Rights Group Slams China for 'Forcibly Disappearing' Activist

Human Rights Watch is urging China to release an activist who was "forcibly disappeared" while trying to participate in a United Nations review of Beijing's human rights record.

Cao Shunli has not been seen since September 14, when media reports say she was interrogated and detained at the Beijing airport. She was one of several Chinese activists prevented from flying to Geneva for a workshop on international human rights.

The activists were trying to help the government draft an official report to the *U.N. Human Rights Council*.
The Geneva-based body is conducting its Universal Periodic Review of China's rights record, as it does with every country every four years.

Under the council's rules, countries are encouraged to allow public participation in the drafting of their reports. Beijing argues it has met those requirements by seeking "broad public support" on the website of its foreign ministry.

However, *Human Rights Watch* says China's "systematic suppression of activists trying to take part in these human rights reviews" represent a violation of the rules and are "eroding the integrity of the U.N.'s top human rights review process."

The group said in a statement Wednesday the moves were part of a wider crackdown on government critics and that since February, Beijing has "arbitrarily detained at least 56 activists, taken into custody critics and online opinion leaders, and increased control on social media, online expression, and public activism."

Critics have said these and other alleged rights violations mean China should not be allowed to serve on the *U.N. Human Rights Council*. Beijing has announced plans to run in a November election to fill one of the council's 47 seats for a three-year period beginning in 2014.

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See: *[Appeal Against China's Membership of U.N. Human Rights Council](#)*

Cao Shunli and others protest in front of Chinese Foreign Affairs Department in Beijing on 19th June 2013. (screenshot)