

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

**Human Rights Council**

Forty-ninth Regular Session

March 11, 2022

**Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders**

*Statement delivered by Vincent Metten on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights*

Mr. President,

We thank the Special rapporteur for her report, and for recalling that anti-corruption activists often face criminal lawsuits for their work.

In this regard, we would like to draw the attention of the Council to the case of Anya Sengdra, a Tibetan environmentalist and anti-corruption campaigner who criticized local officials for siphoning off and misusing public money, notably relief and poverty alleviation funds allocated to settled nomads.

In December 2019, he was arrested, allegedly beaten, and sentenced to seven years in prison on politically motivated charges of “provoking troubles, forming a mob to disturb social order, and other evil cases”.

In May 2020, four UN human rights experts and the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention urged the Chinese government to drop charges against him;<sup>1</sup> yet, two year later, he remains in jail, and his health has reportedly deteriorated due to poor detention conditions.

Mr. President, Human Rights Defenders fighting corruption should never be punished for their important and legitimate work.

We therefore call on Human Rights Council Members to press China to ensure that adequate medical treatment is granted to Anya Sengdra and to immediately release him, as he has been detained solely for peacefully campaigning against corruption.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> OHCHR, ‘UN experts urge China to drop charges against jailed Tibetan minority human rights defender’, 19 May 2020, <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=25894&LangID=E>.