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Answer given by High Representative/Vice-President Borrell
on behalf of the European Commission
(17.5.2021)

The EU, in full compliance with international human rights law, opposes and condemns the use of torture and other inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment by state and non-state actors, wherever it takes place and whatever its form, using all tools at its disposal.

The EU has repeatedly called on China to comply with its obligations under national and international law to respect and protect human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, especially in Xinjiang and in Tibet. The High Representative/Vice-President (HR/VP) reiterated this call in his intervention during the 46th United Nations Human Rights Council¹. EU leaders have used every opportunity to raise the situation of ethnic Tibetans with the Chinese leadership, including at the EU-China Summit on 22 June 2020² and at the EU-China leaders' meeting on 14 September 2020³.

Following the release of human rights defender Tashi Wangchuk, the HR/VP's Spokesperson issued a statement on 29 January 2021, referring to 'numerous related cases of detention, disappearances and deaths in detention' concerning citizens of Tibetan descent in China. The statement called for the immediate and unconditional release of all those currently imprisoned in connection with the exercise of their rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as for fair trial and due process, and decent treatment, free from torture and ill treatment for those in detention⁴.

Diplomatic outreach remains of utmost importance in handling specific cases of arbitrary detention, forced disappearance or torture and ill-treatment. Individual cases will continue to be raised in bilateral meetings with Chinese counterparts, as well as publicly and in multilateral fora.

¹ Video message of 23 February 2021: <http://webtv.un.org/watch/european-union-high-level-segment-5th-meeting-46th-regular-session-human-rights-council-/6234654053001/?term=&lan=English>

² <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/06/22/eu-china-summit-defending-eu-interests-and-values-in-a-complex-and-vital-partnership/>

³ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2020/09/14/eu-china-leaders-meeting-upholding-eu-values-and-interests-at-the-highest-level-joint-press-release-by-president-michel-president-von-der-leyen-and-chancellor-merkel/>

⁴ https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/92276/china-statement-spokesperson-release-human-rights-defender-tashi-wangchuk_en