



**BROKEN  
CHALK**

Submission to the United Nations OFFICE OF THE HIGH  
COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

CALL FOR INPUT | OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN  
RIGHTS

Input on the human rights situation of Africans and  
people of African descent in the Asia Pacific region.

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Submitting Organization: BROKEN CHALK

January 2024

By

Alexia Kapsampeli

Kingsfordweg 151, 1043 GR

Amsterdam, Netherlands

+31687406567

[upr@brokenchalk.org](mailto:upr@brokenchalk.org)

[www.brokenchalk.org](http://www.brokenchalk.org)

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**Broken Chalk** is an Amsterdam-based non-governmental organisation (NGO) committed to addressing human rights violations in the education sector. It was established in October 2020. A multinational team of dedicated human rights advocates collaborates extensively on researching violations in every corner of the world.

The organisation's primary activities include removing obstacles to education, promoting peace and tranquillity in society through intercultural tolerance, preventing radicalism and polarisation, and eliminating educational opportunity gaps across different demographics.

Broken Chalk works hard in advocacy and lobbying on behalf of these educational victims, engaging with international organisations to prompt action. Additionally, the volunteers and interns working remotely worldwide at Broken Chalk prepare comprehensive reports for international organisations, stakeholders, and governments, highlighting human rights violations in education. These reports aim to draw attention to the often-overlooked aspects of human rights violations, providing stakeholders with a complete understanding and calling for the international community to act in cases where conflict halts access to education and endangers civilians' lives. This approach ensures that awareness is raised and necessary actions are taken to address these violations. Broken Chalk is genuinely international, achieving a local and global perspective in its work.

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A. Background Information

- **Name:** Broken Chalk
- **Country:** The Netherlands
- **Email address:** [uninputs@brokenchalk.org](mailto:uninputs@brokenchalk.org)

## B. National legal framework, policies and programmes to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance.

- What national laws are in place to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in your country?

Article 4 of the Constitution of China states, "All ethnic groups in the People's Republic of China are equal. The State protects the legitimate rights and interests of all ethnic minorities and maintains and develops relationships of equality, unity, and mutual assistance among all ethnic groups. Discrimination and oppression of any ethnic group is prohibited. Behaviours that undermine national unity and create national divisions are prohibited".<sup>1</sup>

China applied to the United Nations for the International Convention on All Forms of Racial Discrimination (with reservation to Article 23) on November 29, 1981. It was adopted on January 28, 1982. It is one of the earliest United Nations human rights conventions ratified by China.

Chinese officials denied the existence of racial discrimination in the country.<sup>2</sup>

However, according to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, China lacks an anti-racial discrimination law and a national human rights institution in line with the Paris Principles.<sup>3</sup>

- Are there independent national human rights mechanisms or institutions to combat racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance in your country?

As for the institutions, Reza Hasmath from the University of Alberta claimed in the article "China's NGOs Go Global" in the Diplomat in March 2016: "*The number of NGOs in mainland China has increased dramatically in the past two decades. There are now approximately 500,000 registered NGOs in the nation, working in areas such as education, poverty alleviation, community development, environment, and health*".<sup>4</sup> However, it seems that

<sup>1</sup> 在中国种族歧视会犯法吗? (Is racial discrimination illegal in China?) [https://www.sohu.com/a/139339006\\_244250#google\\_vignette](https://www.sohu.com/a/139339006_244250#google_vignette) May 9, 2017, Last accessed on December 6, 2023

<sup>2</sup> 国际公约和文书中有关消除种族歧视背景知识 50 问答 (Background knowledge on the elimination of racial discrimination in international conventions and instruments 50 Q&A) <https://www.nchrd.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/%E5%9B%BD%E9%99%85%E5%85%AC%E7%BA%A6%E5%92%8C%E6%96%87%E4%B9%A6%E4%B8%AD%E6%9C%89%E5%85%B3%E6%B6%88%E9%99%A4%E7%A7%8D%E6%97%8F%E6%AD%A7%E8%A7%86%E8%83%8C%E6%99%AF%E7%9F%A5%E8%AF%8650%E9%97%AE%E7%AD%94.pdf> Last accessed December 7, 2023

<sup>3</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination reviews the report of China, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2018/08/committee-elimination-racial-discrimination-reviews-report-china>, August 13, 2018, Last accessed on December 11, 2023

<sup>4</sup> Gabriel Corsetti "How many NGOs are there really in China?" <https://chinadevelopmentbrief.org/reports/how-many-ngos-are-there-really-in-china/> August 2, 2019, Last accessed on December 11, 2023

there are no organisations or institutions in the country about racism, xenophobia, discrimination, and human rights in general.

Human Rights in China is a non-governmental organisation founded in March 1989 by overseas Chinese students and scientists in New York. Its mission is to support and strengthen the advancement of international human rights and protect these rights in the People's Republic of China.<sup>5</sup> It is considered the most important exiled Chinese NGO defending human rights.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, international organisations, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have focused on human rights in China.

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<sup>5</sup> Human Rights in China <https://new.hrichina.org/about-us> Last accessed on December 11, 2023

<sup>6</sup> Pierre-Marrie Dupuy, Luisa Vierucci "NGOs in International Law: Efficiency in Flexibility?" Edward Elgar Publishing, p.83, 2008

C. Implementation of the programme of activities of the IDPAD at regional and national levels

- What steps have been taken to implement the programme of activities of the International Decade for people of African descent in the areas of Recognition, Justice and Development at regional and/or national level?

Although the officials spoke out for the equal rights of Africans, such as the Chinese representative in the fifty-fourth session of the United Nations Human Rights Council on October 5, 2023<sup>7</sup>, the State seems not to have taken the necessary measures.

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<sup>7</sup>为世界人权事业贡献中国力量 <http://io.mohrss.gov.cn/a/2023/10/27/11513.html>, October 27, 2023, Last accessed on December 11, 2023

#### D. Demographics of Africans and people of African descent

- Are there statistical data available to monitor the situation of Africans and people of African descent in your country? If yes, please provide recent statistical information available on the demographics of Africans and people of African descent living in your country.
- Number of Africans and people of African descent living in your country, including the number of women and children.

China is mainly a homogenous society, as over 90% of its population has historically been Han Chinese. Han Chinese are 91% and ethnic minorities are 8,9%, and the People's Republic of China has recognised 56 ethnic groups.<sup>8</sup>

Most foreigners reached China after the Communist Party came to power in 1949. African students began arriving in significant numbers in the late 1970s when China started to open to the world.

By 1988, 1,500 of the 6,000 foreign students were Africans and had been scattered to campuses around the country, *"a tactic designed to dilute racial tensions"*, according to the report of Michael J Sullivan in China Quarterly magazine in 1994.<sup>9</sup>

Nowadays, China has become a significant migration destination for Africans. It is estimated around 500,000 Africans currently live and work in China.<sup>10</sup>

- Main geographical locations where Africans and people of African descent live in your country (if relevant)

Asia's largest African population is in the southern Chinese city of Guangzhou. Most of them reach the country from Guangzhou and then go to other cities. They choose Guangzhou because of its economy. According to the Foreign Affairs Office in the province and the Urban Management Institute of the Guangzhou Academy of Social Sciences, the number of Africans is constantly changing. However, it is estimated that around 100,000 Africans live in Guangzhou. As state news agency Xinhua mentioned in 2017, more than 320,000 Africans entered or left China through the city.

As Ning Chaoqiao, an assistant researcher at the Urban Management Institute of the Guangzhou Academy of Social Sciences, said, Africans mainly go to China for work. He also believes that Guangzhou is a business centre where people are tolerant and life is convenient.

Their presence is particularly active in the Tianxiu Building, New Dengfeng Hotel (Overseas Trade City), Ceramics Building, Xiushan Building, Canaan Foreign Trade Clothing City, and

<sup>8</sup> CIA.gov "China-The World Factbook <https://www.cia.gov/the-world-factbook/countries/china/>, Last updated December 6, 2023, Last accessed December 9, 2023

<sup>9</sup> Jenni Marsh "China says it has a 'zero-tolerance policy' for racism, but discrimination towards Africans goes back decades <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/05/25/asia/china-anti-african-attacks-history-hnk-intl/index.html> March 18, 2021, Last accessed on December 12, 2023

<sup>10</sup> A. Bodomo "Historical and contemporary perspectives on inequalities and well-being of Africans in China" Asian Ethnicity, 21, 2020



Tangqi Foreign Trade Clothing City in this area. These locations mainly engage in wholesale business; many stores specialise in African customers. The locals call Xiaobei Road "African Street", and Guangzhou is the "Chocolate City". Most Africans' jobs are in the trade of clothing, electronics, auto parts, and daily goods. Many often travel between Africa and China, for example, once or twice a year. Furthermore, many Africans open shops in their country and go to Guangzhou to take the goods. They are more willing to interact with others of the same race and religious beliefs because they trust one another and are less likely to have disputes.

Another basic problem Africans have is the language. However, Africans living for longer can speak the language sparsely. Furthermore, there are cultural differences, so communication between Africans and Chinese is difficult.

As for religion, there are a lot of religious places in Guangzhou where Africans can worship. The majority of Africans believe in Islam or Christianity. The Stone Chamber Catholic Church in this city is one of Africans' most popular religious places. Notably, more than a thousand Africans attend the mass in English in the Stone Chamber on Sunday afternoons. On the other hand, many Africans go to the Xiaodongying Mosque on Xiaodongying Street in this city. It is one of the four significant mosques in Guangzhou.<sup>11</sup>

- Indicators on nationality and residency status of Africans and people of African descent living in your country.

There are several categories of migrants: short- and long-term students, professionals, diplomats, official representatives, and short- and long-term traders. Many Africans do not prefer the United States and Europe due to immigration policies and constricted legal forms, and for this reason, they travel to the Arab Gulf and Southeast Asia. So, China has become a common migration destination because of its growing economy and substantially cheaper cost of living. Notably, the increased presence of traders is currently the largest migrant category.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Liangmuxuan "劳木：怎么看越来越多非洲人来中国（之一） Why do you think more and more Africans are coming to China" <https://m.huanqiu.com/article/9CaKrnKhI94>, January 23, 2019, Last accessed on December 13, 2023

<sup>12</sup>Anwar Quassini, Mostafa Amini, Nabil Quassini "#ChinaMustexplain: Global Tweets, COVID-19, and Anti-Black Racism in China" <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8914295/> March 2022, Last accessed on December 13, 2023

## INPUT ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION OF AFRICANS AND PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION.

- E. Human rights situation of Africans and people of African descent living in the Asia Pacific region
- What are the most significant human rights violations that Africans and people of African descent experience in your country? Please provide examples of emblematic cases of racial discrimination faced by Africans and people of African descent living in your country.

Racism against Africans is not unusual in China. In 1979, Africans in Shanghai were attacked for playing music too loudly, and 19 of them were hospitalised. Some years later, in 1986, 200 African students marched through Beijing, shouting those Chinese claims that “friendship was a mask for racism”. *“The Chinese deceived us,”* Solomon A. Tradey of Liberia told the New York Times. China's Education Ministry spokesperson said: "It is the consistent and long-term policy of the Chinese government to oppose racism."<sup>13</sup>

At the height of the HIV-AIDS epidemic, African students were accused of being carriers of the disease as they "originated" from primitive societies whose "lack of moral fibre, in contrast to the virtues of socialism with Chinese characteristics."<sup>14</sup>

- What are the key human rights concerns faced by Africans and people of African descent in the following areas:
  - Access to education, health, employment, housing and public services?

Nowadays, Africans have to face racism in everyday life. They rarely take buses and subways and generally choose taxis. However, a lot of them complain that taxi drivers do not accept them, while one woman from Ghana is saying: “Chinese people are too traditional. When we walk on the street, many people look at us like we are aliens.”<sup>15</sup>

According to recent research, negative Chinese attitudes caused psychological distress in Africans through confusion about their personal and social identity as black people, discrimination, and the struggle to form enduring relationships with the locals.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Jenni Marsh "China says it has a 'zero-tolerance policy' for racism, but discrimination towards Africans goes back decades <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/05/25/asia/china-anti-african-attacks-history-hnk-intl/index.html> March 18, 2021 Last accessed on December 12, 2023

<sup>14</sup> Dikötter F. "The construction of racial identities in China and Japan" Hong Kong University Press, p. 27, 1997

