



TEXTS ADOPTED

P8_TA(2016)0505

The cases of the Larung Gar Tibetan Buddhist Academy and of Ilham Tohti

European Parliament resolution of 15 December 2016 on the cases of the Larung Gar Tibetan Buddhist Academy and Ilham Tohti (2016/3026(RSP))

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 instruction¹, of 27 October 2011 on Tibet, in particular self-immolation by nuns and monks² and of 14 June 2012 on the human rights situation in Tibet³,
- having regard to its previous resolutions of 26 November 2009 on China, minority rights and application of the death penalty⁴ and of 10 March 2011 on the situation and cultural heritage in Kashgar (Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, China)⁵,
- having regard to its resolution of 16 December 2015 on EU-China relations⁶,
- having regard to the nine rounds of talks from 2002 to 2010 between high-ranking representatives of the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama; having regard to China's White Paper on Tibet, entitled 'Tibet's Path of Development Is Driven by an Irresistible Historical Tide' and published by China's State Council Information Office on 15 April 2015; having regard to the 2008 Memorandum and the 2009 Note on Genuine Autonomy, both presented by the Representatives of the 14th Dalai Lama,
- having regard to Article 36 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, which guarantees all citizens the right to freedom of religious belief and to Article 4 that upholds the rights of 'minority nationalities',
- 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

¹ OJ C 99 E, 3.4.2012, p. 118.

² OJ C 131 E, 8.5.2013, p. 121.

³ OJ C 332 E, 15.11.2013, p. 69.

⁴ OJ C 285 E, 21.10.2010, p. 80.

⁵ OJ C 199 E, 7.7.2012, p. 185.

⁶ Texts adopted, P8_TA(2015)0458.

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 ‘Sixth Tibet Work Forum’ organised by the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and held in August 2015,
 - having regard to the statement of 23 September 2014 by the EEAS Spokesperson condemning the life sentence handed out to Uighur economics professor Ilham Tohti and calling for his immediate and unconditional release,
 - having regard to the EU–China dialogue on human rights launched in 1995 and to the 34th round held in Beijing on 30 November and 1 December 2015,
 - having regard to the fact that on 11 October 2016 Ilham Tohti was awarded the Martin Ennals Award for his defence of human rights, and in September 2016 he was nominated for the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought,
 - having regard to the EU-China Strategic Partnership launched in 2003 and to the European Commission and EEAS joint communication to the European Parliament and the Council of 22 June 2016 entitled ‘Elements for a new EU strategy on China’,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 16 December 1966,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
 - having regard to Rules 135(5) and 123(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the promotion of and respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law should remain at the centre the long-standing partnership between the EU and China, in line with the EU’s commitment to uphold these values in its external action and China’s expressed interest in adhering to these same values in its own development and international cooperation;
- B. whereas, in its development objectives, 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 increased influence over both political and economic global governance, and has committed to strengthening the rule of law;
- C. whereas the 17th EU-China Summit of 29 June 2015 lifted bilateral relations to a new level, and whereas in its strategic framework on human rights and democracy the EU pledges that it will place human rights at the centre of its relations with all third countries, including its strategic partners; whereas the 18th EU-China Summit of 12-13 July 2016 concluded that another round of the human rights dialogue between EU and China would be held still in 2016;
- D. whereas China has made progress over the last decades in the realisation of economic and social rights, reflecting its stated priorities regarding people’s rights to subsistence and development, but its achievements in the area of political and civil rights, together with the promotion of human rights, are limited;

