



## JOINT PUBLIC CIVIL SOCIETY LETTER

### ***To the attention of:***

EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President European External Action Service (EEAS),

12 June 2024

Dear High Representative / Vice-President Borrell,

We, the undersigned civil society organisations, are writing to reiterate our request for the European Union to suspend its human rights dialogue with China, and to consider other, more impactful measures at the EU's disposal to address the Chinese government's assault on human rights at home and abroad.

While appreciative of the open and frank discussion and engagement with the EEAS in preparation of each round of human rights dialogue with China, we regret that the EU continues this exercise despite its amply proven ineffectiveness over 38 rounds. While the EU raises concerns during these dialogues, it knows that the Chinese government will not acknowledge abuses, will not undertake any effort to secure accountability, and will not be persuaded to undertake any policy or legislative action to comply with China's international human rights obligations. The EU's reluctance to establish any measurable benchmark of progress, or even to establish clearly defined objectives beyond having a dialogue, exacerbates the ineffectiveness of this exercise.

This year's human rights dialogue would also entail EU officials sitting down with authorities in Beijing to "engage... through dialogue and cooperation" on human rights, days after the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Tiananmen.

Since Xi Jinping came to power in 2013, the Chinese government has intensified its crackdown on dissent, harassing and imprisoning human rights defenders and activists including the Swedish bookseller Gui Minhai, the Uyghur economist and Sakharov Prize laureate Ilham Tohti, the Hong-Kong barrister and human rights activist Chow Hang-tung and human rights lawyers Yu Wensheng and his wife Xu Yan, who were arrested a little over a year ago on their way to meet with the EU delegation. The Chinese government has committed egregious violations against Uyghur and other Turkic communities in Xinjiang/The Uyghur Region, which a report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in August 2022 stated "may constitute international crimes, in particular crimes against humanity." Beijing has also intensified its repression in Tibet, while in Hong Kong the creation of a new national security architecture at Beijing's behest has severely restricted the rights and freedoms long enjoyed by Hong Kong's people.

Beijing's foreign policy has also been increasingly detrimental to human rights, both in the region and beyond. The Chinese government continues to support highly abusive governments, to challenge international efforts to secure accountability for grave abuses, and to intensify

efforts to undermine the international human rights system and rewrite its norms. The Chinese government has also engaged in increasingly brazen transnational repression – abuses committed outside its borders – including in EU countries.

The EU has already suspended human rights dialogues with highly repressive countries such as Russia, Syria, Belarus, and Myanmar, among others, in light of the nature, scale and pervasiveness of their authorities' human rights abuses and violations of international law. The Chinese government has committed serious crimes amounting to crimes against humanity. It has long been evident that the human rights dialogue is not an appropriate nor an effective tool to address them.

There is no reason to expect the 39<sup>th</sup> round will prove more beneficial to the rights of people in China than the previous 38. The EU and its member states should pursue different, more effective actions to press the Chinese government to end its crimes against humanity and other serious violations – and to hold accountable those responsible for failing to do so.

We have long been suggesting alternative action, latest in [this February 2023 letter](#). We stand ready to discuss these and other options with you any time

Yours sincerely,

Signatories:

*Amnesty International*

*Front Line Defenders*

*Human Rights Watch*

*International Service for Human Rights*

*World Uyghur Congress*

*P.S.: Letter sent in copy to: COREPER II, COASI, COHOM and relevant EEAS officials.*