



LOCAL STATEMENTS

EU Delegation to China Statement on International Human Rights Day

On 10 December 2018 the international community marks the 70th anniversary of the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations.

The Universal Declaration is as relevant today as it was on the day that it was proclaimed. It states 30 rights and freedoms that belong to human beings, including the right to freedom of thought, freedom of religion and belief, freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly and association. It confirms the inalienability and universality of these rights: neither institution nor individual should act in any way to violate the rights enshrined in the Declaration. Since its adoption, the Declaration has been the basis for all international human rights law, including legally binding treaties, and for all progress made related to human rights worldwide.

This anniversary is an opportunity for all countries, groups and individuals to celebrate the Universal Declaration and to reaffirm the enduring human rights principles and standards it has helped to establish. On this day the European Union and its Member States reaffirm the shared commitment to maintain and to advance human rights.

Hundreds of millions of Chinese citizens have experienced first-hand improvements in their social and economic situation, including poverty alleviation, improved access to health and education, and reduced maternal and infant mortality. In the sphere of civil rights, we have witnessed a commitment by China to ensure legal representation for greater numbers of criminal defendants, as well as a continuing effort to combat and prevent domestic violence. China has reduced the number of offences punishable by death in recent years and we expect it to continue these efforts. At the same time, a significant number of people are still sentenced to death and executed each year by the Chinese authorities. It is important for China to be transparent concerning these numbers and to work towards a moratorium and ultimately the abolition of capital

punishment.

Despite some progress, basic human rights are often denied to China's citizens, including rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration and also in the Constitution of China.

There has been a continuing deterioration of the situation with respect to freedom of religion or belief, particularly in Xinjiang and in Tibet; freedom of expression and association; as well as continuous large-scale extra-judicial detention. Credible reports, including those from the United Nations, point to a worsening of the human rights situation in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region; mass detentions in political "re-education centres" affecting Uighurs and other minorities; intimidation of citizens by mass surveillance; restrictions on travel; and Uighurs abroad, including the EU, being harassed or returned to China involuntarily.

The arrest, detention and imprisonment of human rights defenders, lawyers and other citizens exercising fundamental human rights have continued. Human rights defenders and activists including Ilham Tohti, Tiyip Tashpolat, Wu Gan, Tashi Wangchuk, and Huang Qi, human rights lawyers Wang Quanzhang, Li Yuhua, Jiang Tianyong and Yu Wensheng have been convicted, detained, forcibly disappeared or sentenced to death. We expect China to end the detention and harassment of these and other Chinese citizens and human rights defenders and their family members. All criminal defendants should have access to lawyers of their own choosing and to their family members, and should not be subjected to forced and public confessions, torture or other mistreatment.

We also expect China to promote freedom of information and allow foreign and domestic NGOs to register and operate freely and effectively, to ensure full labour rights for all workers, and to promote freedom of association and information, including internet freedom. We highlight the importance of an enabling legal environment for press freedom and the role of an independent judiciary in ensuring legal guarantees for press freedom and the prosecution of crimes against journalists.

Having endorsed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the European Union and its Member States and China made a public commitment to the international community to uphold international human rights laws and to defend universal values. Protecting human rights is an essential foundation of stable, secure, prosperous and functioning societies. The European Union and its Member States stand ready to work closely with China, within the framework of the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue and other formats, to promote respect for the rule of law and human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration the world celebrates today, and view this as a core part of our engagement with the government of the People's Republic of China.

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