

THE
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促进中国宗教自由联盟

May 13, 2020

United Nations Asia-Pacific Regional Group Member
Palais des Nations
1211 Geneva
Switzerland

Open letter to UN Asia-Pacific Regional Group on China's appointment to UN HRC Consultative Group

UN Asia-Pacific Group member,

We, the undersigned group of human rights and religious freedom organizations from various backgrounds, express our serious concern following the appointment of Chinese Minister Jiang Duan to the UN Human Rights Council's Consultative Group this month. We call on Asia-Pacific members to adopt a stricter standard of scrutiny during the selection process. China's selection represents a blow to the UN human rights system. This is not only because of the government's demonstrably poor record on human rights, but because of its frequent refusal to cooperate with independent UN monitors. These are the very officials that China's delegate now has the power to approve or reject.

The Chinese UN delegation persistently blocks attempts by the Human Rights Council to investigate human rights issues in its own country, and has failed to answer outstanding requests and reminders from [at least 17 UN Experts](#). This includes investigations on cultural rights, assembly, enforced disappearances, expression, privacy, and counter terrorism, among others. Some of the [requests](#) date back nearly 20 years. In cases when Experts were, in fact, permitted to enter China to investigate, [many have documented](#) harassment, intimidation, denial of access to certain locations or individuals, and unacceptable [government controls](#) throughout the visit.

During an official visit to China in August 2016, the UN Special Rapporteur for Extreme Poverty Philip Alston met with a limited number of individuals, including human rights lawyer Jiang Tianyong, who previously represented Falun Gong practitioners, Tibetan protesters, and other well-known human rights defenders. Shortly thereafter, Mr. Jiang was arrested and charged with "subversion of state power." UN experts including Mr. Alston issued a [statement](#) calling for his release. In response, the Chinese government [said he had](#) "overstepped his mandate and meddled with China's judicial sovereignty," because he "referenced certain human rights defenders in his report."

Following an [official Communication](#) from three Experts in October 2019 on the disappearance and sentencing of Uyghur scholar and university president Tashpolat Tiyp, the Chinese delegation in Geneva released a [statement](#) calling the UN letter "blatant interference in China's internal affairs and judicial sovereignty."

In addition, the Chinese government [intimidates victims](#) who try to participate in UN human rights procedures. It has repeatedly blocked any independent investigation of its arbitrary detention of 1.8 million to 2 million Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims. Human rights activist Cao Shunli, who was detained in Beijing while attempting to travel to Geneva for a UN training session, [died](#) after two months in detention. No investigation was ever conducted.

According to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), these experts "[U]ndertake to uphold independence, efficiency, competence and integrity through probity, impartiality, honesty and good faith." The Chinese government's long record of attempts to block or interfere with their work, and reduce their independence stands in direct opposition to these stated goals.

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China's new role will allow it to exercise veto power over candidates it deems unfavorable, further undermining the effectiveness of the Council.

UN Independent Experts are central to a well-functioning human rights system, ensuring that impartiality and good faith drive genuine efforts to improve human rights conditions globally. The Chinese government should play no role in the selection process of those tasked with investigating human rights abuses, if it at the same time refuses to accept their legitimacy.

This calls for careful monitoring of China's participation to ensure that the position is not used to block criticism of its own human rights record or to otherwise undermine the work of the Experts or the Council.

We are therefore requesting that your government, in its capacity as a member of the UN Asia-Pacific Regional Group in Geneva, strongly consider a member state's record of cooperation with the UN Independent Experts before making an appointment to the Consultative Group.

If China would like to play a more constructive role at the Human Rights Council, it has an obligation to accept the standards set by the Council itself, and that includes accepting the mandates of genuinely independent human rights monitors.

Yours sincerely,
Coalition to Advance Religious Freedom in China

Uyghur Human Rights Project (UHRP)

China Aid Association

Citizen Power Initiatives for China

Jubilee Campaign

Family Research Council

CSW

The Church of Almighty God

Lantos Foundation for Human Rights & Justice

Church of Scientology National Affairs Office

21Wilberforce

Save the Persecuted Christians

Friends of Falun Gong

Uyghur American Association

Center for Civil Liberties (Ukraine)

Bitter Winter

CESNUR (Center for Studies on New Religions)

ORLIR (International Observatory of Religious Liberty of Refugees)

Gerard Noodt Foundation

OldPath Mission Nepal

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International Society for Peace and Justice (ISPJ)

Frank R. Wolf, Member of Congress 1981-2014, retired

Lela Gilbert, Sr. Fellow for Int'l Religious Freedom, Family Research Council

Pastor Greg Young, Chosen Generation Radio on USA Radio Networks

Dr. S. Bryan Hickox, President & CEO, Bryan Hickox Pictures, Inc.

Elizabeth Yore, Attorney and Founder, YoreChildren

Dran Reese, President, The Salt & Light Council

Linda Harvey, President, Mission America

Paul Pickern, Executive Director, All Pro Pastors International

Pastor Jonathan Friedt, Believers' Fellowship Church

Gunnery Sergeant Jessie Jane Duff (ret), Military Advisor Committee on the Present Danger China

Dede Laugesen, Executive Director, Save the Persecuted Christians

Kevin Freeman, Founder, NSIC Institute

Dr. Fabong Jemchang Yildam, Chairman, Forum of State Chairmen, National Youth Council of Nigeria

Dr. Mike Ghose, Center for Pluralism, Washington, DC

Jim Eaton, Lead Pastor, Mosaic Church

Kelly Yaegermann, The Way To Happiness Association

Dr. Carl Herbster, President, AdvanceUSA

Dr. Quoc-Hung Tran, Office of External Affairs, Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam

Scott Morgan, President, Red Eagle Enterprises

Wendy Wright, President, Christian Freedom International

Thierry Valle, President, Coordination des Associations et des Particuliers pour la Liberté de Conscience

William Brown, Christian Activist Network of New England

Marion Chen, Chairman, Our Future House