



TEXTS ADOPTED

P9_TA(2022)0445

Chinese government crackdown on the peaceful protests across the People's Republic of China

European Parliament resolution of 15 December 2022 on the Chinese Government crackdown on the peaceful protests across the People's Republic of China (2022/2992(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on China, in particular those of 9 June 2022 on the human rights situation in Xinjiang, including the Xinjiang police files¹, of 20 January 2022 on violations of fundamental freedoms in Hong Kong², of 16 September 2021 on a new EU-China strategy³, of 20 May 2021 on Chinese countersanctions on EU entities and MEPs and MPs⁴, of 21 January 2021 on the crackdown on the democratic opposition in Hong Kong⁵, of 12 September 2018 on the state of EU-China relations⁶ and of 16 December 2015 on EU-China relations⁷,
- having regard to the EU-China Summit held on 1 April 2022,
- having regard to the concluding observations of the United Nations Human Rights Committee on the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China and the Macao Special Administrative Region of China on their implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, adopted on 27 July 2022,
- having regard to the Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984 and the Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration of 1987,
- having regard to the joint communication from the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 12 March 2019 entitled 'EU-China – A strategic outlook' (JOIN(2019)0005),

¹ Texts adopted, P9_TA(2022)0237.

² OJ C 336, 2.9.2022, p. 2.

³ OJ C 117, 11.3.2022, p. 40.

⁴ OJ C 15, 12.1.2022, p. 170.

⁵ OJ C 456, 10.11.2021, p. 242.

⁶ OJ C 433, 23.12.2019, p. 103.

⁷ OJ C 399, 24.11.2017, p. 92.

- having regard to the 2019 Sakharov Prize awarded to Ilham Tohti, a Uyghur economist fighting peacefully for the rights of China’s Uyghur minority,
 - having regard to the decision of the Council of the EU of 5 December 2022 to extend the measures taken under Council Regulation (EU) 2020/1998 of 7 December 2020 concerning restrictive measures against serious human rights violations and abuses¹,
 - having regard to the remarks by Council President Charles Michel following the meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping on 1 December 2022,
 - having regard to the press release of the European External Action Service (EEAS) of 2 December 2022 entitled ‘EU-U.S.: Consultations between the U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman and European External Action Service Secretary General Stefano Sannino’,
 - having regard to the 11th EU-China Strategic Dialogue of 28 September 2021 between the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) Josep Borrell and Chinese State Councillor/Foreign Minister Wang Yi,
 - having regard to Article 35 of the Constitution of the People’s Republic of China, which stipulates that citizens of the People’s Republic of China must enjoy freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly, of association, of procession and of demonstration,
 - having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 16 December 1966, which China signed in 1998 but has never ratified,
 - having regard to the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024 and to the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders,
 - having regard to the report on Xinjiang by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights published on 31 August 2022,
 - having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948,
 - having regard to Rules 144(5) and 132(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the promotion of and respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law should be at the centre of the EU’s relations with China, in line with the EU’s commitment to uphold these values in its external action and China’s commitment to adhere to them in its own development and international cooperation;
- B. whereas since 2020 China has pursued a very strict zero-COVID policy featuring mass testing and ad hoc and long-lasting lockdowns seriously curtailing people’s freedom and rights;
- C. whereas these severe restrictions have led to frequent and protracted lockdowns, massive and systematic testing requirements and quarantining, and disproportionate and severe limitations to freedom of movement inside China; whereas these restrictions

¹ OJ L 410 I, 7.12.2020, p. 1.

have also led to supply shortages of essential goods, including food, limited access to healthcare and an increase in youth unemployment in the People's Republic of China;

