

Statement at 46th session of the UN Human Rights Council

ITEM 2: GENERAL DEBATE

Delivered by: Teng Biao.

As prepared

Madame High Commissioner,

I am a scholar and human rights lawyer from China. Because of my human rights work, I was targeted by the government, kidnapped, detained and tortured. At this very moment, many of my friends find themselves in jails, mistreated by the authorities for standing up for human rights. Gao Zhisheng, Xu Zhiyong, Ding Jiaxi, Ilham Tohti, Wang Yi, Geng Xiaonan... the list goes on. Meanwhile, citizen journalists like Chen Qiushi, Fang Bin and Zhang Zhan remain in police custody for trying to investigate and report on the COVID pandemic.

In Xinjiang, more than a million Turkic peoples are held in concentration camps, subject to torture and sterilisation, by a government intent on destroying their ethno-religious identity. My Uyghur friends tell me that every Uyghur they know has at least one family members who has been in the camps. The Chinese government is also brutally repressing Mongolian and Tibetan cultures.

It's clear to see: no matter the commitments the Chinese government has made to human rights, they are not reality. A whole range of systemic rights violations exists, and has become normalised, and even exported, such as in the disappearance of foreign nationals. When this kind of a government succeeds, once again, at gaining membership in this Council, it risks corroding the Council's role of defending human rights.

I urge governments to work together to confront China for its domestic rights abuses and the threat it poses to international human rights.

Madame Bachelet, I urge you to stand in solidarity with independent Chinese NGOs and rights defenders; to elevate the voices of victims in Xinjiang, Hong Kong, Tibet and elsewhere in the country; and to do all you can to ensure an end to impunity for perpetrators of human rights violations in China, including by leading an independent investigation into the mass detention of Uyghurs.