

UN Human Rights High Commissioner condemned over China trip

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The United Nations' top human rights official, Michelle Bachelet, completed a six-day visit to China on Saturday with a press conference that offered muted criticisms of the country's lack of basic democratic rights across a range of areas, including its labour laws and heavy use of the death sentence, and state policy in Hong Kong, Tibet and Xinjiang.

The trip, however, provoked a storm of criticism and denunciation for its failure to meet the propaganda requirements of Washington and its allies for a denunciation of the Chinese government over its treatment of the Uyghur minority in Xinjiang in the country's west.

While stopping short of branding Bachelet a Chinese stooge, American officials, Uyghur exile organisations and the Western media dismissed the trip as a stage-managed affair that amounted to a cover-up and failed to aggressively expose China's human rights abuses in Xinjiang.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken expressed concern that “the conditions Beijing authorities imposed on the visit did not enable a complete and independent assessment of the human rights environment in the PRC, including in Xinjiang, where genocide and crimes against humanity are ongoing.”

Washington's denunciations of China for genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang are the centrepiece of its hypocritical campaign against China over “human rights.” As with the illegal US-led invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, the vilification of Beijing is the propaganda component of American imperialism's economic and military preparations for conflict with China.

Blinken's “concern” over Bachelet's visit followed days after a keynote speech in which he declared China to be “the most serious long-term challenge to the

international order”—that is, the post-World War II order dominated by the US.

The declaration that China is engaged in “genocide” of the Uyghurs in Xinjiang is a big lie—endlessly repeated without a shred of evidence through the mouthpieces of Western propaganda. Insofar that any attempt is made to substantiate the allegation of “genocide,” it is based on the tendentious claims of right-wing academics that China's crude population controls are leading to the elimination of the Uyghur minority—even though similar heavy-handed methods are applied across China.

As Bachelet began her tour of China, the far-right, US-based Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation published documents purportedly hacked from police computer servers in Xinjiang, which it claimed include speeches by senior Chinese officials, local policing protocols, spreadsheets with records on more than 23,000 detainees, and images of people detained in 2018.

Adrian Zenz, who received and released the documents, is also responsible for the bogus “research” that centrally underpins the allegations of “genocide” and assertions that a million Uyghurs have been forcibly detained in re-education camps. He is a right-wing German commentator and born-again Christian who is closely connected to a network of anti-communist European and American think tanks and, undoubtedly through them, to the foreign policy and intelligence establishments.

Blinken's “concerns” over Bachelet's trip were amplified in more strident terms by Sophie Richardson, China Director of the US-based Human Rights Watch—an “independent” organisation that closely mirrors the “human rights” campaigns of the US State Department.

Richardson declared that she was “appalled and alarmed” that “the world’s leading human rights diplomat just failed to challenge the second most powerful government on earth over some of the gravest crimes under international human rights law.” She continued: “It is unacceptable to fail to robustly investigate crimes against humanity.”

Luke de Pulford, coordinator of the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China, lashed out at Bachelet, saying her trip “hit all the wrong notes.” He continued: “The whole debacle represents an appalling dereliction of duty and betrayal of Uyghurs.” The Alliance is an international grouping of politicians that includes some of the most rabid anti-China hawks such as US Senators Marco Rubio and Bob Menendez.

Uyghur exiles associated with the CIA-backed World Uyghur Congress and American Uyghur Association have also joined the chorus of denunciation. Dilxat Raxit, spokesperson for the World Uyghur Congress, declared that “resignation is the only meaningful thing she [Bachelet] can do for the [UN] Human Rights Council.”

Bachelet’s visit was the first by a UN High Commissioner for human rights in 17 years and was the subject of lengthy negotiations with the Chinese government. Her trip included two major cities in Xinjiang—Kashgar and Urumqi—with a visit to a prison and a former Vocational Education and Training Centre (VETC) in Kashgar. Bachelet met with Foreign Minister Wang Yi and online with President Xi Jinping, as well as civil society organisations, academics, and community and religious leaders.

Seeking to counter criticism of the trip, Bachelet stated: “I would say that, to that prison, the access was pretty open, pretty transparent. We asked many, many questions, and they answered all of them.” While subject to COVID-19 restrictions, she said: “With the people we were able to speak to, it was in an unsupervised manner.”

The Chinese government’s harsher measures in Xinjiang are imposed in the name of countering terrorism and extremism following a series of attacks by Uyghur separatists on Han Chinese. Bachelet raised concerns about allegations of the use of force at the vocational centres and unduly severe restrictions on religious practice. “It is critical that counter-terrorism responses do not result in human rights violations,” she

said.

Also in response to her critics, Bachelet explained that a thorough and detailed investigation was never going to be possible and was not the purpose of her six-day trip. She suggested that Chinese authorities could “potentially rethink policies that we believe may impact negatively on human rights”—touching on Tibet, Hong Kong, the death penalty, and the implementation of labour laws among other areas.

In broad outline, Bachelet voiced the anti-China “human rights” agenda that the US and its allies have been advancing for years. The public attacks on her trip for not being sufficiently strident and condemning reflect the advanced character of the US-led confrontation with China. Even as it is pursuing a proxy war against Russia in Ukraine, the US is escalating its efforts to isolate, encircle and weaken China in preparation for conflict.

A question posed at Bachelet’s press conference on Saturday pointed to the utter hypocrisy of the US “human rights” campaigns against China and other countries. A reporter from state-owned China Central Television asked Bachelet whether her office planned to investigate human-rights violations by the US, noting the recent school shooting in Uvalde, Texas. Bachelet simply noted that her office had published a report on systemic racism involving US police.

Far more egregious human rights abuses and crimes against humanity can be laid at the door of US imperialism. In the name of the war on terror, for instance, the US invaded and occupied Afghanistan and Iraq leading to the deaths of hundreds of thousands of civilians and levelling social and physical infrastructure. The US not only carried out systematic torture and set up the hellhole of Guantanamo Bay, but made deep inroads into democratic rights within the US in the name of combatting terrorism.

It goes without saying that no action has been taken by the UN or the UN Human Rights Commission over these monstrous crimes. China, along with all the major powers, gave its tacit support for these illegal wars.



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