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Agenda item 4

Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by United Nations Watch, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[04 June 2019]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



OHCHR complicity in China's abuse of dissidents attending UN meetings

China has the ignominious distinction of having one of the world's worst human rights records. Nevertheless, it has been a member of the Human Rights Council almost every year since 2006 when the Council was created. China routinely cracks down on dissent at home through travel bans, surveillance, arbitrary arrests and detention, politically motivated prosecutions, torture, and denial of due process rights, among other things.¹ China also tries to silence human rights defenders abroad by retaliating against their families in China.²

In the last few years there have been a number of disturbing reports about China harassing and intimidating its human rights activists at the United Nations. For example, in 2017, Human Rights Watch published a lengthy report on China's interference in United Nations human rights mechanisms, including by barring NGOs from attending a speech by President Xi and getting Uyghur activist Dolkun Isa ejected from the premises of the UN's New York headquarters.³ In 2015, Reuters published an article titled: *At U.N., China uses intimidation tactics to silence its critics*, which reported on China's efforts to deny accreditation to high-profile activists.⁴

In line with these reports, China harassed two of United Nations Watch's speakers at the Human Rights Council in recent years. During the March 2018 session when the prominent Chinese dissident Dr. Yang Jianli spoke, the Chinese government engaged in reprisals against him, including intimidation, harassment, and surveillance.⁵ Our complaint to the UNHRC president on this matter went unanswered.

In March 2014, when Ti-Anna Wang spoke at the Council to plead for the release of her father, Wang Bingzhang, an expatriate Chinese democracy advocate who has been in Chinese custody since 2002, China attempted to silence Ms. Wang and prevent her from speaking at the session.

After that effort failed, a representative of an NGO with close ties to the Chinese government intimidated and harassed Ms. Wang by taking unauthorized photos of her and her computer as she was sitting in a UNHRC debate on China. The UN ultimately expelled the Chinese "NGO" delegate over his improper conduct, but no action was taken against China or the NGO with which the spy was affiliated.⁶

¹ *China: Events of 2018*, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH (2019), <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/china-and-tibet>.

² *Id.*

³ *The Costs of International Advocacy, China's Interference in United Nations Human Rights Mechanisms*, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH (Sep. 5, 2017), <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/09/05/costs-international-advocacy/chinas-interference-united-nations-human-rights>.

⁴ Sui-Lee Wee and Stephanie Nebehay, *At U.N., China uses intimidation tactics to silence its critics*, REUTERS (Oct. 6, 2015), <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/china-softpower-rights/>.

⁵ *China's UN rep spies on dissident, interrupts UN testimony three times*, UN WATCH (March 20, 2018), <https://unwatch.org/chinas-un-rep-spies-dissident-interrupts-un-testimony-three-times/>.

⁶ Didi Kirsten Tatlow, *Fissures in China's Ethnic Policy*, NEW YORK TIMES (March 26, 2014), <https://sinosphere.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/03/26/fissures-in-chinas-ethnic-policy/>; Didi Kirsten Tatlow, *see also U.N. Investigates 'Intimidation' of Activist at Human Rights Council*, NEW YORK TIMES (March 21, 2014), https://sinosphere.blogs.nytimes.com/2014/03/21/u-n-investigates-intimidation-of-activist-at-human-rights-council/?_r=0.