



Speech at the 6th annual briefing on Human Rights Council Candidates hosted by UN Watch and Human Rights Foundation

November 4, 2013, UN Headquarters, New York

At about 9:00pm, September 24, I was on the phone with Ms. Zhang Jing in China, the wife of the street vendor Xia Junfeng. Four years ago, Xia Junfeng, acting in self-defense, stabbed two para-police who were beating him and taking his things. She and their son had just had the last meeting with Xia Junfeng who was that morning notified he was to be executed the same day. She cried to me for help. At the same time, the online community expressed its outrage over the imminent execution, yet nobody could figure out how to save Xia's life, which would be taken away in roughly an hour. I was in such a hurry to search for any clues from all the business cards of those parliamentary and executive leaders I knew in the world democracies, although I knew it would be almost impossible for any of them to do anything about it.

While it is debatable whether the world democracies should intervene in such controversial criminal cases in China as that of Xia, it is unacceptable for them to withdraw from their responsibility to press China on its human rights record when an opportunity arises for them to do so with the international lawful right and capability without risking being charged of "interfering with internal affairs". Such an opportunity will come up next Tuesday when the UN General Assembly will vote to choose new members on its Human Rights Council.

Vote No!

Before I continue, I want to emphasize that I am a citizen of China. As such, I am not a foreigner speaking to "interfere with China's internal affairs." Rather, I am voicing the concerns of a Chinese citizen, concerns that should be heard by the international community. If you will, I am a citizen of China trying to interfere with foreign affairs. But I am not alone. In my hand are a

copy of nearly 10,000 names of Chinese, Tibetans, Uyghurs and Mongolians who urge foreign governments to vote "NO" on China's membership on the UN Human Rights Council.

In the course of its affairs as a great nation, China has left large fingerprints on the canvas of human events. With regard to human rights, these fingerprints place China at the scene of so many activities, both domestic and international, that are so outside the norm of civilized nations, that its membership in the Nations Human Rights Council defies logic, reason and common sense.

To put it simply, a country's qualification for UNHRC membership is based on how it treats its own people and how it helps promote the human rights of other peoples around the world. Unfortunately, China has failed on both accounts.

In considering China's record, we need look no further than these individuals, groups, events, and policies:

The Tiananmen Massacre, the Tiananmen mothers; Liu Xiaobo and his wife Liu Xia, Wang Bingzhang, Dhondup Wangchen, Ghetret Niyaz, Hada; Tibetans, Uyghurs, Mongolians; House Churches, Falun Gong, Forced Abortions, Forced Evictions, Forced Disappearances, Black Jails; ...

Almost a quarter century has passed since the Tiananmen Massacre, yet the Chinese government has never admitted its wrongdoing, and has continually repressed any individuals and groups who have been working to expose the truth and commemorate the victims.

The government that massacred its own citizens in the heart of its capital is the very same government who today continues to routinely imprison, torture, and exile its best citizens for no other reason than exercising the right to speak freely. It is the same government who pursues cultural genocide on Tibetans, Uyghurs and Mongolians and religious purges on Christians and Falun Gong practitioners, and whose foreign policies and models of repression enable the morally bankrupt regimes of North Korea, Iran, and Syria to suck freedom and dignity from its people. Its paranoia and insecurity drive it to extend its tyranny beyond its borders. Its disdain for human dignity now openly challenges the very foundation of civilization itself.

Some people have hoped and maybe continue to hope that the inclusion of China into the UN Human Rights Council will behave it. But China's track record from when it previously served on the Council was dismal one. Thousands of instances of illegal repression happened from 2006 to 2012 when China was a member of the UN Human Rights Council. During that time, China became the only country detaining a Nobel laureate and its failed ethnic policies led to a series of deplorable incidents. There was the Lhasa incident on March 14, 2008 in Tibet, the July 5 Urumqi Incident in 2009, the May 25 Inner Mongolia Incident in 2011, and more than 100 Tibetan self-immolations.

In the most recent months, while China was bidding to become a UN Human Rights Council member, the government has intensified its suppression of online freedom of speech and of the citizen movement. It arrested and jailed about a couple of hundreds activists.

Fox to guard the henhouse

Therefore, voting to put China on UNHRC would be like picking the fox to guard the hen house — while he was still wiping the feathers off his mouth from his last meal.

We know that any candidate needs 97 votes at UNGA to be elected to sit on UNHRC. If each democracy says no, the chances for China will be zero. Such a vote will test any democratic country's commitment to democracy and human rights. Therefore, we call on all democracies not to humiliate your great country and people, and choose to cast a "No" vote on China. After all, how could democracies vote with a straight face to place China, the world leading human rights violator on the body charged with protecting human rights? Unlike intervening with the case of Xia Junfeng, opposing China's candidacy for UNHRC is the kind of clear step that is needed. This is the least the world democracies can and should do.