

Follow up – Additional evidence regarding:

Ethics complaint to World Health Organization filed February 26, 2020 regarding WHO 'goodwill ambassador' James Chau's unfitness for role.

Attention: WHO Office of Compliance, Risk Management and Ethics (CRE) - ethicsoffice@who.int

Attention: Margaret Harris (media) - harrism@who.int (mediainquiries@who.int)

Attention: Ruel E. Serrano (WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific) - serranor@who.int

Attention: Director-General Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

Submitted June 16, 2020 by Safeguard Defenders

Reasons for additional submission

Ethics complaint sent to WHO and complaint to UNAIDS

As you are aware, on February 26, Safeguard Defenders drew your attention to Human Rights violations perpetrated by one of your Goodwill Ambassadors, journalist James Chau. Since that initial complaint, new information directly related to his unfitness for the role of 'goodwill ambassador' has emerged and which has direct bearing on the internal investigation that the WHO has stated it has launched.

Due to the frequent public mentions by Chau himself and in public descriptions of him as UNAIDS 'goodwill ambassador', and because UNAIDS is bound by the same code of ethics and conduct as the WHO, we Safeguard Defenders, believing Chau to hold the claimed UNAIDS position, on June 3 [filed a complaint to UNAIDS](#) questioning for his suitability for this position to be reviewed, our reasons being exactly the same as those cited in our earlier complaint to the WHO.

Additional breach of ethics by James Chau

However, our organization has recently learned that James Chau has been **falsely** presenting himself, on a number of prominent websites and platforms, including his own, as holding a UN title which he does not in fact hold. Up until this month, James Chau has been impersonating the role of a 'goodwill ambassador' for UNAIDS.

We have learned this from none other than UNAIDS itself. After we repeatedly reached out to UNAIDS over email and phone, to our surprise the agency stated to us on 9 June, "*His role ended in 2016 by mutual agreement when he was appointed as a Goodwill Ambassador for WHO*".

Not only does UNAIDS state categorically that his role ended some four years ago, but that it was done by *mutual agreement* – confirming that Chau knows his position was terminated at that time.

In spite of this, Chau has actively and intentionally continued to claim this title with a UN organ that he knows he has not possessed for the past four years.

Safeguard Defenders (and a number of other entities) have contacted Chau with request for comment via several of his communication platforms but he has not responded.

There are in fact signs that he is busy trying to erase and conceal his history. Knowing he is under investigation and public scrutiny, he has recently removed the UNAIDS reference under his byline on US-China Focus, and he has recently taken down his personal website. It is possible other websites proclaiming his imposed UNAIDS role will soon start to be scrubbed. Indeed some of the hypertext links referenced below might no longer work by the time that the WHO reads this letter. But Safeguard Defenders has preserved copies of the cached versions of the respective websites, along with screenshots and other proofs that have been collected exposing Chau's dishonesty and lack of integrity.

Basis for complaint

We believe the facts presented below ("Our investigation's details") constitute an additional serious breach of ethics under the WHO's [Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct](#), which, as pointed out in our original complaint, is stated to be binding for collaborators (that is to say non-staff members) such as 'goodwill ambassadors'.

Article 4.1.3 of the Code, notably states:

"No abuse of authority/power 26. The abuse of authority/power is the improper use of a position of influence, power or authority by an individual towards others.

Abuse of authority can include a one-time incident or a series of incidents"

On that basis, in dealing with Goodwill ambassador James Chau, the WHO may:

- terminate any contract with the contractor or collaborator immediately upon written notice to the contractor or collaborator, without any liability for termination charges or any other liability of any kind; and/or
- exclude the contractor or collaborator from participating in any ongoing or future tenders and/or entering into any future contractual or collaborative relationships with the WHO.

We also wish to draw your attention to the additional damages that this newly uncovered breach of ethics will have on the image of absolutely all UN 'goodwill ambassadors' and on UN agencies per se. After all, James Chau's well-documented and undeniable violations of human rights by packaging and broadcasting forced TV confessions from untried prisoners, now all exposed in the media, are having a powerful impact on UNAIDS as an entity, while Chau himself in truth has not had any official relationship with that agency for many years already, despite claiming to represent it.

