



## [Human Rights Groups and Activists Raise Concerns Over Authoritarian Influence on the Upcoming Interpol Elections](#)

Human rights groups and activists have sounded the alarm over potential authoritarian influence on the International Criminal Police Organization (Interpol) elections, with the global entity holding a vote this week to select its next president and some executive committee members. A couple of the candidate nominations in particular have elicited concern – Ahmed Naser Al-Raisi, inspector general of the United Arab Emirates’ interior ministry who is running for Interpol president; and Hu Binchen, an official at China’s ministry of public security who is seeking a vacant spot on Interpol’s executive committee. The fear among rights activists is that Interpol, which focuses on issues such as crimes against humanity, political corruption, and intellectual property infringement, could have its work in these important areas hindered by authoritarian governments if the international organization’s top-level positions are filled by candidates like Al-Raisi or Hu. Due to this, many nations have also expressed opposition to the controversial nominations. In the United States, congressional members signed a letter to Interpol urging the international organization to resist them in order to ensure that it remains dedicated to holding human rights violators accountable to the global community, and does not become a tool used by authoritarian regimes to promote oppression.

One of the main concerning nominations comes from the United Arab Emirates, who have put forward Ahmed Naser Al-Raisi for the Interpol position of president. The current inspector general of the UAE’s interior ministry is accused of torture and human rights abuses, and has criminal complaints against him in five different countries – including France, where Interpol has its headquarters, and Turkey, where the elections are taking place. A couple of the credible accusations of human rights abuse come from two British men who were both unjustly imprisoned in the United Arab Emirates. Matthew Hedges, an academic, was unlawfully detained and tortured in the UAE, as was another man – Ali Issa Ahmad – who was arrested while on vacation in Dubai back in 2019 for merely wearing a Qatar soccer shirt. The United Arab Emirates’ array of human rights violations are well documented, with reports by activist groups routinely uncovering the abuses which include torture, arbitrary detention, forcible disappearance, and intimidation.

The other troubling candidate who is running for a high-level position within Interpol is Hu Binchen. The Chinese government official has expressed consistent disdain for groups that have been persecuted by the country’s communist party including the Uyghurs, Tibetans, and Hongkongers. As such, a collection of lawmakers who are a part of the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China drafted a letter to Interpol member nations stating that “the election of Hu Binchen to the Interpol executive committee would place tens of thousands of Chinese dissidents living abroad at even graver risk.” Rights activists fear that the Chinese government’s manipulation of Interpol upon the potential election of Hu would be near certain since they have consistently attempted to arrest dissidents of the ruling communist regime.

The legitimate concern over the prospect of authoritarian influence on the international organization has led many nations and advocacy groups, including Human Rights Watch, to directly call on Interpol to not vote for either of these controversial candidates. The hope is that there is now enough resistance to avoid the election of both, and that Interpol can remain an impartial enforcer of justice for international crimes against humanity.