

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

8 June 2022

Over 230 Rights groups demand resignation of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

Activists slam Michelle Bachelet's six-day visit for whitewashing repression against Uyghurs, Tibetans, Southern Mongolians, Hong Kongers and others

We, over 230 Uyghur, Tibetan, Southern Mongolian, Hong Kong, and Chinese democracy and international human rights advocacy groups, call for the immediate resignation of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights after she whitewashed the Chinese government's human rights atrocities during her recent visit to China. We further call on the UN Secretary General to not propose the renewal of her mandate [1] and demand the High Commissioner immediately release the report on the human rights violations against Uyghurs and other Turkic communities in East Turkistan [Ch: Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region].

During her six-day visit to China, the first by a High Commissioner since 2005, Michelle Bachelet squandered a rare opportunity to promote accountability by failing to address the litany of systematic human rights violations committed by the Chinese authorities. This includes genocide and crimes against humanity in East Turkistan. Bachelet also neglected to offer a single specific recommendation to address the gravity of the human rights crisis [2]. This abject failure to hold the Chinese government accountable for its crimes comes despite an unprecedented call in June 2020, by over 50 UN experts for "decisive measures" to protect fundamental freedoms in China [3].

The High Commissioner legitimized Beijing's attempt to cover up its crimes by using the Chinese government's false "counter-terrorism" framing [4] and repeatedly referred to the notorious internment camps by the Chinese government's term: "Vocational Education and Training Centers" (VETCs). Just days prior, the 'Xinjiang Police Files' revealed further incriminating evidence of the mass internment of thousands of Uyghurs and Directives from Beijing to treat detainees like dangerous criminals and to open fire to stop escapees [5]. While world leaders responded by calling for an immediate investigation, Bachelet remained silent. Since 2021, the High Commissioner has also stalled on the commitment to release a report on the human rights violations against Uyghurs and other Turkic communities in East Turkistan. The repeated, open-ended, and unexplained delays call into serious question the credibility of her Office to fulfil its mandate.

During her four year tenure, Bachelet has been entirely silent on the human rights crisis enveloping Tibet and failed to even request access to the occupied country despite no High Commissioner visiting since 1998. She did not visit Tibet on this trip, and when she finally mentioned Tibet during her end-of-visit press conference it was brief and in general terms, failing to take the rare opportunity to critique and address the unprecedented, systematic and escalating attacks taking place on Tibetan language and identity today [6]. She also referred only to the "Tibet Autonomous Region," –

what China refers to as Tibet – ignoring the Tibetan autonomous prefectures and counties in Sichuan, Qinghai, Gansu, and Yunnan that make up half of Tibet and are home to more than half of the total Tibetan population [7].

Moreover, the High Commissioner did not visit Hong Kong and failed to condemn the Chinese government's unrelenting campaign to destroy human rights and democracy in the city, which had escalated since the most recent mass protests broke out in 2019. In her end-of-visit statement, she grossly underplayed the crackdown, calling the arbitrary detention and incarceration of over 1,000 political prisoners under the National Security Law and other alleged crimes only as “deeply worrying”[8]. This is yet another sign of her inexplicable unwillingness to confront Chinese leaders over well-documented and egregious abuses of human rights.

The High Commissioner also made no mention of Southern Mongolia (Ch: Inner Mongolia), despite Chinese authorities engaging in a far-reaching assault on Mongolian identity and the unprecedented mass protests across Southern Mongolia in 2020. No reference was made to China's so-called “bilingual” education program which recently replaced Mongolian with Chinese as the language of instruction in all elementary and middle schools nor to all the Mongolian herders who have been targeted for fighting policies that are destroying their traditional livelihoods, including China's illegal land confiscations.

