

**Submission to the Committee on the Rights of the Child
For the preparation of the List of Issues for the People's Republic of China**

Submitted by: International Service for Human Rights

Date: August 2026

Executive summary

This submission draws primarily on United Nations (UN) documentation and recommendations issued since 2018 that remain relevant to the rights of children in the People's Republic of China. It is intended to assist the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in preparing a focused List of Issues by identifying recurring concerns, recommendations and gaps in publicly available information.

The submission addresses four of the thematic clusters used by the CRC: general measures of implementation (cluster 1), civil and political rights (cluster 3), family environment and alternative care (cluster 5), and education, leisure and cultural activities (cluster 10).

Under each cluster, it maps relevant recommendations and concerns raised by Treaty Bodies, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and Special Procedures, with particular attention to children in mainland China, the Uyghur region (Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region), Tibet and Hong Kong.

The proposed List of Issues questions prioritise requests for disaggregated data, clarification of applicable laws and policies, and measures taken to implement previous UN recommendations. Particular attention is also given to the implementation of the 2026 Law of the People's Republic of China on Promoting Ethnic Unity and Progress and its possible implications for children.

Methodology

This submission is based on desk research. ISHR reviewed the CRC's previous concluding observations, China's combined fifth and sixth periodic report, concluding observations and decisions of other Treaty Bodies, the assessment of the OHCHR concerning the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, and publicly available communications issued by Special Procedures.

ISHR's repositories of United Nations recommendations on China and Hong Kong were used as the principal research indexes. The China repository compiles recommendations issued since 2018 and organises them by topic and affected community.¹

Recommendations were selected where they concern children or have a foreseeable impact on children's rights protected under the Convention.

Cluster 1: General measures of implementation

National security frameworks in mainland China and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region have consequences extending beyond persons formally investigated or detained. UN mechanisms have

¹ International Service for Human Rights, Repository of United Nations recommendations on human rights in China <https://ishr.ch/toolbox/resources/repository-of-united-nations-recommendations-on-human-rights-china/> and Repository of United Nations recommendations on human rights in Hong Kong <https://ishr.ch/toolbox/resources/repository-of-united-nations-recommendations-on-human-rights-in-hong-kong/>

documented the large-scale detention of Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim minorities under broadly defined concepts of terrorism and extremism, including for conduct connected with religious and cultural expression. The detention or disappearance of parents may result in family separation, loss of parental care and restrictions on communication and travel, while security-related measures may also shape children's education, access to information, language use and religious and cultural participation. In Hong Kong, national security legislation has similarly affected the environment in which children learn, obtain information and participate in school and community life.

The 2026 Law on Promoting Ethnic Unity and Progress adds a need to examine how requirements concerning the national common language, shared national identity and parental responsibilities are implemented in schools and whether adequate safeguards protect children's languages, cultures, religions, and identities.

Past UN recommendations

On national security-related frameworks in mainland China and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region

- **Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2023)**
 - Refrain from persecuting and prosecuting human rights defenders and lawyers under broadly defined offences;
 - Take all necessary legislative and administrative measures to guarantee the full independence and impartiality of the judiciary.²
- **Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2022)**
 - Undertake a full review of the legal framework governing national security, counter-terrorism and minority rights;
 - Urgently repeal laws, policies and practices that discriminate against Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim minorities.³
- **Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (2022)**
 - Undertake a full review of the security, counter-terrorism and minority-rights framework.⁴
- **Special Procedures mandates (2022)**
 - Repeal the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Regulation on De-extremification;
 - Review the counter-terrorism framework and its definitions.⁵

On national security legislation in Hong Kong

- **Human Rights Committee (2022)**
 - Take concrete steps to repeal the current National Security Law and, in the meantime, refrain from applying it;
 - Repeal the sedition provisions under the Crimes Ordinance and refrain from using them to suppress the expression of critical and dissenting opinions; immediately stop applying the National Security Law and the implementation rules to sedition cases.⁶
- **Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2023)**
 - Cooperate with China to review the Law of the People's Republic of China on Safeguarding National Security in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (2020) to ensure the

² Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Concluding observations on China, E/C.12/CHN/CO/3, 22 March 2023, paras. 14 and 16.

³ OHCHR, Assessment of human rights concerns in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, 31 August 2022, para.151.

⁴ Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Decision 1 (108) on the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region under the early warning and urgent action procedure, 24 November 2022.

⁵ Special Procedures communication JAL CHN 12/2022, 19 December 2022.

