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*Plenary sitting*

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**B8-0175/2016**

2.2.2016

## **MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION**

with request for inclusion in the agenda for a debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 135 of the Rules of Procedure

on the case of the missing book publishers in Hong Kong  
(2016/2558(RSP))

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on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

**B8-0175/2016**

**European Parliament resolution on the case of the missing book publishers in Hong Kong  
(2016/2558(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to its previous resolutions on China with regard, in particular to the one of 16 December 2015 on EU-China relations,
- having regard to the statement of the EU and its Member States of 29 January 2016 on EU Concerns about the Human Rights situation in China,
- having regard to the Statement by the Spokesperson of the HR/VP for CFSP on the disappearance of individuals associated with the Mighty Current publishing house in Hong Kong, 07 January 2016,
- having regard to the EU-China Strategic Partnership launched in 2003,
- having regard to the adoption of the new national security law by the Standing Committee of the Chinese National People's Congress of 1 July 2015, and the publication of the second draft of a new Foreign NGO Management law on 5 May 2015,
- having regard to the EU-China dialogue on human rights launched in 1995 and the 32nd round held in Beijing on 8-9 December 2014,
- having regard to Rule 135 of the Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas from October to December 2015 five Hong Kong residents (Lui Bo, Gui Minhai, Zhang Zhiping, Lin Rongji and Lee Po) associated with the publishing house Mighty Current or its bookstore, Causeway Bay Books, have been reported missing,

B. whereas local Hong Kong publisher Mighty Current is known for racy biographical works on China's political leaders with titles that are especially popular with visitors from mainland China, where the sales of these books are generally banned; whereas the publisher was reportedly planning an expose on the love life of President Xi Jinping,

C. whereas thousands of protesters marched in Hong Kong on January 10 to demand action from the city government to explain the disappearance of the five publishers and booksellers that are believed being held by mainland Chinese authorities over the border from Hong Kong; whereas some demonstrators carried yellow umbrellas and generally followed the routes of a mass pro-democracy protest, known as the 'umbrella movement', which shut down parts of Hong Kong's city centre in late 2014 in support for reforms,

D. whereas on 17 January 2016 Gui Minhai appeared on Chinese state television saying he voluntarily handed himself over to the authorities after being on the run for 12 years over a drink-driving conviction in what appeared to be a forced confession,,

F. whereas these disappearances are having a chilling effect on other booksellers and due to this some have already removed titles critical of China's leaders; whereas there is a growing perception that Hong Kong's political freedoms are under attack by mainland authorities;

G. whereas an editorial in a mainland Party-linked tabloid, the Global Times, described these types of Hong Kong publications as an "evil influence"; whereas China maintains strict curbs on freedom of expression, and the popularity of the books with mainland readers is considered a threat to social stability,

H. whereas revelations were published that 14 publishers and 21 publications in Hong Kong had been identified as targets in an internal document of the Communist party of April 2015, in which a strategy to 'exterminate' banned books at their sources in Hong Kong and Macau was revealed,

J. whereas the disappearances follow a series of violent attacks in 2013 and 2014 against Hong Kong journalists critical of Beijing; whereas China blocks the websites of foreign news outlets that are critical of the regime and it appears to be losing patience with criticism arising in Hong Kong's lively media environment, which is accessible to the large numbers of mainlanders who visit Hong Kong,

K. whereas Article 27 of the Basic Law, Hong Kong's de facto constitution, guarantees: "freedom of speech, of the press and of publication, freedom of association, of assembly, of procession and of demonstration"; whereas this Law, negotiated between China and the United Kingdom, guarantees those rights for a 50-year period ending in 2047,

I. whereas the worsening media environment is seen by the protest movement and cultural circles as Beijing's dissatisfaction with the 'one-country, two-systems' arrangement that the Basic Law established and plays into fears that Beijing is casting an ever larger shadow on life in Hong Kong,

L. whereas over the past couple of years, Hong Kong activists and some politicians in the United Kingdom have called on the UK government to ensure that China observes the legal guarantees negotiated before the 1997 handover of Hong Kong,

M. whereas since President Xi Jinping assumed power in March 2013 the human rights situation in China itself continues to deteriorate with the government stepping up its hostility toward peaceful dissent, freedoms of expression and religion, and the rule of law; whereas the Chinese authorities have detained and prosecuted hundreds of human rights defenders,

N. whereas the Chinese government has drafted or passed a slew of new laws that cast public activism and peaceful criticism of the government as state security threats, strengthen censorship, surveillance and control of individuals and social groups and deter individuals from campaigning for human rights with regard, in particular, to the State Security Law, passed on July 1, 2015, the draft Counterterrorism Law, the draft Cybersecurity Law, and the draft Foreign NGO Management Law,

O. whereas the 17th EU-China Summit of 29 June 2015 lifted bilateral relations to a new level and sent out a signal for closer political cooperation going beyond mere trade relations

and towards a coordinated strategic approach to tackling common global challenges and threats; whereas both sides agreed at the Summit on a set of priorities to reinforce their bilateral cooperation and enhance the global dimension of their strategic partnership,

P. whereas in its strategic framework on human rights and democracy, the EU pledges that human rights, democracy, and rule of law will be promoted “in all areas of the EU's external actions without exception” and that the EU will “place human rights at the center of its relations with all third countries including strategic partners.”,

1. Expresses its sympathy and solidarity with the people of Hong Kong in support of democratic reforms and calls on the Chinese authorities to respect the independence of the judicial system, fundamental freedoms and rights, transparency and freedom of information and expression in Hong Kong in line with the "One country, two system" principle;
2. Urges China to immediately account for the missing booksellers whereabouts and wellbeing, allow them unfettered access to family/lawyers and release them;
3. Calls on China to respect the guarantees of autonomy in Hong Kong as set out in the Basic Law, which stipulates that China only involve itself in Hong Kong's foreign affairs and defense;
4. Calls on China to release or drop all charges against peaceful government critics, anti-corruption activists, lawyers, and journalists;
5. Invites the EU High Representative and EU Member States to adopt Foreign Affairs Council conclusions on China that stress the critical importance of human rights in the EU-China relationship, convey a clear sense of concern about the negative trends in China in this regard, along with an expectation that the Chinese authorities take specific steps in response; stresses that such conclusions would serve to bind the 28 EU Member States and EU institutions to a common message and approach with regards to human rights in China;
6. Notes that a strong contradiction exists between the official Chinese aspiration to the universality of human rights and the worsening human rights situation; points out that the recent worsening of the situation of human rights and freedoms in China that started in 2013 has intensified an already existing crackdown over the population, limiting the space for expression and peaceful advocacy for civil society even further; expresses its deep concern at the arrest, trial and sentencing of numerous civil rights activists, human rights defenders and government critics and at the fact that more than 200 human rights lawyers and activists have been detained or questioned by Chinese police; calls on the Chinese authorities to release those in custody and to ensure that they can exercise their profession without hindrance;
7. Believes that strong ongoing EU-China relations must provide an effective platform for a mature, meaningful and open human rights dialogue based on mutual respect;
8. Takes the view that in order to be truly effective, and to implement the EU's own Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy, adopted in June 2012, the EU should clearly articulate its concerns and set out transparent benchmarks for advancing human rights in China as a means to ensure that EU messaging reaches not just Chinese government officials, but also people across China and Europe;

9. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the EEAS, the Council, the Commission and to the President, the Government and Parliament of the People's Republic of China and to the Chief Executive and the Assembly of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.