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 cases of the Larung Gar Tibetan Buddhist Academy and Ilham Tohti (2016/3026(RSP))


on behalf of the PPE Group
The European Parliament,

– having regard to its previous resolutions on Tibet, in particular those of 25 November 2010 on Tibet: plans to make Chinese the main language of instruction, of 27 October 2011 on Tibet, in particular self-immolation by nuns and monks and of 14 June 2012 on the human rights situation in Tibet,

– having regard to its previous resolutions of 26 November 2009 on China, minority rights and application of the death penalty and of 10 March 2011 on the situation and cultural heritage in Kashgar (Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region),

– having regard to its resolution of 16 December 2015 on EU-China relations,

– having regard to the Articles 18 and 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that respectively protect the freedom of religion either alone or in community with others and the right to freedom of movement and residence within a country’s borders,

– having regard to Article 4 of the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China that upholds the rights of ‘minority nationalities’ and to Article 36 that enshrines freedom of religion,

– having regard to the Joint Communication of the European Commission: Elements for a new EU strategy on China of 22 June 2016 adopted by EU Council Conclusions on 18 July 2016,

– having regard to the EU’s delegation to China statement of 24 May 2016 expressing its concerns about the Human Rights situation in China,

– having regard to the 34th EU-China Dialogue on Human Rights held in Beijing on 2 December 2015,

– having regard to the remarks made by Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, on 29 June 2015 at the joint press conference with Chinese Prime Minister Li Keqiang following the 17th EU-China Summit, in which he expressed the EU’s ‘concerns on freedom of expression and association in China, including the situation of the persons belonging to minorities such as Tibetans and Uighurs’ and ‘encouraged China to resume a meaningful dialogue with the Dalai Lama’s representatives’,

– having regard to the EEAS’ Spokesperson statement of 23 September 2014 condemning the life sentence handed to Uighur economics professor Ilham Tohti and calling for his immediate and unconditional release,
– having regard to the Rule 135 of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas the EU and China have a long-standing partnership based on common interests and values; whereas the promotion and the respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law should remain at the center of this relationship in line with the EU’s commitment to uphold these values in its external action and China’s expressed interest in adhering to these very values in its own development and international cooperation;

B. whereas, in its development, the Chinese government has indicated that it is seeking a greater role in addressing global challenges, such as international peace and security and climate change, and an increased influence over global governance, both political and economic, and has committed to strengthening the rule of law;

C. whereas over recent decades China has made significant progress regarding the realisation of economic and social rights, reflecting its stated priorities for the people’s rights to subsistence and development over of political and civil rights in its overall promotion of human rights;

D. whereas in its statement to the 33rd session of the United Nations Human Rights Council on 19 September 2016, the EU urged China “to respect cultural diversity and freedom of religion, not least in Tibet and Xinjiang” and called for the “immediate release of all individuals detained or convicted for [...] the peaceful exercise of their freedom of expression including [...] Ilham Tohti”;

E. whereas the EU Council Conclusions on EU Strategy on China adopted on 18 July 2016 underline that the promotion of human rights and the rule of law will continue to be a core part of the EU engagement with China and call China to ensure the protection of the rights of people belonging to minorities, not least in Tibet and Xinjiang;

F. whereas during his visit to China from 9 to 14 November 2015, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights, Stavros Lambrinidis, urged China to amend provisions within the package of security laws, including the anti-terrorism law, cyber-security law and the law on the management of international NGOs, that could curtail freedom of expression and association and freedom of religion and belief;

G. whereas during 34th EU-China Dialogue on Human Rights held in Beijing on 2 December 2015, the EU raised its concerns about the respect of the rights of persons belonging to minorities, especially in Tibet and Xinjiang and about the respect of freedom of religion or belief; whereas the case of Ilham Tohti was discussed during the 34th EU-China Dialogue on Human Rights;

H. whereas the Larung Gar Tibetan Buddhist Academy, the largest Buddhist Academy in the world, was founded in 1980 and is a highly respected center of Tibetan Buddhism and a key heritage for the Tibetan language, culture and religion;

I. whereas the Chinese authorities started the demolition of Larung Gar Academy in July 2016 with the objective of downsizing the academy by fifty percent and evicting half of its population; whereas around 4600 residents have been evicted and around 1500 dwellings destroyed; whereas the monks and nuns of Larung Gar are evicted by force;
J. whereas the evictees are forced to be enrolled in so called ‘patriotic education’ exercises; whereas three nuns of the academy committed suicide in protest of the ongoing large-scale demolitions at Larung Gar;

