

## **Over 100 Global Rights Groups Call for the Immediate Release of Mongolian writer and activist Munkhbayar Chuluundorj**

### **World leaders urged to jointly press for all charges against him to be dropped and for him to be freed**

[New York] Human rights groups have today called on the Mongolian government to immediately release human rights defender Munkhbayar Chuluundorj who is serving a 10-year prison sentence on politically motivated charges related to his public criticism of the Mongolian government's close ties with China.(1) *[Full statement text and list of signatories can be seen below]*

Mr. Munkhbayar Chuluundorj is an award-winning Mongolian journalist, poet, and human rights activist known for defending the linguistic, cultural, and historical identities of Southern Mongolians.

In February 2022 he was arbitrarily arrested, in the Mongolian capital Ulaanbaatar, after raising public critique of the relationship between the Mongolian and Chinese governments and the links to a crackdown on the rights in Southern Mongolia [CH: Inner Mongolia], which China has occupied since 1949. (2)

**Togochog Enghebatu of Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center said:** *"Munkhbayar 's case reminds us of that the Chinese regime is not just a colonial power that occupies once independent Southern Mongolia, Tibet, and East Turkistan, but also a global hegemon that threatens its sovereign neighbors and the wider free and democratic world."*

**Aurora Chang, International Tibet Network, said:** *"Munkhbayar's unjust conviction and detainment is one in a long line of examples of the overreach of Beijing's power outside of its borders, and the Chinese Communist Party's disregard for the sovereignty of other countries and international law. Human rights activists, lawyers, and writers from all across the world are calling for Munkhbayar's release, and it is imperative that the Mongolian authorities listen to them now in the interest of protecting democracy and freedom of expression."*

**Talita Pessoa, Program Director, PEN/Barbey Freedom to Write Center, said:** *"The unjust conviction of Munkhbayar Chuluundorj is a worrisome example of the use of national security laws to criminalize human rights defenders. The charges and his subsequent conviction have effectively silenced Munkhbayar Chuluundorj's criticism of both the Mongolian and Chinese governments' policies around the culture and language of ethnic Mongolians living in China's Inner Mongolia. It's noteworthy that his trial happened amid China's new public education policies to remove Mongolian language instruction for various key subjects in the region. We urge the Mongolian authorities to respect their citizens' fundamental right of freedom of expression, calling for the conviction to be voided and for Chuluundorj's immediate release."*

**Hidetoshi Ishii of Free Tibet Fukuoka said:** *"We cannot overlook the fact that an authoritarian country is repainting democratic countries. Rescuing Munkhbayar isn't just about helping one individual, it's about protecting democracy."*

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**FULL STATEMENT TEXT:**

We urge the Mongolian government to immediately release Mr. Munkhbayar Chuluundorj who was arbitrarily arrested in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, by the General Intelligence Agency (GIA) of Mongolia on February 17, 2022.

Mr. Munkhbayar Chuluundorj is an award-winning Mongolian journalist, poet, and human rights activist known for defending the linguistic, cultural, and historical identities of Southern Mongolians.

Mr. Munkhbayar Chuluundorj was detained in Ulaanbaatar on politically motivated charges related to his public criticism of the Mongolian government's close ties with China (1) and the shrinking rights in Southern Mongolia [CH: Inner Mongolia], which China has occupied since 1949. (2) His arrest and sentencing took place amid China's increasingly severe policies in Southern Mongolia that aim to remove learning in the Mongolian language for several key subjects. These restrictive policies are similar to those rolled out by Chinese authorities in Tibet and East Turkistan [CH: Xinjiang], and recent moves to replace Cantonese education in Hong Kong with Mandarin. (3)

Mr. Munkhbayar Chuluundorj was sentenced to 10 years in prison on June 28, 2022, for "collaborating with a foreign intelligence agency" against the People's Republic of China. On December 21, 2022, the Supreme Court of Mongolia heard his appeal and upheld the lower court's original decision. There is no evidence linking Mr. Munkhbayar Chuluundorj to the charge and his lawyer, Ms. Baasan Geleg, has dismissed the national security charge against him as entirely baseless. (4)

In September 2022 two handwritten letters from Mr. Munkhbayar Chuluundorj - penned in the detention center in June 2022 - were received by the Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center. In the letters, he pleaded his innocence and detailed how he believed the evidence against him had been fabricated in relation to his work to better the conditions of Mongolians. (5)

Land-locked Mongolia is highly dependent on China for imports (6) and there has been an increase in economic influence, including vast loans via Xi Jinping's 'Belt and Road Initiative', in recent years that have pushed Mongolia into major indebtedness to China. (7) These debts are further exacerbated by a program of cultural propaganda such as the establishment of Confucius Institutes, television and radio broadcasts, and cultural centers.

Growing concern about the Mongolian state's harassment, intimidation, and reprisals against human rights defenders is growing. In October 2022, the UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights raised the issue of human rights defenders and recommended Mongolia put in place protection safeguards and 'urgently investigate cases in which human rights defenders are criminalized'. (8) Later in the same month, the Japanese "Parliamentary Support Group for Southern Mongolia" (9) published a statement regarding the sentence of Mr. Munkhbayar Chuluundorj.

Rights groups are calling on like-minded governments - both jointly and bi-laterally - and the UN Human Rights Council to call for the immediate release of Mr. Munkhbayar Chuluundorj.

