



ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS  
SENATOR JEFF MERKLEY, CHAIRMAN  
REPRESENTATIVE JAMES P. MCGOVERN, COCHAIRMAN

July 1, 2021

His Excellency António Guterres  
Secretary-General  
United Nations  
United Nations Headquarters  
New York, NY 10017

Dear Mr. Secretary-General:

As the chairs of the bipartisan and bicameral Congressional-Executive Commission on China, we write in reference to the [June 26, 2020 statement](#) in which 50 independent United Nations human rights experts called for “renewed attention on the human rights situation in [the People’s Republic of China], particularly in light of the moves against the people of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, minorities of the Xinjiang Autonomous Region, the Tibet Autonomous Region, and human rights defenders across the country.” We request that your office advise whether there has been any progress in implementing the measures suggested by these experts and if so, provide a description and the status of such efforts. If no action has been taken in this regard, please provide a basis for the failure to act.

The experts, a group that includes the leading UN special rapporteurs responsible for monitoring a wide range of human rights issues, “urge[d] the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) to act with a sense of urgency to take all appropriate measures to monitor Chinese human rights practices.” Possible measures identified by the experts include creating a special session to evaluate China’s human rights violations; establishing an impartial and independent mechanism to monitor, analyze, and report on China’s practices; and engaging in dialogues with China to demand that it fulfill its human rights obligations.

Today is the anniversary of the enactment of the National Security Law (NSL), which has led to the rapid deterioration of fundamental freedoms in Hong Kong. To date, more than a hundred people have been arrested under the NSL, many of whom were arrested for peacefully participating in marches, advocating democratic reforms, or engaging in civic activities. In addition, independent news reporting is being targeted, and educators are being disciplined for preparing teaching materials inconsistent with the government’s narrative.

Also of note is the upcoming anniversary of the “709 Crackdown,” a nationwide and coordinated campaign that began around July 9, 2015, affecting over 300 rights advocates and lawyers. Some of them were convicted of “endangering state security” charges, when in fact they were merely defending the rights of others. Four individuals remain in prison today, and lawyers who represented those detained during the crackdown became prisoners themselves. Specifically, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has determined that the detentions of lawyers Li Yuhan and Yu Wensheng were arbitrary. We note that the persecution of lawyers and rights advocates is at odds with the Chinese government’s rhetorical promotion of rule-based governance.

Similarly, rights abuses across China have not abated. As the Commission has noted in its reports, Chinese authorities have implemented discriminatory policies against ethnic minorities and religious groups and have used “economic development” as a pretext to sinicize them. Forced relocation of herders, demolition of religious buildings, and mandatory Chinese language education are among the methods the Chinese government has employed to eradicate cultural diversity. Significantly, credible reports show that millions of ethnic Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities are being detained in numerous large-scale internment camps across Xinjiang or are transferred from the camps to the prison system elsewhere in China. Given the immense scale of the network of camps, the Chinese government’s initial denial of the camps’ existence and subsequent justifications that the camps constitute either an anti-extremism measure or voluntary vocational training are not credible.

With these gross human rights violations in mind, we echo the UN experts’ call for immediate measures to closely monitor and assess China’s behavior. We further encourage you to employ the Commission’s Political Prisoner Database (<https://www.ppdcecc.gov/ppd>) as a resource for information on victims of persecution. We look forward to a prompt response from your office. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Senator Jeffrey A. Merkley  
Chair



Representative James P. McGovern  
Co-Chair

cc: Michelle Bachelet, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights