

Annotations by Peter A Gallo

NEWS RELEASE



UN rights office categorically rejects claims it endangered NGOs

GENEVA (2 February 2017) – The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights strongly rejects the totally unsupported allegation by the Global Accountability Project (GAP) and the Inner City Press blog that it endangered four Chinese human rights defenders who attended the Human Rights Council in Geneva in March 2013.

Evidence shows Ms. Reilly was concerned about the Chinese Mission wanting to know who would be attending the UPR meetings.

OHCHR is "plagued with a problem of leaks."

The UN Human Rights Office also objects to the totally unsupported attempt by GAP to link the detention and subsequent tragic death in custody of Chinese activist Cao Shunli to the actions of the Office.

In the case of Cao Shunli; Ms. Reilly's fears were realised.

We deplore the efforts by organizations such as UN Watch to take the spurious allegations by GAP a step further. UN Watch tweeted: "Top @UNHumanRights official informed #China of dissident planning to testify @UN. She was detained & died in prison." This is an outright lie and a deliberate defamation. *Will OHCHR commence legal action?*

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So what?

The UN Human Rights Office has publicly condemned the fact that harassment, intimidation and reprisals against NGO delegates attending the Human Rights Council appear to have been increasing in recent years – by a number of different States. Specific examples are now routinely and publicly referred to by the President of the Human Rights Council.

Public statements and private actions are two entirely different things.

→ Since when has OHCHR had the monopoly on deciding what is a fact?

The facts surrounding the Chinese human rights defenders' attendance at the Human Rights Council 2013 March session are as follows:

→ Who are they?... and where is **their** Press Release?

Representatives of the NGO in question attended the February-March 2013 meeting in Geneva – a regular public event that is televised and webcast. All four of them were residents of Europe or the United States and made public their plans to attend the Human Rights Council session, at several points beginning with a press release on 27 December 2012, when the NGO in question announced it would be co-hosting a public side event at the UN headquarters in Geneva during the Human Rights Council meeting. As is apparent on its website, the NGO is extremely open about its presence at many such events – including ones at venues much less secure than the UN premises in Geneva. Dating back at least to 2010, the same delegates have been regularly attending meetings of the Human Rights Council, which occur three times a year.

Yes.... very interesting, but Ms. Reilly expressed concerns about this since February or March 2013.

Why did the Ethics Office not refer to her having been given this explanation at any time in the past?

If it had been explained to her, she would have no grounds to keep reporting the same concerns....

Chinese authorities, and others, regularly ask the UN Human Rights Office, several days or weeks prior to Human Rights Council meetings, whether particular NGO delegates

Why could nobody explain this before?

How is this relevant to activists living in CHINA?

Did the NGO publish the names of the delegates who would be attending FROM CHINA - and IN ADVANCE?

The UN is confirming that if the Chinese Government decide that someone is a "terrorist", then UN Security decides if that information is correct or not.but how do they make that determination WITHOUT reference to information from the Chinese Government.

are attending the forthcoming session. The Office never confirms this information until the accreditation process is formally under way, and until it is sure that there is no obvious security risk.

Nearer to the start of the sessions, the Office frequently receives an official letter, a *note verbale*, from the Government of China alleging that the NGO in question is a terrorist organization, and listing specific allegations against the individual delegates it knows are coming and requesting they be denied accreditation. At this point, the Office alerts UN Security, which looks into the allegations. Upon UN Security's decision that there is no evidence to back up the allegations, the individuals are given the all-clear to enter the UN premises and attend the events they wish to attend. The individuals in question have never been denied entry by the UN on the basis of such allegations.

Very interesting - but nobody is asking whether these NGOs were involved in "terrorism"

Ms. Reilly's concerns were only for the Chinese Human Rights activists who were prevented - by the Chinese Government - from attending the UPR

Additional precautionary measures triggered by the allegations include a warning by the UN to the concerned individuals that such allegations have been made against them, and specific additional vigilance by UN security to ensure no harm comes to the concerned NGO while they are on UN premises.

So... the Chinese Government describes these NGOs as terrorists, then UN Security decide they are not.... but are then "additionally vigilant to ensure no harm comes to them when on UN premises.

The inference that the UN Human Rights Office was in some way linked to the detention and tragic death of Cao Shunli six months later is malicious and defamatory, and is not supported by any evidence. Ms. Shunli, who was resident in China itself, was detained en route to an NGO event in Geneva. Neither Ms. Shunli nor the Chinese authorities approached the UN Human Rights Office about her plans to attend the event and the Office had no knowledge of those plans. There was no communication whatsoever between the Office and the Chinese authorities prior to her detention.

...So who exactly is a threat to them when they are on UN premises?

Why was Cao Shunli flying to Geneva if she had not been accredited by OHCHR?

Can a notoriously "leaky" OHCHR prove a negative?

Not supported by any evidence but she was on her way to Geneva when arrested.

After she was detained, the Office closely followed the matter and drew the attention of the President of the Human Rights Council to Ms. Shunli's case. Subsequently, the President raised her detention directly with the Chinese Ambassador in Geneva as a possible example of reprisal by a State against someone cooperating with the UN or its various human rights mechanisms – a practice which the UN Human Rights Office has frequently and publicly denounced.

This would be the perfectly acceptable explanation that a month after being arrested, this lawyer was formally charged with the serious criminal offence of

GAP and the Inner City Press also refer to a staff member at the UN Human Rights Office in relation to this case, who they assert is a whistle-blower and who they allege suffered reprisals at the hands of the Office. In fact, the staff member has never faced reprisals. The staff member has had her contracts renewed and remains employed by the organization on full pay. She has made allegations against various managers. These have been taken seriously, leading to two separate independent investigations that have been carried out to determine whether or not there is any substance to her allegations. In both instances, the claims made by the staff member were found to be unsubstantiated.

"picking quarrels and provoking troubles" and held in custody till the lack of medical attention contributed to her death.

If she was taken seriously, why did OIOS not investigate in March 2013.

Remember the term: "an outright lie and deliberate defamation" (para 3 above)

ENDS

If OHCHR is so confident this staff member has never faced reprisals; will Ms. Reilly release a statement confirming that is actually correct?

I, Peter A Gallo, hereby promise to issue an apology and make a donation of \$10,000 to any Human Rights charity of the High Commissioner's choosing if Ms. Reilly makes a public statement, together with him, in which she categorically and freely denies ever having suffered any reprisals.