- E. whereas, during 34th EU-China Dialogue on Human Rights held in Beijing on 2 December 2015, the EU raised its concerns about respect for the rights of persons belonging to minorities, especially in Tibet and Xinjiang, and about respect for freedom of religion or belief; whereas the case of Ilham Tohti was discussed during the 34th EU-China Dialogue on Human Rights;
- F. whereas the Larung Gar Institute, the largest Tibetan Buddhist centre in the world founded in 1980, is currently facing extensive demolition by the Chinese Government with the objective of downsizing the academy by fifty percent, evicting around 4 600 residents by force and destroying around 1 500 dwellings; whereas according to the Chinese authorities this demolition is necessary in order to carry out ‘correction and rectification’;
- G. whereas the evictees are to be forcibly enrolled in so-called ‘patriotic education’ exercises; whereas three nuns at the academy committed suicide in protest at the ongoing large-scale demolitions at Larung Gar;
- H. whereas an extremely high number of Tibetans, mostly monks and nuns, have reportedly set themselves on fire since 2009 in protest against restrictive Chinese policies in Tibet and in support of the return of the Dalai Lama and the right to religious freedom in the Aba/Ngaba county prefecture in Sichuan Province and other parts of the Tibetan plateau;
- I. whereas envoys of His Holiness the Dalai Lama have approached the Government of the People’s Republic of China to find a mutually beneficial solution to the issue of Tibet; whereas no progress has been made in the resolution of the Tibetan crisis in the last few years, as the last round of talks took place in 2010 and the negotiations are currently frozen;
- J. whereas the Uighur economics professor Ilham Tohti was sentenced to life imprisonment on 23 September 2014 on the charge of alleged separatism after being arrested in January of the same year; whereas seven of his former students were also detained and condemned to prison sentences of between three and eight years for alleged collaboration with Mr Tohti;
- K. whereas there are allegations that the due process of law was not respected, in particular with regard to the right to a proper defence;
- L. whereas the Xinjiang region, in which the Muslim Uighur ethnic minority is mainly located, has experienced repeated outbreaks of ethnic unrest and violence; whereas Ilham Tohti has always rejected separatism and violence and sought reconciliation based on respect for Uighur culture;
1. Urges the Chinese authorities to stop the demolition of Larung Gar and the eviction of its residents, and in this way to respect the freedom of religion in accordance with its international commitments in the field of human rights;
 2. Calls on the Chinese authorities to initiate a dialogue and to engage constructively on developments in Larung Gar with the local community and its religious leaders, and to address concerns regarding overcrowded religious institutes by allowing Tibetans to establish more institutes and build more facilities; calls for adequate compensation and the 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 sentencing of ten Tibetans by the Intermediate People's Court in Barkham to different terms ranging from 5 to 14 years in prison for taking part in an 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 in the number of self-immolation cases; criticises the increase in military displays on the Tibetan plateau that will only lead to escalating tension in the region; condemns the increase in the use of surveillance systems in Tibetan private households;
5. Is worried about the increasingly repressive regime faced by different minorities, in particular Tibetans and Uighurs, as additional constraints are put on the constitutional guarantees of their right to freedom of cultural expression and religious belief, and to the freedom of speech and expression, peaceful assembly and association, calling into question China's stated commitment to the rule of law and respect for international obligations; demands that the authorities respect these fundamental freedoms;
6. Is worried about the adoption of the package of security laws and its impact on minorities in China, particularly the law on counter-terrorism that could lead to the penalisation of peaceful expression of Tibetan culture and religion and the law on the management of international NGOs which will come into effect on 1 January 2017 and will place human rights groups under the strict control of the government, as this constitutes a strictly top-down approach instead of encouraging partnership between local and central government and civil society;
7. Urges the Chinese Government to amend the provisions in the security law package that narrow the space for civil society organisations and tighten government control over religious practices; calls on 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 social and economic, political and civil rights;
8. Calls on 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 respect for the freedoms of expression, association and religion of the Tibetan people as enshrined in the Constitution; believes that respect for minority rights is a key element of democracy and the rule of law that is indispensable for political stability;
9. Strongly condemns the imprisonment of Ilham Tohti who is serving a life sentence on alleged charges of separatism; deplores the fact that the due process of law was not respected and that he did not benefit from the right to a proper defence; urges the Chinese authorities to respect the norm of granting one visit per month for family members;
10. Calls for the immediate and unconditional release of Ilham Tohti and of his supporters detained in relation to his case; further calls for Ilham Tohti's teaching permit to be restored and for his free movement to be guaranteed within and outside China;
11. Recalls the importance of the EU raising the issue of human rights violations 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; further points out that, as part of 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, and therefore calls for dialogue to be pursued with China to live up to these commitments;

12. Deplores the fact that the 35th round of the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue will probably not take place before the end of 2016, as agreed; urges the Chinese Government to agree to a high-level dialogue in the first weeks of 2017;
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 the Government and the Parliament of the Peoples' Republic of China.