

*'At the moment, we don't know his whereabouts, which prison he is in, or even if he is alive.'*

*'On December 26, 2017, my sister took a flight from Malaysia to our home town. We have not heard from her since.'*

*'For more than 10 years, we have not been able to be together as a family... each time he disappears, our only hope is that he is able to live.'*

Beginning in 2011, the international community has dedicated **30 August** as an opportunity to raise awareness of enforced disappearances. The stories above are just a few examples of hundreds or thousands of lives affected by this crime.

Today, we remember those gone, and those who are left behind. It is a day to press governments to step up efforts to prevent and investigate disappearances, and support families looking for their loved ones. It is a day to stand in solidarity with all victims of this crime, and call on authorities to hold those responsible to account.

Globally, however, enforced disappearances continue, affecting those most vulnerable, the marginalised or those targeted by state and non-state actors. Often, they can continue is because governments fail to ensure that their citizens are protected, or struggle to combat the crime. In China, however, enforced disappearance has become a tactic explicitly used by the Chinese Communist Party to stifle criticism and threaten dissent.

Put simply, state policies are designed to permit disappearances and perpetuate impunity. This includes the persistent erosion of due process guarantees, such as blocking access by lawyers and family to those detained; extensive use of legalised forms of incommunicado detention, including 'Residential Surveillance in a Designated Location'; a system of 'retention in custody' called *liuzhi* for Communist Party members and public sector workers; the transition of released prisoners into house arrest or other forms of 'non-freedom'; and the widespread use of re-education camps in Xinjiang.

**Today, we call on the Chinese government to stop all forms of enforced disappearance.**

Numerous United Nations human rights experts have raised concerns about the practice of enforced disappearance, including the specific use against Tibetan and Uyghur populations, and against human rights defenders. The Working Group on Arbitrary Detention has noted that these practices could possibly constitute crimes against humanity. Standing with the victims of disappearance is not just about justice. It is about standing up for truth, human dignity, and love.

In addition to urging China to change its practices, including by repealing legal provisions allowing for enforced disappearance in all its forms, we call on the United Nations and Secretary General Antonio Guterres to step up efforts to ensure access by independent human rights experts to all places of detention in China, in particular in Tibetan and Uyghur areas, and to urge China to bring its laws and practices in line with its international commitments.

We urge all States to ensure that victims of enforced disappearance by the Chinese state, whether within the People's Republic of China or elsewhere, are protected; can seek remedy; and can exercise their right to know the truth about the status of their loved ones.

**Signatories:**

Belgium Uyghur Association  
Campaign for Uyghurs  
Casa Tibet Panamá  
China Human Rights Lawyers Concern Group  
ChinaAid  
ChinaChange  
CSW (Christian Solidarity Worldwide)  
Den norske Tibet-komité  
Free Tibet  
Friends of Tibet New Zealand  
International Campaign for Tibet  
International Service for Human Rights  
International Tibet Network Secretariat  
Norwegian Uyghur Committee  
Reporters Sans Frontières / Reporters Without Borders  
Safeguard Defenders  
Save Tibet Austria  
Students for a Free Tibet  
Tibet Justice Center  
Tibet Support Committee, Denmark  
Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization  
US-Tibet Committee  
Uyghur American Association  
Uyghur Human Rights Project  
Uyghur Times  
Uyghur Transitional Justice Database  
World Uyghur Congress