⁶ Human Rights Committee, Concluding observations on Hong Kong, China, CCPR/C/CHN-HKG/CO/4, 11 November 2022, paras. 14 and 16.

full independence of the judiciary and to ensure that national security legislation is not arbitrarily used to interfere with it.⁷

- **Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2022)**

- Urgently repeal and independently review the 2020 National Security Law for compatibility with international human-rights law.⁸

- **Special Procedures (2024)**

- The mandates requested review of the Safeguarding National Security Ordinance, including its definitions of offences, penalties, procedural protections, executive powers and extraterritorial application, and asked how the legislation would be implemented consistently with international obligations concerning expression, association, peaceful assembly, privacy, due process and fair trial.⁹

Recent development: Law on Promoting Ethnic Unity and Progress

- The Law of the People's Republic of China on Promoting Ethnic Unity and Progress was adopted by the National People's Congress on 12 March 2026 and entered into force on 1 July 2026.
- The law makes the national common spoken and written language (Mandarin) the basic language of instruction. It requires education concerning a shared national community across schools, social practice and online education; assigns parents responsibilities concerning children's ideas and conduct; and provides for supervision and sanctions.¹⁰
- In April 2026, eight Special Procedures mandates transmitted a communication to China and warned that, in its national application, the law could "transform temporary or experimental regional measures into binding nationwide obligations" with serious implications for linguistic, cultural and religious rights and autonomy of ethnic groups and peoples, including Tibetans, Uyghurs, and Mongols".¹¹

Information gap

The available public UN documentation does not show how these legislation affecting children in mainland China and Hong Kong. The Committee should request evidence of implementation and its impacts on children.

The recommendations above demonstrate repeated concern across UN mechanisms regarding national security, counter-terrorism and counter-extremism frameworks; restrictions on independent civil society and human rights defenders; insufficient judicial safeguards; and the compatibility of national-security legislation in Hong Kong with international human rights standards.

However, the available public UN documentation does not provide a sufficiently child-specific account of the operation of these frameworks. In particular, it does not establish whether the State party has provided disaggregated data on children investigated, detained, prosecuted or subjected to legal, administrative or school disciplinary measures under national security or related provisions.

Proposed questions for the List of Issues

1. Please provide statistical data on persons under 18 years of age who have been investigated, arrested, detained, prosecuted, convicted or subjected to administrative measures under national security related provisions. Please provide separate data for mainland China and Hong Kong, disaggregated by age, gender, ethnicity, religion or belief, geographic location and legal basis.

⁷ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Concluding observations on China, E/C.12/CHN/CO/3, 22 March 2023, para. 101.

⁸ Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Concluding observations on the combined second and third periodic reports of China, CRPD/C/CHN/CO/2-3, 10 October 2022, para. 74.

⁹ Special Procedures communication OL CHN 5/2024, 22 March 2024.

¹⁰ Law on Promoting Ethnic Unity and Progress

¹¹ Special Procedures, joint observations on the Law on Promoting Ethnic Unity and Progress, JOL CHN 5/2026, 16 April 2026.

2. Please provide updated information on the measures taken to implement the recommendations of OHCHR and Treaty Bodies concerning the national security frameworks in mainland China and Hong Kong.

Cluster 3: Civil and political rights

Children's exercise of civil rights takes place principally through schools, online spaces, religious and cultural communities, student organisations and public activities. UN mechanisms have raised concerns regarding censorship, surveillance, restrictions on religious and cultural expression, and the application of national security measures to expression, association and peaceful assembly.

In Hong Kong, the Human Rights Committee expressed concern about the removal of books from public and school libraries on national security grounds and recommended that the authorities stop such censorship and reinstate removed materials. Restrictions applied through school rules, curriculum requirements, digital monitoring or disciplinary proceedings may affect children even where they are not subjected to criminal proceedings.