- D. whereas in the days and weeks before the widespread protests erupted, there had been high levels of tension in some factories, such as the Foxconn factories, from where large numbers of workers fled in order to escape radical and total factory lockdowns following COVID outbreaks inside the production sites and in protest against the recurrent non-payment of bonuses during lockdowns; whereas factory protests turned violent and social media videos showed workers being beaten by the police;
- E. whereas due to the strict enforcement of the lockdowns, entire buildings, including emergency exits, were at times sealed off; whereas on 24 November 2022 a fire broke out in a residential building in Urumqi, Xinjiang, a city where a continuous lockdown had been in place for over 100 days, in which at least ten people lost their lives; whereas local sources and numerous social media posts have suggested a much higher death toll¹ of up to 40 casualties; whereas inhabitants of this building were allegedly locked in their apartments and firefighters were delayed, probably because of restrictions imposed under the zero-COVID policy;
- F. whereas on 26 November 2022, for the first time since the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989, people took to the streets in Beijing, Shanghai and other major Chinese cities and municipalities and reportedly in more than 100 universities to protest against China's zero-COVID policy and denounce the Chinese Communist Party's authoritarian rule; whereas protesters quickly adopted a blank sheet of paper as a symbol to express their anger over the suppression of free speech;
- G. whereas the police, after initially showing restraint, quickly began to break up crowds and carry out widespread arrests in several cities; whereas in Shanghai, for instance, police used pepper spray to disperse around 300 protesters who had gathered; whereas posts about the protest on China's social media platforms were deleted immediately in an effort to suppress criticism; whereas Chinese state media has so far simply avoided covering the protests;
- H. whereas some protesters are calling for President Xi Jinping to resign, which constitutes an unprecedented challenge to the country's current leadership;
- I. whereas women have been at the forefront of these protests; whereas women's rights in China have been deteriorating in recent years; whereas studies have shown that lockdowns increase the risk of gender-based domestic violence;
- J. whereas reports have been made of a strong police presence and interventions leading to numerous arrests of peaceful protesters; whereas, according to various human rights organisations, authorities have also interfered with the protesters' right to legal representation, with some lawyers being warned by local authorities not to take on cases;
- K. whereas Article 35 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China proclaims that 'citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of speech, of the press, of

¹ <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/12/01/china/china-protests-urumqi-fire-deaths-covid-dst-intl-hnk/index.html>.

assembly, of association, of procession, and of demonstration’; whereas the liberties enshrined in this article are being constantly violated;

- L. whereas, since President Xi Jinping assumed power in March 2013, the human rights situation in China has drastically deteriorated; whereas the Chinese Government has stepped up its hostility against human rights and the rule of law; whereas China’s illegal mass surveillance and monitoring of its citizens has been expanded;
- M. whereas, in recent years, the Chinese authorities have tightened online censorship, in particular since the outbreak of COVID-19; whereas the Chinese authorities and police have assembled one of the world’s most sophisticated surveillance systems by gaining access to powerful facial recognition software and technology in order to heavily restrict fundamental freedoms in a generalised fashion, or even massively violate human rights; whereas there are concerns that due to these mass surveillance and facial recognition technologies, the security apparatus will prosecute demonstrators at a later time;
- N. whereas, according to recent reports, the Chinese authorities have implemented the highest ‘emergency response’ level of media censorship in the context of the recent outbreak of protests; whereas social media platforms have played an active and instrumental role in disseminating content across the country; whereas security forces have also stopped citizens on the street, inspected their electronic devices and forced them to delete certain applications, content and photos related to the protests; whereas, following the outbreak of the protests, the Chinese authorities immediately began to track, on a massive scale, messaging applications, social media and mobile phone data they consider suspicious, as well as the use of virtual private networks, in order to identify, intimidate and harass people allegedly organising and participating in the protests;
- O. whereas, in recent years, the Chinese authorities have dismantled civil society groups and imprisoned many independent activists, making large-scale protests extremely difficult to carry out; whereas, in recent months, sporadic protests have taken place in response to the COVID-19 policy, economic hardship, censorship and President Xi’s expanded powers, in China and by Chinese nationals outside the country;
- P. whereas China engages in cross-border repression and surveillance through various activities ranging from espionage, cyber-attacks, physical attacks and the issuance of Red Notices through INTERPOL to ‘offshore police stations’ on EU territory;
- Q. whereas, in a nationally coordinated move, students were sent home from universities one month early in order to prevent them from continuing to participate in organised protests;
- R. whereas some Chinese diplomats have engaged in violence and threats towards Chinese students and opponents abroad, demanding that they ‘resist distorting and discrediting China’s epidemic prevention and control policies’;
- S. whereas China has been pursuing the systemic persecution of the Uyghur people and other ethnic minorities, human rights defenders, social activists, religious groups, journalists and protesters against injustices, as well as the ever-increasing repression of all dissenting and opposition voices; whereas the loss of life in the Urumqi fire adds

another tragedy to the human rights atrocities taking place in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region;

