced labour](#) and [torture](#) in China; and [transnational repression](#), including in Europe. Chinese authorities not only [refuse](#) to comply with the vast majority of their international human rights obligations, they also seek to rewrite global human rights [norms](#) and weaken key international [institutions](#).

We urge the EU and its member states to confront this human rights crisis—which increasingly affects not only people across China but also people worldwide—with the same determination to identify and commit to alternative approaches as it is now setting out on security and trade issues.

In that spirit, our organizations urge you to use the Summit to ensure justice for victims and survivors of Beijing’s violations and abuses by publicly:

1. Condemning the Chinese government’s crimes against humanity, and the impunity that sustains them, echoing the findings and [recommendations](#) of UN bodies, including the August 2022 OHCHR report on Xinjiang, the 2023 reviews of China by the Committee for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the 2024 Universal Periodic Review (UPR), and UN Special Procedures. The EU should reiterate that crimes against humanity are subject to universal jurisdiction, and that those responsible can and should be held criminally responsible and face justice, including in EU member states. The 18 June 2025 [announcement](#) by Argentina’s highest criminal court to hear a case brought by Uyghurs alleging Chinese authorities have committed genocide and crimes against humanity should lend confidence and momentum to similar initiatives across EU member states, and to a push for accountability through UN mechanisms. Doing so is consistent with High Representative Kaja Kallas’ March 2025 [remarks](#) broadly supporting international law and the need for perpetrators to be “brought to justice.”
2. Calling for the immediate and unconditional releases of human rights defenders who have been detained for their work, naming individuals explicitly, including EU citizen Gui Minhai, Sakharov Prize laureate Ilham Tohti and others identified in the most recent EU [statement](#) at the UN Human Rights Council: Gulshan Abbas, Anya Sengdra, Ekpar Asat, Chadrel Rinpoche, Rahile Dawut, Ding Jiayi, Ding Yuande, Dong Yuyu, Drugdra, Gao Zhen, Gao Zhisheng, Go Sherab Gyatso, Golog Palden, He Fangmei, Huang Qi, Huang Xueqin, Hushtar Isa, Yalkun Isa, Ji Xiaolong, Li Yanhe, Lobsang Gephel, Lobsang, Khedrub, Lu Siwei, Peng Lifa, Qin Yongmin, Ruan Xiaohuan, Semkyi Dolma, Tashi Dorje, Tashpolat Tiyp, Wang Bingzhang, Pastor Wang Yi, Kamile Wayit, Xie Yang, Xu Na, Xu Zhiyong, Yang Hengjun, Yang Maodong, Yu Wensheng, Pastor Zhang Chunlei and Zhang Zhan.
3. Emphasizing the [commitments](#) made at the G7 to ending transnational repression (TNR), including abuses undertaken by the Chinese government, both across EU member states and elsewhere. Those commitments can be demonstrated through investigations and prosecutions, while also supporting and protecting individuals and communities who may be or have already been targeted by TNR. These human rights abuses include intimidation, surveillance, threats or acts of physical violence, threats against family members and digital repression, in particular sexual harassment or degrading language targeting women.
4. Reiterating that the EU and its member states are ready to use all tools at their disposal to hold Chinese government officials accountable for human rights violations, including the right to freedom of religion or belief, such as in the context of the selection of the next Dalai Lama.

5. Stressing that the EU expects the Chinese government to comply with its freely-undertaken human rights obligations under international law, and calling for the urgent repeal of laws and criminal provisions incompatible with those obligations, including but not limited to the Hong Kong National Security Law, the Hong Kong Safeguarding National Security Ordinance, “picking quarrels and provoking trouble,” “subversion” and “inciting subversion of state power,” and the criminal procedure of “residential surveillance at a designated location,” in line with recommendations by UN human rights bodies.

After 50 years of EU-China relations, the EU should take stock of deepening Chinese government repression inside and outside the country, and express solidarity with people across China who seek to exercise, uphold and defend human rights. The EU’s recent decision to cancel an economic and trade dialogue with the Chinese government over serious differences suggests a willingness to pressure Beijing in new and different ways. Grave and worsening human rights violations by Chinese authorities should motivate new strategies. Without those, people across China—and in Europe—are increasingly at risk.

Amnesty International

Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)

Chinese Human Rights Defenders

Christian Solidarity Worldwide

CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation

Front Line Defenders

Hong Kong Watch

Human Rights in China

Human Rights Watch

Human Rights Without Frontiers

International Campaign for Tibet

International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), in the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR)

International Service for Human Rights

The Rights Practice

World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), in the framework of the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders

World Uyghur Congress