Past UN recommendations

On freedom of expression and access to information

- **Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2023)**
 - Ensure that surveillance, both online and offline, complies with strict tests of legality, necessity and proportionality, including for matters of national security, and does not infringe on the fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals, and immediately cease imposed co-habitation;
 - Respect the freedom indispensable for creative activity and the enjoyment of the benefits of scientific progress and its applications, including by ensuring that online and analogue censorship does not limit them.¹²
- **Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2022)**
 - re that persons with disabilities are able to enjoy the right to freedom of expression and opinion, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas, including in their cooperation with the United Nation.¹³
- **Human Rights Committee (2022)**
 - Stop applying national security and sedition legislation against journalists, politicians, academics, human rights defenders, students and members of the public exercising freedom of expression;
 - Discontinue related cases and provide adequate compensation;
 - Stop censoring books and other materials in public libraries, including school libraries.¹⁴
- **Special Procedures (2021)**
 - The mandates transmitted a communication concerning the disciplining of educators, restrictions on classroom discussion, textbook review and censorship, removal of critical-thinking components and the incorporation of national-security content across primary and secondary curricula.¹⁵

On freedom of association and peaceful assembly

- **Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2023)**

¹² Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Concluding observations on China, E/C.12/CHN/CO/3, 22 March 2023, paras. 69 and 94.

¹³ Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Concluding observations on the combined second and third periodic reports of China, CRPD/C/CHN/CO/2-3, 10 October 2022, para. 45.

¹⁴ Human Rights Committee, Concluding observations on Hong Kong, China, CCPR/C/CHN-HKG/CO/4, 11 November 2022, paras. 42 and 44.

¹⁵ Special Procedures communication JAL CHN 9/2021, 13 August 2021

- Repeal provisions and practices that unduly restrict the activities of non-governmental organisations and ensure an enabling environment for organisations working to promote and protect economic, social and cultural rights.¹⁶
- **Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2022)**
 - Recognise the role of civil society organizations as human rights defenders, prohibit any reprisals against individuals and organisations promoting the rights of persons with disabilities and take measures to protect the civic space.¹⁷
- **Human Rights Committee (2022)**
 - Facilitate peaceful assemblies and impose only necessary and proportionate restrictions;
 - Ensure that members and representatives of civil society organisations are not charged under the National Security Law or victimised in any other way as a result of their engagement with the [UN].¹⁸
- **Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2023)**
 - Take into consideration the paramount importance of the right of peaceful assembly and refrain from over-prioritizing public order and security concerns when considering restrictions on democratic manifestations.¹⁹

Information gap

Across these mechanisms, the recurring recommendation is that restrictions on expression, information, association, assembly, privacy and digital activity must be legal, necessary, proportionate and subject to review and remedy. Public UN material does not provide a comprehensive inventory of rules applicable to children or data on school discipline, police referrals, online account restrictions, religious participation, student organisations or complaints. Those omissions prevent a reliable assessment of implementation.

Much of the available UN documentation addresses the population generally and does not provide sufficient information about the specific application of these restrictions to children. Information is lacking on the laws, regulations and school rules governing children's expression, access to information, digital activity, student organisations and peaceful assemblies. There is also insufficient child-disaggregated data.

Proposed questions for the List of Issues

1. Please provide information on the measures taken to ensure that children can freely express their views and seek and receive information.
2. Please comment on UN documentations to which the right to freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and association and freedom of religion and belief of Tibetan and children continues to be severely restricted.

Cluster 5: Family environment and alternative care

Detention, imprisonment, enforced disappearance and other restrictions imposed on parents can have immediate consequences for children's care, education, health and psychological well-being. UN communications have raised concerns about children whose whereabouts or care arrangements became uncertain following the detention of a parent. In the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, restrictions on communication and travel and the detention of members of Uyghur and other predominantly Muslim communities have also created risks of prolonged family separation.

¹⁶ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Concluding observations on China, E/C.12/CHN/CO/3, 22 March 2023, para. 14.

¹⁷ Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Concluding observations on the combined second and third periodic reports of China, CRPD/C/CHN/CO/2-3, 10 October 2022, para. 9.

¹⁸ Human Rights Committee, Concluding observations on Hong Kong, China, CCPR/C/CHN-HKG/CO/4, 11 November 2022, paras. 46 and 50.

¹⁹ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Concluding observations on the ninth periodic report of China, CEDAW/C/CHN/CO/9, 31 May 2023, para 74(b).

Separately, UN experts and Treaty Bodies have raised concerns regarding Tibetan residential or boarding schools and their impacts on language and cultural identity.