The High Commissioner has wasted a much needed opportunity to meet with top Chinese leaders as she shied away from publicly raising and condemning the widespread torture, enforced disappearance, arbitrary detention, organ harvesting, and routine persecution of faith communities. Instead, Bachelet lauded the Chinese authorities for making what she called “*important legislative and judicial reforms*” as well as “*improvements for protection of women's rights.*”

Bachelet also naively posed for a photo opportunity with Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Wang Yi, who presented her with a book of Xi's quotations on “human rights”. She furthermore gave praise to China's commitment to multilateralism, despite widespread evidence that Beijing has routinely sought to silence criticism of its human rights record before UN bodies and weaken UN institutions [9].

The High Commissioner's end-of-visit statement, attempted to claw back some legitimacy by stating that she “met virtually with a number of civil society organisations.” In doing so, she failed to mention that this was the first time in four years that she agreed to meet with any affected communities despite consistent requests. By holding a two hour virtual meeting a matter of days before her visit, she limited the space and scope of any substantive discussions. The meeting invitation only came after 220 Tibetan, Uyghur, Hong Kong, Southern Mongolian, and Chinese democracy groups demanded the High Commissioner reverse her plans to visit China or risk walking into a propaganda minefield laid out by the Chinese Communist Party [10]; a that fear that has now been materialised.

The failed visit by the High Commissioner has not only worsened the human rights crisis of those living under the Chinese government's rule, but also severely compromised the integrity of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in promoting and protecting human rights globally. An independent, experienced and honest High Commissioner is crucial to ensure truth, justice, and reparations for crimes committed in violation of international law. Michelle Bachelet has repeatedly

fallen short in her ability to uphold this vital mandate and it is under such reprehensible conditions that we are calling for her immediate resignation.

Signed by:

Act with HK	RangZen: Movimento Tibete Livre, Brazil
Aide aux Refugies Tibetains	Roof of the World Foundation, Indonesia
Alaskans for Tibet	Sakya Trinley Ling
Alberta Uyghur Association	Santa Barbara Friends of Tibet
Amigos de Tibet Colombia	Satuq Bugrakhan Foundation of Science and Civilization
Amigos del Tibet Chile	Save Tibet Foundation
Amigos del Tibet El Salvador	Save Tibet, Austria
Anterrashtriya Bharat – Tibbet Sahyog Samiti	Shambhala Sangha
Asociación Cultural Peruano Tibetana	Sierra Friends of Tibet
Asociación Cultural Tibetano Costarricense	Society for Threatened Peoples International
Association Cognizance Tibet	Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center
Association Drôme Ardèche-Tibet	Stop Uyghur Genocide
Associazione Italia-Tibet	Students for a Free Tibet
Australia Tibet Council	Students for a Free Tibet Canada
Australian Uyghur Association	Students for a Free Tibet Denmark
Australian Uyghur Tangritagh Women's Association	Students for a Free Tibet France
Bay Area Friends of Tibet	Students for a Free Tibet India
Belgium Uyghur Association	Students for a Free Tibet Japan
Bharrat Tibbat Samvad Manch, India	Students for a Free Tibet UK
Blue Crescent Humanitarian Aid Association	Support Hong Kong Independence Movement
Boston Tibet Network	Svenska Uigur Union
Briancon05 Urgence Tibet	Sweden Uyghur Education Union
CADAL	Sweden Uyghur Union
Campaign for Uyghurs	Swedish Tibet Committee
Canada Tibet Committee	Swiss Tibetan Friendship Association
Casa del Tibet	Taiwan Friends of Tibet
Casa Tibet México	Tashi Delek Bordeaux
Centro De Cultura Tibetana, Brazil	The Norwegian Tibet Committee
Chi Milk Tea Alliance	The Youth Liberation Front of Tibet, Mongolia and Turkestan
Chicago Solidarity with Hong Kong 芝援香港	Tibet Action Group of Western Australia
China Against the Death Penalty	Tibet Action Institute
China Aid Association	Tibet cesky
Circle of Friends	Tibet Committee of Fairbanks
Citizen Power Initiatives for China	Tibet Group, Panama
Comite de Apoyo al Tibet	Tibet Initiative Deutschland
Committee of 100 for Tibet	Tibet Justice Center
Core Group for Tibetan Cause, India	Tibet Lives, India
Czechs Support Tibet	Tibet Mx
Dawn of Hong Kong	Tibet Patria Libre, Uruguay
DC4HK (Washingtonians Supporting Hong Kong)	Tibet Rescue Initiative in Africa
Den Norske Uyghur komiteen	Tibet Society
Dialogue China	Tibet Society of South Africa
Dream for Children, Japan	Tibet Solidarity
DUQ Ayallar komiti	
Dutch Uyghur human rights foundation	