<sup>15</sup> Liangmuxuan “劳木：怎么看越来越多非洲人来中国（之一） Why do you think more and more Africans are coming to China” <https://m.huangqi.com/article/9CaKrnKhI94>, January 23, 2019, Last accessed on December 13, 2023

<sup>16</sup> Amoah P.A., Koduah A., Anaduaka U.S., Addae E. A., Gwenzi G, Amankwaa A “Psychological wellbeing in diaspora space: A study of African economic migrants in Hong Kong” Asian Ethnicity, 21(4), 542-559, 2020

## INPUT ON THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION OF AFRICANS AND PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT IN THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION.

- Representation in the media, racist discourse, stigmatisation and negative stereotyping, negative use of political platforms?

The media has contributed to the negative attitudes by highlighting news reports on drugs, AIDs, illegal immigration, crime, fraud, and other offences when mentioning African migrants.<sup>17</sup>

Furthermore, Africans have been the target of racial discrimination on the Chinese Internet. In many videos, Africans are poor and dependent, while Chinese people are benevolent and wealthy, giving jobs, housing, food, and money to Africans.

Some netizens asked the Chinese authorities to ban Africans from becoming permanent residents of China or prohibit Black people from marrying Chinese. Netizens also attacked Chinese people who condemned racism or supported victims of racial discrimination. In April 2021, racist netizens launched a siege against China House, a non-governmental organisation that promotes sustainable development, because it had projects to help Africans living in Guangzhou. Their messages were: "Thank you for your hard work in participating in this project, I wish you all ascend to heaven," "Traitor," and "You guys want to help Black people integrate into Chinese society. Where do you get the funds? Who is behind it?" The Chinese government's Internet system, commonly known as the "Great Firewall," is one of the most sophisticated in the world. China has banned many words on the Internet and has primarily isolated itself from the global Internet. The country's primary social media employs thousands of content moderators responsible for removing or restricting politically sensitive content. As for the racist content, it seems that the policies are insufficient, or they have failed to implement them.

Black people who had recently lived in China had reported racist content to social media companies, but they had received the same response that the content did not violate regulations. A West African man living in Shanghai said: "In my opinion, it is shocking that the Great Firewall blocks information so quickly, but this racist content is not censored or banned." As Runako Celina, the "African Blessing Industry" documentary producer, said: "I am worried if the online extremism can only stay online for long."<sup>18</sup>

- Afrophobia, xenophobia, racially motivated acts of violence and hate crimes?

Another common type of racist content is the interracial romance. Marriage between a Black person and a Chinese person is thought to threaten the purity of Chinese blood. Romance between Black men and Chinese women is usually stigmatised. Some Chinese women have

<sup>17</sup> Anwar Quassini, Mostafa Amini, Nabil Quassini "#ChinaMustexplain: Global Tweets, COVID-19, and Anti-Black Racism in China" <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8914295/> March 2022, Last accessed on December 13, 2023

<sup>18</sup> Human Rights Watch 中国：应打击社交媒体上的仇黑种族歧视 (China: Black hatred and racial discrimination on social media should be combated) <https://www.hrw.org/zh-hans/news/2023/08/16/china-combat-anti-black-racism-social-media>, August 16, 2023 Last accessed on December 15, 2023

been subjected to online harassment due to posting photos of themselves with their Black male partners on social media, including threats to kill, rape, or scrounge.

A difficult period for Africans in China was the coronavirus pandemic. China's success in controlling the spread of coronavirus fuelled a frenzy of patriotism, nationalism, and xenophobia.<sup>19</sup> Many Africans were forced to coronavirus testing and arbitrary 14-day self-quarantine, regardless of their recent travel history. Others were left homeless after being evicted by landlords and rejected by hotels under the various virus containment measures.<sup>20</sup>

Congolese businessperson Mwaba said he and other community leaders spent a night scouring the city because they were searching for accommodation for Congolese students who had been kicked out of their places. In Yiwu, Zhejiang, Nigerian jewellery exporter Lucky Destiny said that whenever he went out during the coronavirus pandemic, he saw locals either covering their noses or walking around him. He started going out to buy food at night when fewer people were on the streets.<sup>21</sup>