Past UN recommendations

On family separation in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region

- **Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (2022)**
 - Urgently clarifies the whereabouts of individuals whose families have been seeking information about their loved ones in XUAR, including by providing details of their exact locations and establishing safe channels of communication and travel enabling families to reunite.²⁰
- **Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (2022)**
 - Provide relatives of detained or disappeared persons with detailed information on status and well-being;
 - Cease intimidation and reprisals against Uyghur and other Muslim communities and the diaspora.²¹
- **Special Procedures (2022)**
 - In a communication to China, the mandates urged closure of facilities used for mass arbitrary detention; an end to enforced disappearance and incommunicado detention; notification of and access by family members.²²

On Tibetan residential or boarding schools

- **Special Procedures (2022)**
 - The mandates requested information on the number of schools – private, semiprivate and state funded – with instruction in Tibetan language(s) are operational in China now and how their number has changed over the past 10 years.²³
- **Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2023)**
 - Abolish immediately the coerced residential (boarding) school system imposed on Tibetan children and allow private Tibetan schools to be established;
 - Ensure that Mandarin is not the only language of instruction allowed for ethnic minorities and peoples.²⁴
- **Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2023)**
 - Abolish the coerced residential (boarding) school system imposed on Tibetan girls and authorise the establishment of and subsidise private Tibetan schools;
 - Reverse the closure of schools providing instruction in minority languages.²⁵

On children whose parents are detained, imprisoned or disappeared

- **Special Procedures (2024)**
 - The mandates requested information as to the factual and legal basis for the reported surveillance and accompaniment of Chinese human rights defenders Xu Yan and Yu Wensheng's son since his parents have been detained. Their son reportedly attempted to take his life by overdosing on medication when both parents were arbitrarily detained.²⁶
- **Special Procedures (2025)**

²⁰ OHCHR, Assessment of human rights concerns in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, 31 August 2022, para. 151.

²¹ Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Decision 1 (108) on the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region under the early warning and urgent action procedure, 24 November 2022.

²² Special Procedures communication JAL CHN 12/2022, 19 December 2022.

²³ Special Procedures communication AL CHN 6/2022, 11 November 2022.

²⁴ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Concluding observations on China, E/C.12/CHN/CO/3, 22 March 2023, para. 89.

²⁵ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Concluding observations on the ninth periodic report of China, CEDAW/C/CHN/CO/9, 31 May 2023, para. 40.

²⁶ Special Procedures communication AL CHN 6/2024, 8 April 2024.

- The mandates requested information on the whereabouts, health, living conditions and care arrangements of two children affected by the detention of their mother and woman human rights defender He Fangmei; their access to education, medical care and family contact; and measures to prevent arbitrary deprivation of liberty, intimidation or victimization linked to a parent's human-rights activities.²⁷

Information gap

UN documentation identifies concerns regarding family separation resulting from detention, imprisonment, enforced disappearance and restrictions on communication and travel, particularly in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. UN experts also raise concerns about Tibetan residential or boarding schools and about the treatment of children whose parents are human rights defenders.

However, the public record does not provide comprehensive data on the number of children separated from a parent or primary caregiver because of detention or other security-related measure. Information is lacking on children's care arrangements, the identity and legal authority of guardians, the duration of separation, assessments of the child's best interests, family contact, periodic review and reunification outcomes.

In relation to Tibetan residential or boarding schools, information remains insufficient on the number and ages of children enrolled, the legal and practical voluntariness of attendance, the availability of viable local day schools, and parental consent

Proposed questions for the List of Issues

1. Please provide statistical data on children separated from a parent or primary caregiver because of imprisonment, pretrial detention, residential surveillance at a designated location. Please disaggregate the data by age, sex, ethnicity, geographic location, the parent's detention status.
2. Please provide the number of schools – private, semiprivate and state funded – with instruction in Tibetan language(s) are operational in China now and how their number has changed over the past 10 years. (AL CHN 6/2022)
3. Please provide measures taken in response to Special Procedures communication Treaty Bodies' recommendations on Tibetan residential or boarding schools.

Cluster 10: Education, leisure and cultural activities

UN mechanisms have repeatedly raised concerns about unequal access linked to household registration, disability, ethnicity and geographic location; restrictions on minority language education; the availability of local schools in Tibetan areas, and national security-related changes affecting curricula, teaching materials and access to information in Hong Kong.

Past UN recommendations and documentation

On inclusive education

- **Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2023)**
 - Take all necessary measures to ensure the full and unrestricted enjoyment by peoples and minorities of their right to enjoy fully their own cultural identity and take part in cultural life, to ensure the use and practice of their language and culture, and to abolish immediately the coerced residential (boarding) school system imposed on Tibetan children and allow private Tibetan schools to be established;
 - Ensure that Mandarin is not the only language of instruction allowed for ethnic minorities and peoples;

²⁷ Special Procedures communication AL CHN 17/2024, 3 January 2025.