Dutch Uyghur Human Rights Foundation	Tibet Support Committee Denmark
East Turkestan Press and Media Association	Tibet Support Group Adelaide
East Turkestan Union in Europe	Tibet Support Group Ireland
East Turkestan Union of Muslim Scholars	Tibet Support Group Kenya
East Turkistan Association of Canada	Tibet Support Group Kiku, Japan
East Turkistan Education and Solidarity Association	Tibet Support Group Netherlands
East Turkistan Entrepreneur Tradesmen and Industrialists Businessmen Association	Tibetan Association of Germany
East Turkistan Human Rights Watch	Tibetan Association of Ithaca
East Turkistan New Generation Movement	Tibetan Association of Northern California
East Turkistan New Generation Movement	Tibetan Association of Philadelphia
East Turkistan Nuzugum Culture and Family Association	Tibetan Association of Washington DC
East Turkistan Sports and Development Association	Tibetan Community Austria
East Turkistan Union in Europe	Tibetan Community in Britain
Eastern Turkistan Foundation	Tibetan Community in Denmark
EcoTibet Ireland	Tibetan Community in Ireland
European East Turkistan Education Association	Tibetan Community of Italy
Finnish Uyghur Culture Centre	Tibetan Community Queensland
Foundation for Universal Responsibility of the Dalai Lama	Tibetan Community Sweden
France-Tibet	Tibetan Community Victoria
Free Indo-Pacific Alliance	Tibetan Cultural Association Quebec
Free Tibet	Tibetan Programme of The Other Space Foundation
Free Tibet Fukuoka	Tibetan Women's Association (Central)
Friends of Tibet Costa Rica	Tibetan Youth Association in Europe
Friends of Tibet in Finland	Tibetan Youth Congress
Friends of Tibet New Zealand	Tibetans of Mixed Heritage
Furkan Education and Cooperation Association	Tibetisches Zentrum Hamburg
Grupo de Apoio ao Tibete, Portugal	TIBETmichigan
Hira Education Association	TSG – Slovenia
Hoca Ahmet Yesevi Science and lore Foundation	Turkish Welfare Association
Hong Kong Collaborative Academic Network (HKCAN)	U.S. Tibet Committee
Hong Kong Committee in Norway	Uighur Association Victoria Australia
Hong Kong Democracy Council	UK Uyghur Community
Hong Kong Forum, Los Angeles	UNFFT
Hong Kong International Alliance Brisbane	United Macedonian Diaspora
Hong Kong Liberation Coalition	University of Toronto Hong Kong Public Affairs and Social Service Society
Hong Kong Professional Network	Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization
Hong Kongers in San Francisco Bay Area	US HongKongers Club
Human Rights Network for Tibet and Taiwan	Uyghur Academy
Ilham Tohti Initiative	Uyghur Academy Australia
Ili Meshrep Educational Foundation	Uyghur Academy Canada
India Tibet Friendship Society	Uyghur Academy Europe
Inner Mongolia People's Party	Uyghur Academy Foundation
Institute of China Studies	Uyghur Academy Japan
International Society of Human Rights, Munich	Uyghur Academy USA
International Tibet Network Secretariat	Uyghur American Association
International Tibet Independence Movement	Uyghur Association France
International Union of East Turkistan Organisations	Uyghur Association of Victoria, Australia
	Uyghur Association Switzerland
	Uyghur Center for Human Rights and Democracy