1. Strongly condemns the Chinese Government-led reaction to the peaceful protests and the persecution of the peaceful protesters across the People's Republic of China; expresses its condolences to and stands in solidarity with the victims of the Urumqi fire and their family members; calls upon the Chinese Government to be transparent about the number of victims and the circumstances under which they died; calls for a prompt, effective and thorough investigation of the Urumqi fire;
2. Expresses its solidarity with the people of China in their fight for fundamental freedoms; condemns the persecution of the peaceful protesters; urges all police forces to respond in line with international standards, including the United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials;
3. Expresses its serious concerns about human rights violations in China, including in the context of its zero-COVID policy;
4. Notes that all the victims of the Urumqi fire are of Uyghur ethnicity¹, thus deepening the suffering of this ethnic group which has fallen victim to systematic human rights atrocities taking place in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, which the European Parliament has recognised as constituting crimes against humanity and representing a serious risk of genocide²;
5. Condemns in the strongest terms the fact that freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and freedom of the press and social media are severely restricted in China; calls on the Chinese Government to ensure the freedom of expression, association, assembly, press and media, as enshrined in the Chinese Constitution and international human rights law;
6. Strongly condemns the violent assault and detention of a foreign journalist covering these protests; recalls that the freedom of the press is a fundamental principle and an essential pillar of any democracy; calls on China to ensure that all journalists are able to conduct their work freely and without impediments or fear of reprisals, as provided for by Chinese law; stresses that the freedom of the press and media should be ensured; urges the Chinese authorities to stop interfering with, harassing and intimidating lawyers and legal professionals, human rights defenders and others who openly express concern about the protesters or who defend the right to peaceful protest;
7. Urges China to put an immediate end to the suppression and intimidation of peaceful protesters and to guarantee fundamental rights for everyone; calls on the Chinese authorities to immediately release all protesters wrongfully detained; demands that all data recently collected about peaceful protesters be deleted and not used in any future cases; requests that family members of all those deprived of liberty be notified of their whereabouts and the charges brought against them;
8. Recognises the challenge of designing a COVID-19 policy with the right balance between protecting public health and protecting rights and freedoms; recalls the

¹ <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/uyghur/urumqi-fire-12022022172846.html>.

² Texts adopted, P9_TA(2022)0237.

importance of proportionality; notes the recent lifting of some of the most oppressive COVID-19 restrictions in China;

