en

Publication | 24.11.2009

The rights of minorities in China and the use of death penalty

Greens/EFA motion for a resolution

Tabled by ***Heidi Hautala, Barbara Lochbihler, Eva Lichtenberger, Helga Trüpel, Daniel Cohn-Bendit*** *on behalf of the Greens/EFA Group*

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on China and, in particular, to the one of 3 December 2007 on the EU-China Summit and the EU/China human rights dialogue,
- having regard to the declaration of the Presidency on behalf of the EU regarding the recent executions of two Tibetans of 29 October 2009,
- having regard to the declaration of the Presidency on behalf of the EU regarding the recent executions of nine persons in Xinjiang of 12 November 2009,
- having regard to the EU-China seminar of 18-19 November 2009 and the EU-China Human Rights dialogue of 20 November 2009,
- having regard to Rule 122(5) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas during the first days of July 2009 the worst ethnic violence in decades broke out in Xinjiang after Uyghur demonstrators took to the streets and attacked and caused causalities among Han Chinese in Urumqi to protest against attacks on Uyghur workers at a factory in South China in June; whereas according to official figures 197 people died and more than 1600 people were wounded,

B. whereas there is a growing dissatisfaction and resentment among the Uyghur population, who is largely Muslim and shares linguistic and cultural bonds with Central Asia and makes up almost half of Xinjiang's 20 million people, against the mainly Han Chinese authorities accused of closely watching and containing religious activities in a context of employment discrimination and marginalisation of their ethnic group in the region; whereas the call by the most important human rights NGOs to the international community to send an independent investigative team to the site of the riots had no response,

C. whereas on 13 October, after the verdict of the Urumqi Intermediate Court of the People Abdukerim Abduwayit, Yeni Yusup, Abdulla Mettohti, Adil Rozi, Nurel Wuxiu'er and Alim Metyusup were sentenced to death and another to life imprisonment for murder and other crimes

committed in the street protests of last July,

D. whereas two Tibetans, Lobsang Gyaltsen and Loyak, were executed in Lhasa for their alleged roles in the protests and rioting in Lhasa on March 14, 2008, according to reports by Tibetan exile organizations confirmed by the Chinese embassy in London on October 23; whereas these are the first known executions of Tibetans in connection with the Lhasa riots of March 2008 although others have been killed following torture in custody; whereas the reports of two other executions have not been officially confirmed and there were earlier official reports of three further death sentences, all imposed with two-year reprieves, according to state media reports published on April 8 and April 21, 2009,

E. whereas the executions were carried out in the context of a severe crackdown that began last year following the wave of protests that swept across the Tibetan plateau from 10 March 2008; whereas state repression and the hardening of the Chinese government's position on the Dalai Lama have created deepening tension in Tibet, and over the past year the Chinese government has sought to cover up the torture, disappearances and killings that have taken place across Tibet following the protests and dissent,

F. whereas the legitimacy of the sentences of the Tibetans condemned for crimes during the March 2008 riots has been called into question in a report by Human Rights Watch which stated that some trials proceedings took place covertly on undisclosed dates and that the Tibetans were denied access to a meaningful defence with lawyers they had chosen,

G. whereas Tibetan Buddhism as well as the other religions are subjected to restrictions and closely controlled by the state; whereas Chinese authorities keep on interfering in the internal affairs of the Tibetan religious hierarchy with regard, in particular, to the replacement of the Panchem Lama,

H. whereas the number of executions carried out is a state secret in China, although, according to estimates given by Chinese jurists, about 8,000 people die in this way each year;

I. whereas the death penalty is applicable to 68 offences in China, including non-violent ones such as tax fraud and drug offences,

J. whereas the EU-China human rights dialogue established in 2000 has achieved so far no tangible results; whereas the lack of results is also the consequence of an uncoordinated and ineffective EU common foreign policy towards China,

K. whereas any decision to initiate a human rights dialogue is taken on the basis of certain criteria adopted by the Council which notably takes into consideration the major concerns on the part of the EU about the human rights situation on the ground in the country concerned, a genuine commitment on the part of the authorities of the country concerned, with regard to such dialogue, to improve the human rights situation on the ground, and the positive impact which a human rights dialogue may have on the human rights situation,

L. whereas the EU is China's biggest trading partner and the biggest investor in China and whereas China is the EU's second biggest trading partner; whereas trade and economic relations have overshadowed the question of democratic reforms, respect for human rights and the rule of law,

