

THE
CHINA
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促进中国宗教自由联盟

April 24, 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 August 2016 visit to China, the UN Special Rapporteur for Extreme Poverty Philip Alston met with 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, 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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The Chinese delegate's new role will allow him 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)

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