K. whereas 144 have self-immolated themselves in protest against the Chinese policy, whereas no progress has been made in the resolution of the Tibetan crisis in the last few years; whereas the Chinese government is still rejecting the Dalai Lama’s Middle Way Approach which seeks a genuine autonomy within the framework of the Constitution of China;

L. whereas as a scholar Ilham Tohti has advocated for dialogue and understanding between Uyghurs and Han Chinese in Xinjiang, rejecting separatism and extremism, with the aim of fostering reconciliation and harmonious ethnic relations, activities for which he faced official surveillance, harassment and periodic house arrests as early as 1994 until his arrest in September 2014, sentenced to life in prison following a two-day show trial on alleged charges of “separatism”;

M. whereas Ilham Tohti was nominated to the European Parliament Sakharov Prize for freedom of Thought in 2016; whereas he is the 2016 Laureate of the Martin Ennals Foundation Award for his efforts to foster dialogue and understanding between different communities in China;

1. Urges the Chinese authorities to put an end to demolitions and evictions in Larung Gar and to respect the freedom of religion of Tibetans in accordance with its international human rights obligations;

2. Calls for adequate compensation and re-housing of Tibetans who have been evicted during the demolitions in Larung Gar at the place of their choice to continue their religious activities;

3. Deplores the condemnation of 10 Tibetans by the Intermediate People Court in Barkham to different terms of 5 to 14 years in prison for taking part in 80th birthday celebration of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Ngaba County;

4. Is deeply concerned by the deterioration of the human rights situation in Tibet which has led to an increase of self-immolations cases; criticises the increase of militarized displays on the Tibetan Plateau that will only lead to an escalation of tensions in the region; condemns the increase in the use of surveillance systems in Tibetan private households;

5. Is worried about the increasingly suppressive regime that different minorities, in particular Tibetans and Uyghurs face, putting additional restraints on the constitutional guarantees of their right to freedom of cultural expression and religious belief, to freedom of speech and expression, peaceful assembly and association and calling into question China’s stated commitment to rule of law and respect for international obligations;

6. Is worried about the adoption of the package of security laws and its impact on minorities in China and particularly the law on counter-terrorism that could lead to the penalisation of peaceful expression of the Tibetan culture and religion and the law on the management of international NGOs which will come into effect on 1 January 2017 and that will place human rights groups under the strict control of the government constituting a strictly top-down approach, instead of encouraging partnership between the local and central government and
civil society;

7. Urges the Chinese government to amend the provisions in the security law package that are narrowing the space for civil society organisations and reinforcing government controls of religious practices; calls the Chinese government to provide and guarantee a fair and safe environment for all NGOs and human rights defenders to operate freely in the country, which could greatly complement the state delivery of social services with a bottom-up approach and contribute to the advancement of both social and economic, political and civil rights;

8. Calls for the Chinese government to resume the dialogue with Tibetan representatives, which was ended by China in 2010, in order to find an inclusive political solution to the crisis in Tibet; calls for the respect of the freedoms of expression, association and religion of the Tibetan people as enshrined in the Constitution; believes that the respect of minority rights is a key element of democracy and rule of law that is indispensable to political stability;

9. Condemns the imprisonment of Ilham Tohti who is serving a life sentence for alleged charges of separatism; deplores that the due process of law was not respected and that he did not benefit of the right to a proper defence;

10. Calls for the immediate and unconditional release of Ilham Tohti as well as his supporters detained in relation to his case; further calls for the re-establishment of Ilham Tohti’s teaching permission and the guarantee of his free movement within and outside China;

11. Recalls the importance for the EU to raise the issue of human rights violation in China, in particular the case of minorities in Tibet and Xinjiang, at every political and human rights dialogue with the Chinese authorities, in line with the EU’s commitment to project a strong, clear and unified voice in its approach to the country, including the yearly Human Rights Dialogues; it further reminds that in its ongoing reform process and increasing global engagement China has opted into the international human rights framework by signing up to a wide range of international human rights treaties, therefore it calls on pursuing dialogue with China to live up to these commitments;

12. Calls the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign affairs and Security Policy to engage in stronger public diplomacy with China on human rights issues since the quiet diplomacy efforts have been largely insufficient to improve the human rights situation in China, including the situation of minorities, namely that of Tibetans and Uyghurs;

13. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and to the Government and the Parliament of the Peoples’ Republic of China;