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Declaration by High Representative Catherine Ashton on behalf of the European Union regarding the treatment of human rights defenders and their relatives in China

The EU has welcomed recent decisions by the Chinese authorities to deepen the reform of the justice system and to uphold the Constitution and laws to protect human rights.

However, in recent weeks, the EU has become seriously concerned about the trials, convictions, detention and house arrests of a number of Chinese human rights defenders. Some, like Xu Zhiyong, were peacefully advocating social justice and a society based on the rule of law, and more transparency in the fight against corruption. Some, like Ilham Tohti, were promoting the human rights of minorities, while others, like Cao Shunli, were supporting the participation of independent civil society in the UN Universal Periodic Review of China.

The EU is also concerned by the health conditions of some prominent human rights defenders and their families, who are under house arrest or imprisoned, and not receiving appropriate independent medical treatment.

The EU urges China to implement the announcements made at the last Third Plenum of the 18th CPC, as well as the pledges before the Human Rights Council, by releasing all those imprisoned or detained for the peaceful expression of their views.
The Candidate Countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, Montenegro*, and Iceland+, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and the EFTA countries Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this declaration.

* The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

+ Iceland continues to be a member of the EFTA and of the European Economic Area.