<p>Isa Yusuf Alptekin Foundation Israeli Friends of the Tibetan People Japan Association of Monks for Tibet (Super Sangha) Japan Uyghur Association Justice For All Canada Justice for Uyghurs Knowledge and Service Solidarity and Cooperation Association Les Amis du Tibet Belgium Les Amis du Tibet Luxembourg Lions Des Neiges Mont Blanc, France Lungta Association Belgium Maison des Himalayas Maison du Tibet – Tibet Info McMaster Stands With Hong Kong National Campaign for Tibetan Support, India National Democratic Party of Tibet Norsk uyghur komite Norwegian Uyghur Committee Objectif Tibet Omer Uyghur Foundation Passeport Tibetain Phagma Drolma-Arya Tara Public Association of Uyghurs "Ittipak" of the Kyrgyz Republic</p>	<p>Uyghur Community in Austria Uyghur Cultural and Education Union in Germany Uyghur Human Rights Project Uyghur Projects Foundation Uyghur Research Institute Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project Uyghur Science and Civilization Research Foundation Uyghur Science and Ingenuity Foundation Uyghur Transitional Justice Database Uyghur Youth Union in Kazakhstan Uyghurischer Verein Schweiz Uyghuristan Republican Party Uygur ilim - Meripet vakfi Uyghur medeniyet we maarip birliki , Germaniye Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation Victoria Uyghur Association Voces Tibet We The Hongkongers Western Australian Association for Pan-Asian Democracy Women of the World, teaming for Tibetans World League for Freedom and Democracy World Mongol Federation USA World Uyghur Congress World Uyghur Congress Foundation</p>
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Editors Notes:

[1] "In accordance with General Assembly resolution 48/141, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is appointed by the Secretary-General of the United Nations and approved by the General Assembly, with due regard to geographical rotation for a fixed term of four years with a possibility of one renewal for another fixed term of four years."

<https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N94/012/56/PDF/N9401256.pdf?OpenElement>

[2] OHCHR, 'Statement by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet after official visit to China' 28 May 2022:

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/05/statement-un-high-commissioner-human-rights-michelle-bachelet-after-official>

[3] OHCHR, 'UN experts call for decisive measures to protect fundamental freedoms in China' 26 June 2020:

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2020/06/un-experts-call-decisive-measures-protect-fundamental-freedoms-china?LangID=E&NewsID=26006>

[4] OHCHR, 'Expert: sustained detention is a "dark stain on our collective conscience"' 27 April 2022:

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2022/04/expert-sustained-detention-dark-stain-our-collective-conscience> ; OHCHR, <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gld=24845>

[5] BBC, 'Xinjiang Police Files: Inside a Chinese internment camp' 24 May 2022:
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/idt-8df450b3-5d6d-4ed8-bdcc-bd99137eadc3> ;
<https://www.xinjiangpolicefiles.org/>

[6] For example, see Tibet Action Institute, "Separated From Their Families, Hidden From the World: China's Vast System of Colonial Boarding Schools Inside Tibet," 2021, pg. 24,
available at:
https://s7712.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/2021_ColonialBoardingSchoolReport_Digital.pdf

[7] 'Tibet' refers to the three Tibetan provinces of Amdo, Kham and U-Tsang. In the 1960s, the Chinese government split Tibet into new administrative divisions: the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), and Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures within Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan Provinces. When the Chinese government references Tibet, it is referring to the TAR.

[8] Hong Kong Democracy Council, "Hong Kong Reaches a Grim Milestone: 1,000 Political Prisoners," 22 May 2022:
<https://hkdc.us/political-prisoners-research-report/>

[9] Human Rights Watch, 'The Costs of International Advocacy: China's Interference in United Nations Human Rights Mechanisms' September 2017:
<https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/09/05/costs-international-advocacy/chinas-interference-united-nations-human-rights>

[10] Tibet Advocacy Coalition, 'Over 220 groups urgently demand UN High Commissioner immediately postpone her visit to China' 5 May 2022:
<https://tibetadvocacy.org/over-220-groups-urgently-demand-un-high-commissioner-immediately-postpone-her-visit-to-china/>