

Human Rights Watch

Torture, Former Combatants, Political Prisoners, Terror Suspects, & Terrorists

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/12/09/china-un-review-slams-lack-progress-torture>

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(Geneva) The outcome [report](#) of [Chinas](#) fifth review under the Convention against Torture highlights the absence of accountability and need for broad legal reform to eradicate [torture](#) in the country, Human Rights Watch said today. Chinas review, under the United Nations Committee Against Torture, concludes at the UN Human Rights Council on December 9, 2015, in Geneva. Many of the committees recommendations have been raised in previous reviews.

More than a dozen pages of fundamental and longstanding recommendations show that Chinas compliance with the UN review has been at best superficial, said [Sophie Richardson](#), China director at Human Rights Watch. China has shown no serious willingness to adopt the independent experts recommendations to eradicate torture and ill-treatment in detention. In doing so, the Chinese government rejects the core purpose of UN reviews, and deepens the pain of torture survivors. The committees concluding observations document, reflecting a year-long process, praises the Chinese government for a half-dozen steps, primarily the adoption of specific legal provisions to combat torture and ill-treatment. But it then addresses at unusual length and in considerable detail principal subjects of concern on issues such as the definition of torture as China has still not adopted a definition that fully meets international standards and the persistent problems of prolonged pre-trial detention, restrictions on access to lawyers, and the shortfall in medical professionals independent of the police and detention centers.

The report details the Chinese governments unwillingness to provide critical data about the number of allegations of [torture in detention](#) and the efficacy of the [exclusionary rule](#) in protecting criminal suspects from abuse. It raises concerns about the [crackdown on human rights lawyers](#), and about the torture of 1989 [Tiananmen Square protesters](#), and refugees [forcibly returned to North Korea](#).

In the [interactive dialogue](#), held on November 17-18, 2015, the Chinese delegation refused to answer critical questions from the committee; claimed that the term torture was difficult to translate into Chinese; and tried to assert that tiger chairs devices used, according to Human Rights Watch research, to immobilize suspects for days at a time and sometimes longer are in fact used for suspects comfort and safety.

Chinese authorities should not only vigorously pursue the committees detailed, thorough recommendations, but should also be pressed to report to the committee and other UN human rights mechanisms on pressing cases raised in the review: accountability for the more than 40 human rights lawyers and activists [being detained](#), many of them in unknown locations; the need for investigations into the deaths of peaceful government critics including [Cao Shunli](#) and [Tenzin Delek Rinpoche](#); investigations into those who brutally tortured victims like [Nian Bin](#); and the harassment of activists from China who wanted to participate in the CAT review.

China ratified the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in 1988. Parties to the convention are required to submit reports every four years on any new measures taken [to implement the treaty] and such other reports as the Committee may request.

These extraordinary recommendations reflect the UN Committees deep commitment to ending torture and providing support to torture survivors in China, said Richardson. But the question remains: Does Beijing share that commitment?

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