9. Notes the fact that the protest movement has united people from very different backgrounds and has taken place nationwide; highlights the remarkable fact that inter-ethnic solidarity has been expressed with the victims of the fire in Xinjiang, since China's Han population has not previously reacted significantly to the terrible fate of the Uyghurs over the past six years;
10. Calls on the Chinese and local authorities to put an end to the repression of Uyghurs and recalls that the Uyghurs in the region have been subjected to intense surveillance, forced labour, involuntary sterilisations and birth prevention measures, among other rights abuses, which amount to crimes against humanity and represent a serious risk of genocide; welcomes, in this regard, the Commission proposal to ban products made using forced labour from entering the EU market;
11. Strongly condemns the extensive use of mass surveillance and the current censorship of social networks; urges the Chinese authorities to put an end to these violations of fundamental rights to privacy and freedom of expression and to the manipulation of information on social networks;
12. Condemns the fact that Chinese technology companies TikTok and Tencent are working with the Chinese Government to gather evidence on the identity of protesters to enable their arrest and are censoring the internet; calls on European pension funds to divest from Chinese companies that undermine human rights;
13. Expresses its deep concern over the conduct of Apple Inc. in China during the protests, as it effectively worked hand in glove with the Chinese Communist Party to suppress the dissemination of footage of the peaceful anti-lockdown protests by disabling the AirDrop function on its devices in China; notes that this function had enabled the protesters to share footage and organise the protests without using Wi-Fi, which is under constant surveillance and control by the Chinese Communist Party; stresses that the fact that companies can be held hostage by the Chinese Communist Party and enable ruthless human rights violations should be a wake-up call for western governments to put forward legislation that would encourage western companies to double down on their efforts to reshore production from China;
14. Reiterates its concerns about the fact that the Chinese authorities did not allow UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet, during her visit to China, to have full access to independent civil society organisations and human rights defenders; reiterates its call on the Chinese authorities to allow the same free, meaningful and unhindered access for independent journalists, international observers and investigative bodies, including, in particular, the mandate holders of the UN Human Rights Council Special Procedures and the EU Special Representative for Human Rights; supports the call issued by 50 United Nations human rights experts for the establishment of a special mandate at the UN Human Rights Council to monitor and report on human rights conditions across China; calls for the EU and its Member States to continue to work with like-minded partners towards the establishment of an investigative mechanism at the UN Human Rights Council to monitor, assess and publicly report on serious human rights violations across China;

15. Urges the EU and the Member States to provide protection and support to human rights and democracy activists in China, in particular by reaching out to the local and national authorities and applying in full the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders and other relevant EU policies, including the new EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy; welcomes the continuation of the established bilateral EU-US Dialogue on China, in particular the statement that ‘the United States and European Union have never been more aligned on our strategic outlooks’;
16. Calls on the EU and other international organisations to monitor and assess how China’s responses to these protests align with international human rights standards and its obligations under international human rights law; stresses the importance of the EU Delegation in Beijing continuing to monitor the detention of peaceful protesters and any trials of those being prosecuted for exercising their right to freedom of peaceful assembly and expression, applying in full the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders and other relevant EU policies;
17. Calls on VP/HR Josep Borrell to follow up, with concrete steps, the recent European Council discussions by intensifying discussions at the level of Member States’ foreign affairs ministers; calls on the EEAS and the Commission to set up a permanent discussion on China under the Asia-Oceania Working Party; welcomes the decision to extend the sanctions in response to human rights violations in Xinjiang until 8 December 2023; reiterates its call for additional EU sanctions targeting Chinese officials and entities responsible for crimes against humanity; encourages EU Member State authorities to consider prosecuting Chinese officials deemed responsible for crimes against humanity, on the basis of the principle of universal jurisdiction;
18. Expresses its deep concerns about the recent revelations regarding the presence of Chinese overseas police service stations in numerous EU Member States and around the world; calls on the Commission, the Council and national law enforcement agencies to ensure, as a matter of urgency, good coordination in order to shed light on these practices, take appropriate action and close down all Chinese overseas police service stations; calls on the EU and its Member States, in coordination with like-minded partners, to identify and close down any avenues facilitating China’s campaigns of transnational repression, in particular against members of its diaspora;
19. Urges the Member States to end all their extradition agreements with China and Hong Kong; urges further the Member States to exercise caution when cooperating in international law enforcement forums such as INTERPOL and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime; calls further on the Member States to properly ensure the security of Chinese refugees under their jurisdiction in order to avoid their capture or their being ‘persuaded to return’ or lured into a non-EU country from which they could easily be repatriated to China;
20. Calls on all members of the international community and all stakeholders to address the issue of freedom of expression when engaging with the People’s Republic of China; welcomes the fact that European Council President Charles Michel raised the issue of the protests with Xi Jinping; calls for unconditional readiness to resume the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue, which has not taken place for more than three years; also notes that all European leaders should clearly communicate to the Chinese authorities the EU’s determination to react to an escalation of the repression against protesters by

raising the issue in international organisations and to possibly impose additional sanctions, if necessary;

21. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the United Nations Secretary-General, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Government and Parliament of the People's Republic of China, and all ambassadors of the People's Republic of China in EU Member States.