1. Expresses its deep concern over the verdicts of the Chinese courts and at the lack of transparency in the trials and reiterates its firm condemnation of the use of the death penalty;
2. Urges Chinese authorities to publish the exact figures of the executions per year; calls on the Chinese government to diminish the number of statutory offences that require the death penalty; calls on Chinese authorities to join the UN moratorium on the death penalty;
3. Calls on the Council and the Commission to raise firmly this issue at the forthcoming EU-China summit;
4. Recognizes the positive move by the Supreme People's Court of January 2007 to review death sentences but deplores that it has not led to a significant decrease of the number of executions in China; points out that China executes more people every year than any other country in the world;
5. Stresses that the Chinese government has published its first National Human Rights Action Plan (2009-2010) in April 2009 which notably aims at improving the protection of citizens' rights in every process of law enforcement and judicial work from arbitrary detention, prohibiting extortion of confessions by torture and ensuring fair and open trials;
6. Calls on the Chinese authorities to make every effort so as to develop a genuine Han-Uyghur dialogue and adopt more inclusive and comprehensive economic policies in Xinjiang aimed at strengthening local ownership and to protect the cultural identity of the Uyghur population;
7. Regrets that the sixth Sino-Tibetan round of talks has brought about no results; calls on the parties to make every effort in order to resume the dialogue and calls on the Chinese government to engage in substantive negotiations taking into due consideration the genuine autonomy for Tibet within China; calls on China to refrain from exerting pressure on states that have friendly relations with the Dalai Lama;
8. Expresses its deep concern at the way Chinese authorities responded to the 2008 and 2009 protests (at least 250) with a security crackdown across the Tibetan plateau that includes the documented detention of 735 Tibetans exercising peacefully their freedom of speech, religion, assembly and association and reiterates its concern over the reports of continuing human rights violations in Tibet and in the other provinces inhabited by Tibetan people, including torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, repression of religious freedom, arbitrary restrictions on free movement, and rehabilitation through labour camps; deplores the intensification of the so-called 'patriotic education' campaign since October 2005 in Tibet's monasteries and nunneries, forcing Tibetans to sign declarations denouncing the Dalai Lama as a dangerous separatist; calls on China to allow an independent body to have access to Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the Panchen Lama of Tibet, and his parents, as requested by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child;
9. Reiterates, in this regard, its call on the Council to appoint a special envoy for Tibetan issues in order to facilitate the dialogue between the parties and closely follow the negotiations once they are resumed;
10. Stresses that China's human rights record remains a matter of serious concern; takes note of the previous rounds of human rights dialogues with China and the EU-China human rights dialogue of 20 November which had to examine matters such as freedom of expression, the protection of human rights defenders, the use of torture and death penalty, the situation of minorities in Tibet, the independence of the judiciary, including the role of the defence and the reform of the re-education through work as well as the right to work and to heath; insists on the need for a strict follow-up between all dialogues with regard to the application of the recommendations resulting from previous dialogues mutually agreed upon by both parties and the EU-China legal seminars on human rights, which used to precede the dialogue, with the participation of academic and civil society representatives;
11. Emphasises the need to make a comprehensive assessment of the EU-China human rights dialogue,

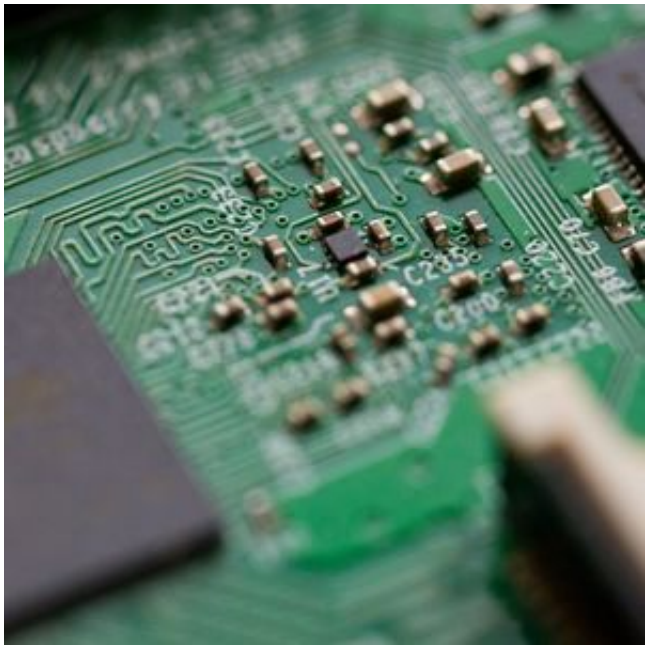
including the EU-China legal seminar on human rights, in order to measure the EU human rights strategy and the progress achieved on the ground and to make it more effective and result-oriented; considers, in this regard, that the cases of human rights defenders must be systematically raised during these dialogues and points particularly out the situation of the 2008 Sakharov Prize Hu Jia and his wife Zeng Jinyan; demands that the question of the participation of academics and experts in the EU delegation for EU-China seminars on human rights be seriously examined; calls on the Council and the Commission to provide the Parliament with the outcome of this assessment;

12. Deplores that China, in the framework of its Universal Periodic Review process of June 2009, has rejected all recommendations made by UN member states related to freedom of expression and freedom of association, independence of the judiciary, guarantees for the legal profession, protection of human rights defenders, rights of ethnic minorities, reduction of the death penalty, abolition of reeducation-through-labour, prohibition of torture, media freedom, and effective remedies for discrimination;
13. Takes the view that the development of trade relations with China must go hand in hand with the development of a genuine, fruitful and effective political dialogue and that the respect for human rights should be an integral part of the new framework agreement which is now being negotiated with China;
14. Regrets the lack of a coordinated and coherent European policy towards China that has been marked so far by a wild competition among EU leaders whose only interest was to sign lucrative contracts with the Chinese authorities at the expense of human rights; realizes at the same time that economic modernisation process has improved the living conditions of millions of Chinese citizens while recognizing that the rights of those who did not benefit from those modernisation process are not granted such as the right to basic health care and education for migrant workers; considers in this regard that this economic liberalisation process has not automatically reduced the political repression against civil and political rights;
15. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission and to the President, the Prime Minister and the People's National Assembly of the People's Republic of China;

Recommended

Press release

chris-ried



Digital Fairness Act falls short on addictive design

11.11.2026

Press release

Redek Kozak



Czech public media under attack - with Markéta Gregoro…

11.11.2026

Press release

Sebastian P



Commission must overhaul EU Democracy Shield

15.09.2026

Study

©abraham osorio



REFORMING FRONTEX | A HUMAN RIGHTS - BASED REVIEW

01.07.2026

Responsible MEPs



Heidi Hautala

EP Vice-President, Member



Barbara Lochbihler

Member



Helga Trüpel

Member

Please share

- E-Mail