The point in the global media's attention on anti-Black racism in China was the viral post of a local McDonald's restaurant hanging a sign in the front door stating, *"We have been informed that from now on Black people are not allowed to enter the restaurant. For the sake of your health consciously notify the local police for medical isolation, please understand the inconvenience caused."*<sup>22</sup> It was an act that showed the normalisation of discriminatory behaviour in contemporary China, where Han's stores often hang signs banning the entrance of Black people, Uyghurs, and other minorities. This situation caused tremendous outrage on Twitter and mainstream new media outlets<sup>23</sup> but also a rupture in China-Africa relations, as the foreign ministries of several African nations -and even the African Union- demanded answers from China.<sup>24</sup> Ghana's foreign minister criticised China's inhumane treatment of Africans. A group of African ambassadors sent a letter to the foreign minister of China

<sup>19</sup> Wang Yuemei, 随着疫情消退, 民族主义和仇外情绪在中国蔓延 As epidemic recedes, nationalism and xenophobia spread in China <https://cn.nytimes.com/china/20200417/coronavirus-china-nationalism/> April 17, 2020, Last accessed on December 7, 2023

<sup>20</sup> Jenni Marsh "China says it has a 'zero-tolerance policy' for racism, but discrimination towards Africans goes back decades <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/05/25/asia/china-anti-african-attacks-history-hnk-intl/index.html> March 18, 2021, Last accessed on December 12, 2023

<sup>21</sup> Wang Yuemei, 随着疫情消退, 民族主义和仇外情绪在中国蔓延 As epidemic recedes, nationalism and xenophobia spread in China <https://cn.nytimes.com/china/20200417/coronavirus-china-nationalism/> April 17, 2020 Last accessed on December 7, 2023

<sup>22</sup> Deabler A. "McDonald's in China apologises for notice banning black customers from entering restaurant" <https://www.foxnews.com/food-drink/mcdonalds-china-apologizing-notice-banning-black-people> April 14, 2020, Last accessed on December 13, 2023

<sup>23</sup> Anwar Quassini, Mostafa Amini, Nabil Quassini "#ChinaMustexplain: Global Tweets, COVID-19, and Anti-Black Racism in China" <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8914295/> March 2022, Last accessed on December 13, 2023

<sup>24</sup> Jenni Marsh "China says it has a 'zero-tolerance policy' for racism, but discrimination towards Africans goes back decades <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/05/25/asia/china-anti-african-attacks-history-hnk-intl/index.html> March 18, 2021, Last accessed on December 12, 2023

condemning the discrimination against Africans.<sup>25</sup> However, China's official response was not satisfying. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said, "*All foreigners are treated equally. We reject differential treatment, and we have zero tolerance for discrimination.*"<sup>26</sup>

Despite the officials' statements, it has proved that racism against Africans in China is not an unusual phenomenon. Africans have encountered many difficulties in their everyday life, and they have been targeted unfairly, even on the Internet, due to their race. However, there seems to be no progress, and the Chinese officials are unwilling. Otherwise, they would have taken the necessary measures or applied the legislation in favour of the Africans residing in the country.



Kingsfordweg 151, 1043 GR

Amsterdam, Netherlands

+31687406567 | [info@brokenchalk.org](mailto:info@brokenchalk.org) | [www.brokenchalk.org](http://www.brokenchalk.org)

<https://twitter.com/brokenchalk>

<https://www.youtube.com/brokenchalk>

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/brokenchalk>

<https://www.facebook.com/BrokenChalk/>

[https://www.instagram.com/brokenchalk\\_/](https://www.instagram.com/brokenchalk_/)

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<sup>25</sup> Wang Yuemei, 随着疫情消退, 民族主义和仇外情绪在中国蔓延 As epidemic recedes, nationalism and xenophobia spread in China <https://cn.nytimes.com/china/20200417/coronavirus-china-nationalism/> April 17, 2020 Last accessed on December 7, 2023

<sup>26</sup> Jenni Marsh "China says it has a 'zero-tolerance policy' for racism, but discrimination towards Africans goes back decades <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/05/25/asia/china-anti-african-attacks-history-hnk-intl/index.html> March 18, 2021, Last accessed on December 12, 2023