- Strengthen efforts to abolish the household registration system (hukou) and ensure that all rural-to-urban migrants are able to enjoy the work opportunities, as well as the social security, housing, health-care and education benefits, enjoyed by residents in urban areas;
- Take concrete steps to eliminate the persistent disparities between men and women and promote full access to employment, housing and higher education;
- Increase overall expenditure on education;
- Ensure that the nine years of compulsory public education are free and that the State party take appropriate measures to ensure the equal distribution of funds, with a view to ensuring equal access to, and the availability of, education in urban and rural areas;
- Redouble efforts to increase pre-primary education enrolment and intensify its efforts to ensure equal opportunities in access to quality pre-primary education for children of migrants.²⁸
- **Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2023)**
 - Strengthen access to mainstream education for rural girls, girls whose parents have migrated to urban areas and girls with disabilities;
 - Strengthen access for girls and women from disadvantaged groups, including rural girls, girls whose parents have migrated to urban areas and girls and women with disabilities, to mainstream education at all levels;
 - Ensure that girls and women belonging to ethnic minorities have access to instruction in their mother tongue, including Tibetan, Uyghur and Kazakh, and reverse the closure of schools providing instruction in minority languages;
 - Abolish the coerced residential (boarding) school system imposed on Tibetan girls and authorise the establishment of and subsidise private Tibetan schools.²⁹
- **Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2022)**
 - Introduce legislation containing an enforceable right to inclusive education and adopt a comprehensive action plan with targets, time frames, budgets, transfer of resources and inclusive curricula;
 - Revise the Regulations on the Education of Persons with Disabilities with the aim of eliminating all discriminatory provisions regarding the education of children with disabilities, and explicitly provide for quality inclusive education to ensure that no child with disabilities is excluded from the general education system on the basis of impairment.³⁰
- **Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (2018)**
 - Strengthen special measures to ensure equal access to and the availability and quality of primary and secondary education for all ethnic groups;
 - Increase human, technical and financial resources to day schools and boarding schools in disadvantaged ethnic minority areas;
 - Provide information on reported restrictions on Uyghur as a medium of instruction in schools in Hotan prefecture and take measures to preserve, promote and support minority languages.
 - Facilitate the smooth integration of non-Chinese speaking students in Hong Kong, China into the education system, and ensure that children of all ethnicities enjoy their right to inclusive and Chinese-language education;
 - Preserve the Tibetan language in the Tibet Autonomous Region by, inter alia, encouraging and promoting its use in the fields of education, the judicial system and the media.

²⁸ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Concluding observations on China, E/C.12/CHN/CO/3, 22 March 2023, paras. 38, 44, 87, 89 and 151.

²⁹ Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Concluding observations on the ninth periodic report of China, CEDAW/C/CHN/CO/9, 31 May 2023, paras. 40.

³⁰ Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, Concluding observations on the combined second and third periodic reports of China, CRPD/C/CHN/CO/2-3, 10 October 2022, para. 51.

- Ensure the availability of Mongolian-language public education for ethnic Mongolians, including those residing outside of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region.³¹

On human rights education

• Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (2023)

- Incorporate human rights education, including education on women's rights and gender equality, into curricula at all levels of education, introduce mandatory teacher training on human rights education and training on ways to avoid reproducing gender inequalities in schools and review educational materials with a view to removing gender stereotypes;
- Raise awareness among students, teachers and the general public of the new Regulations on the Protection of Minors at Schools, adopted in 2021, which include provisions against sexual harassment and cyberbullying, and monitor the establishment of zero-tolerance handling mechanisms for bullying, sexual assault and harassment against students.³²

Information gap

Past UN recommendations are consistent: education must be equally accessible, adequately resourced, inclusive of children with disabilities, and respectful of children's language, culture, religion, and identity. However, the 2026 Law on Promoting Ethnic Unity and Progress adds a need for prospective scrutiny of how its education related provisions are interpreted in practice.

Proposed questions for the List of Issues

1. Please provide information, disaggregated by school level and geographic region, on the languages of instruction used in schools in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and Tibetan area, the number of these language schools opened or closed.
2. Please provide information on the implementation of the education-related provisions of the Law of the People's Republic of China on Promoting Ethnic Unity and Progress.

³¹ Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, Concluding observations on the combined fourteenth to seventeenth periodic reports of China, CERD/C/CHN/CO/14-17, 19 September 2018, paras. 40, 44 and 46.

³² Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, Concluding observations on the ninth periodic report of China, CEDAW/C/CHN/CO/9, 31 May 2023, para. 40.