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China blasts U.S. 'rape and murder' at U.N. Human Rights Council

BY: TOM MILES AND STEPHANIE NEBEHAY

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China strongly rejected U.S.-led criticism of its human rights record at the U.N. Human Rights Council on Thursday, saying the United States was hypocritical and guilty of crimes including the rape and murder of civilians.

"The U.S. is notorious for prison abuse at Guantanamo prison, its gun violence is rampant, racism is its deep-rooted malaise," Chinese diplomat Fu Cong told the Council, using unusually blunt language.

"The United States conducts large-scale extra-territorial eavesdropping, uses drones to attack other countries' innocent civilians, its troops on foreign soil commit rape and murder of local people. It conducts kidnapping overseas and uses black prisons."

Fu was responding to a joint statement by the United States and 11 other countries, who criticised China's crackdown on human rights and its detentions of lawyers and activists.

"These actions are in contravention of China's own laws and international commitments," said U.S. Ambassador Keith Harper, who read out the statement backed by Australia, Japan and nine northern European countries.

"These extra-territorial actions are unacceptable, out of step with the expectations of the international community, and a challenge to the rule-based international order."

Harper read the statement straight after U.N. human rights chief Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein gave his main annual speech to the council. He recalled his message to China in mid-February, when he cited a "very worrying pattern" of detentions.

Fu said Zeid should "refrain from making subjective comments not backed up by real facts".

He also criticised Japan's support for the joint statement, saying Japan had refused to take responsibility for conscripting 100,000 "comfort women" in Asian countries during World War Two.

In China's crackdown, police have detained about 250 human rights lawyers, legal assistants, and activists since a nationwide crackdown began last July, although many have subsequently been released.

Sophie Richardson, China director at Human Rights Watch, said the message delivered by Harper was the first collective joint statement on China in the 10 history of the council.

"The statement shows that while President Xi may think he can eradicate dissent at home, the world stands with embattled human rights defenders across China," she said in a statement.