



Olivier De Raeymaeker

Director general and editing director
Le Soir
Rue Royale 100
1000 Brussels

Brussels, January 24, 2019

Subject: Insertion of Xinhua supplements

Mr. Director General,

The signatories of this letter wish to express their deep concern about the insertion of the Xinhua supplement « Focus Belgique-Chine » once again by Le Soir in its 29 November 2018 edition.

Xinhua is an official press organisation of the Chinese government, and its editorial line, far from taking into account the requirements of neutrality and objectivity of journalism, is in tune with the official propaganda and the interests of the Chinese Communist Party, one of the most repressive regimes worldwide, including in terms of freedom of expression and information and of press freedom.

As you are certainly aware, the human rights situation in China has strongly deteriorated since President Xi Jinping came to power. There are many examples of this deterioration, such as the establishment of a legal arsenal aimed at controlling NGOs, the surveillance of internet networks, police monitoring of Tibetans and Uyghurs, the practice of arbitrary detention or enforced disappearances, the use of torture in detention... Freedoms of expression and information are also systematically violated, as illustrated by the 5-year prison sentence imposed last May on Tibetan language education activist Tashi Wangchuk for “inciting separatism” following the publication of an interview by the New York Times in 2015,¹ and the arrest of Lu Guang,² a Chinese photojournalist based in

¹ *Tibetan language rights advocate Tashi Wangchuk sentenced to five years in prison*, International Campaign for Tibet, 22 May 2018, <https://www.savetibet.org/tibetan-language-rights-advocate-tashi-wangchuk-sentenced-to-five-years-in-prison/>

New York who had visited Urumqi – the capital of the Xinjiang province where a million of Uyghurs are reportedly detained without trial in re-education camps- on 23 October last year to meet with local photographers.³

Although it is indicated on these supplements that Xinhua provides their content, they are likely to be confused by your readers with other articles published in your newspaper's pages. Moreover, their content is generally at odds with that of the articles of your contributors, who are well aware that the situation on the ground is much more nuanced than what official Chinese propaganda agrees to show.

Mr. Director General, we are aware of the difficulties that the print media currently face, and understand that your newspaper is looking for financial resources to maintain and pursue its activities. However, we feel that it is important to carefully select your external sources of funding, and to refuse spreading propaganda from authoritarian states guilty of blatant, grave and repeated human rights violations such as China. It therefore seems crucial to us that Le Soir, if it wishes to continue to produce quality journalism and to maintain its credibility and legitimacy as an independent media, cease publishing the supplements of the China Daily as soon as possible.

We are surprised that a number of letters addressed to Le Soir on this matter have so far remained unanswered.

We would appreciate a quick feedback on the issues raised in this letter, and remain at your disposal to engage in a discussion on this matter,

List of signatories

FIDH
International Campaign for Tibet
Ligue des Droits Humains
Tibetan Community of Belgium
Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation
World Uyghur Congress

² *RSF calls for the release of award-winning photojournalist*, Reporters without Borders, 28 November 2018, <https://rsf.org/en/news/china-rsf-calls-release-award-winning-photojournalist>

³ The European Parliament has expressed its deep concern regarding this situation on several occasions; see for example the European Parliament's urgency resolutions *Mass arbitrary detention of Uyghurs and Kazakhs in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region* of 4 October 2018 (<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P8-TA-2018-0377+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>) and *The cases of human rights activists Wu Gan, Xie Yang, Lee Ming-che, Tashi Wangchuk and the Tibetan monk Choekyi* of 18 January 2018 (<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P8-TA-2018-0014+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN>)