SIGNED BY:

Togochog Enghebatu, President, Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center

Hidetoshi Ishii, Senior Advisor, Free Tibet Fukuoka

Elbegdorj Tsakhyagiin, President World Mongol Federation and former President of Mongolia

Dolkun Isa, President, World Uyghur Congress

Anna Kwok, Executive Director, Hong Kong Democracy Council

Mandie McKeown, Executive Director, International Tibet Network

Talita Pessoa, Program Director, PEN America

Dr. Sanj Altan, President, Mongol American Cultural Association

Dr. Yang Jianli, President, Citizen Power Initiatives for China

Merce Monje Cano, Executive Director, Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization

On behalf of the following global rights groups:

Afghanistan Cinema Club	Kalmyk Youth Coalition
Afghanistan Hazara Culture and Solidarity Association (AHCSA)	Keep Taiwan Free
Alaska Tibet Committee	La Federacion of Cantonia
Altanseseg Band	Latvia for Tibet
Asociación Cultural Tibetano-Costarricense	Law and Society Alliance (LSA)
Association France Tibet	LUNGTA - Actief voor Tibet
Australian Uyghur Tangritagh Women's Association	Mongol Heritage Foundation
Bath District Tibet Support Group	Mongolian 4-H NGO (USA)
Bayanmongol NGO (USA)	National Democratic Party of Tibet
Bolaq Analysts Network USA	New Yorkers Supporting Hong Kong
Buriat House	Nutug Chuulgan
	Objectif Tibet
	RangZen Brazil

<p>Buryaat Mongol United Association  CADAL  Campaign For Uyghurs  Captive Nations Coalition  Casa del Tibet  Centre for Himalayan Asia Studies and Engagement (CHASE)  China Against the Death Penalty  China Alarm  China Change  Chinggis Khan Memorial Foundation  Comité de Apoyo al Tíbet - CAT  Committee on the Present Danger: China  Foundation for Non-violent Alternatives  Fredrik Larsson  Free Tibet  Free Tibet Fukuoka  FREE TIBET ITALY  Fundacion Casa del Tibet  Global Alliance for Tibet &amp; Persecuted Minorities  Grupo de Apoio ao Tibete-Portugal  Hazara Committee in UK  Hazara Community in Ireland  Hazara Community of Washington  Hazara Organization for Peace and Equality (HOPE)  Hazara Research Center  Hong Kong Committee in Norway  India - Tibet Friendship Society  India Tibet Friendship Society NAGPUR  Inner Mongolia People's Party  Institute for China's Democratic Transition  InterMongol Network  International PEN Uyghur Center  International Society for Human Rights - Sweden  International Society for Human Rights, Munich chapter  Kalmyk Project</p>	<p>Regional Tibetan Youth Congress NYNJ  Santa Barbara Friends of Tibet  Save the Mongolian Language NGO  Students for a Free Tibet  Students for a Free Tibet - Japan  Students for a Free Tibet - Taiwan  Students For a Free Tibet- India  Swedish Mongolian Committee (Svenska Mongol Kommitten)  Swedish Tibet Committee  Swiss Tibetan Friendship Association  Terrorism Victims Protection Organization (TVPO)  The Norwegian Tibet Committee  The Tibet Support Committee, Denmark  Tibet Justice Center  Tibet Solidarity  Tibet Support Association Sambhala Tibet Center  Tibet Support Groep Nederland  Tibet Support Group Ireland  TIBET WATCH  Tibetan Community in Britain  Tibetan Community in Switzerland and Liechtenstein  Tibetans of Mixed Heritage  Tso Pema Non-Profit  TSSA  UK Mongolian Community  USTC US Tibet Committee  Uyghur American Association  Uyghur Human Rights Project  Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project  Vancouver Society in Support of Democratic Movement  Voice of Southern Mongolia  World Hazara Council  World Mongol Federation Europe  World Mongol Federation USA  Youth Liberation Front of Tibet, East-Turkistan, Manchuria &amp; Inner-Mongolia ( YLFTM )  Zerd Band</p>
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NOTES:

1. Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center, [Mongolian journalist handed 10 years: attorney says "independent country of Mongolia became a province of China"](#)
  2. [UNPO: Southern Mongolia](#)
  3. Mongolian: PEN America, [New Mongolia Education Policy Threatens to Degrade Language Rights - PEN America](#)
- Tibetan: Human Rights Watch, [China: Tibetan Children Denied Mother-Tongue Classes | Human Rights Watch](#)  
Uyghur: Uyghur Human Rights Project, [Assault on the Uyghur Language in East Turkestan](#)

Hong Kong: Australia Broadcasting Corporation, [Fears for the future of Cantonese as China urges Hong Kong to legally recognise Mandarin](#)

4. [Mongolian journalist handed 10 years: attorney says “independent country of Mongolia became a province of China”](#)
5. [Munkhbayar Chuluundorj's open letter: Wake up, Mongolians, if you don't want to be wiped out!](#)
6. The Financial Times, 2016, [Mongolia: Living from loan to loan | Financial Times](#)
7. South China Morning Post, August 2022, [China accelerates Mongolia investment to ‘facilitate’ Russia trade link and secure energy, commodities](#)
8. [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=E%2fC.12%2fMNG%2fC.O%2f5&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=E%2fC.12%2fMNG%2fC.O%2f5&Lang=en)
9. [Japan's ‘Southern Mongolia Parliamentary Alliance’ is Historically Significant | JAPAN Forward](#)