



Media release

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China and Switzerland conduct human rights dialogue

The 15th round of human rights dialogue between Switzerland and China took place from 2 to 3 March in Bern. The confidential discussions allowed an open, constructive and mutually critical debate to take place on the human rights situation in both countries. The focus was on human rights issues such as the judicial and penal system, including the death penalty, the rights of minorities and strengthening the international human rights protection system.

The priority topics discussed in this year's round of dialogue were the judicial and penal system and the rights of minorities. Switzerland expressed its concern over the criminal prosecution of lawyers and human rights defenders and the allegations of torture connected with these cases, underlining the procedural obligations such as access to and choice of legal counsel and family notification. During the discussions, a number of individual cases illustrating these issues were raised including cases concerning the protection of minority rights – particularly worrying in Tibet and Xinjiang. The dialogue also covered both countries' engagement at the multilateral level and in the UN Human Rights Council in particular. It was noted that strengthening the human rights pillar within the UN system and the participation of civil society in this and other international mechanisms was key. Switzerland also suggested once again to the Chinese government that the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights should visit China soon.

The occasion was also used to discuss technical cooperation in the field of human rights and the further development of Switzerland and China's long-standing exchange of expertise in criminal justice.

The state secretary of the FDFA, Pascale Baeriswyl, received the Chinese delegation on 3 March. With its focus on the Swiss criminal justice system, the delegation completed its stay with a visit to the cantonal police of Bern and the prison in Burgdorf. These visits illustrated how human rights protection for people in police custody or detention is implemented in Switzerland, and helped both countries to examine the specific details of these challenges in Switzerland and China.

The bilateral human rights dialogue was begun in 1991.

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