Our investigation's details

Various profiles of Chau, as well as descriptions of him on various platforms, including self-descriptions, regularly indicate, sometimes subtly and sometimes not so subtly, that he holds two official UN positions, namely as 'goodwill ambassador' for both the WHO and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS). Some of these profiles clearly imply those are both roles that he **currently** holds: On the website for The Global Forum for Young Leaders, where he is listed as a 'councillor', it says, "In 2009, he was named UNAIDS Goodwill Ambassador, and in 2016 he was appointed to **an additional role** as WHO Goodwill Ambassador".¹

More profiles seem to indicate that Chau is a 'goodwill ambassador' for both UNAIDS and WHO, but most of them are vague. But a lifestyle puff piece by a Hong Kong online magazine, *Prestige*, dated 2 January 2020, carrying a [long interview and profile](#), goes further. Based on this interview, it states first that Chau "is closely involved with the UNAIDS programme". He also claims he tried to "offer value" by his work with UNAIDS. And then finally, the profile states outright that "Chau is a Goodwill Ambassador for both **UNAIDS and the WHO**".

A review of sources where James Chau has evidently written his own descriptions, the fact that he claims to be a current UNAIDS Ambassador becomes undeniable. In a [recent OpEd](#) in India's newspaper, *The Hindu*, dated 6 February 2020, the byline reads "James Chau is the host of *The China Current* with James Chau, and a Goodwill Ambassador **for the WHO and UNAIDS.**"

The "China Current" is James Chau's own, one-person media platform. In the [about section](#) of its Youtube channel, run by James Chau, it states "He [Chau] serves as World Health Organization Goodwill Ambassador **and UNAIDS Goodwill Ambassador.**" The account is the official one, tied to the program's email cc@chinacurrent.com. On the [official website](#), it is stated, again somewhat vaguely, that "Since 2009, he has also served as a UNAIDS Goodwill Ambassador".

Chau is Editor-at-large at "China-US Focus", a web platform, and his byline there is "Host of *The China Current*, Goodwill Ambassador for the **WHO and UNAIDS**", as here seen on [21 February 2020](#) and [11 March 2020](#) most recently. The oldest entry is from [28 May 2018](#).

If the argument were to be made that all of those mentions were simply true at a time and stopped being true afterwards, it would not hold for very long, for several reasons. First, the sheer number of occurrences is a sign that it is no accident or oversight. Secondly, that in many instances those mentions were written by Chau himself is another. Finally, some of the occurrences were published years after his status was terminated, which was in 2016 according to UNAIDS very own secretariat.

And the following occurrence of the many mentions of his status as UNAIDS Goodwill Ambassador dispels any remaining doubts on Chau's deliberate impersonation of the role from 2016 until now.

On the Chinese social media platform known as Weibo, [UN News](#) posted an item on **27 September 2019**, an [interview with James Chau](#), which refers to him as UNAIDS (and WHO) 'goodwill ambassador'. When UNAIDS was asked about this, it said it would contact UN News to correct this error. And yet, Chau still left a comment on the very same day claiming "***I am so honoured to have the chance to serve as an ambassador for WHO and UNAIDS.***"

¹ <https://www.oneyoungworld.com/counsellors/james-chau>

We look forward to the WHO accordingly expanding its internal investigation in line with the same code, section 3.3.3. and its article 19 which specifies it will [take] *appropriate administrative action including disciplinary sanctions in cases of corroborated allegations of misconduct*, and to do so in a timely manner, and be as public and transparent about the process as possible. We also look forward to that transparency and timeliness required of the WHO in its own regulations, so that you will complete the investigation without delay.

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Note: Since Safeguard Defenders as well as journalists started contacting James Chau for comments on this situation, some of the references have started to be removed. Evidence, screenshots, and cached versions of websites have been collected as evidence.

Safeguard Defenders

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