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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



Human Rights situation in the PRC's Tibet Autonomous Region and adjacent areas where Tibetans Live

Society for Threatened Peoples is deeply concerned over the unabated repression and systemic violations of fundamental rights of Tibetan people. All available information and sources indicate that the human rights situation in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and adjacent areas where Tibetans live continues to remain critical.

March 2019 marked the 60th anniversary of Tibetan National Uprising of 1959 - the year the Dalai Lama and some 80,000 Tibetans were forced to escape into exile. The year that Tibetans from all walks of life rose up against the Chinese government for violating a long list of rights: from self-determination to cultural life.

2019 also marked the 30th birthday of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the 11th Panchen Lama, one of the most important Tibetan religious heads, who was abducted on 17 May 1995 when he was just six-years-old. For 24 years now, despite repeated calls by UN mandate holders, governments, and international human rights groups, the well-being and whereabouts of Panchen Gedhun Choekyi Nyima continue to remain unknown.

Unabated Chinese repressive policies in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and adjacent areas where Tibetans live continue compelled Tibetans to take tragic act of self-immolation protests. 153 Tibetans have self-immolated since 2009. All the protestors have called for the return of the Dalai Lama and freedom in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and adjacent areas where Tibetans live continue. Instead of efforts to address the underlying grievances of the protestors, the Chinese authorities have responded them with more repression. Family, friends, monasteries and villages of self-immolators have been subject to collective punishments.

Independent international human rights watchdogs, including Human Rights Watch, Freedom House, Reporters without Borders, all have voiced that there is a worsening situation in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and adjacent areas where Tibetans live continue. For the fourth consecutive year, Freedom House ranked the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and adjacent areas where Tibetans live continue as the second least free place in the world. Foreign Correspondence Club of China voiced against China's obstruction for journalists in carrying an independent reporting in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and adjacent areas where Tibetans live continue.

China's systematic and continues abuse of the Tibetan people's freedom of religion and belief has seen new heights in the recent months. Their systematic efforts to undermine Tibetan cultural and religious education is detailed by Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) in their latest annual report. The report revealed China's unabated oppression and reduction of space for the Tibetan people to preserve and practice the Tibetan cultural and religious life, in China's efforts to bring Tibetan religious affairs under the control of Communist Party.

In December 2018, for instance, Chinese authorities in Dzoerge Toema Township in Tsoe (Chinese: Hezuo) City in Kanlho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (TAP) launched a campaign to install photos of Xi Jinping and Mao Zedong in all homes and offices of the village while Tibetans in Serta County, in Sichuan Province, were compelled to display portrait of Chinese leaders, including Xi Jinping, in their altars and made to prostrate and make offerings.

Tibetan families found in possession of the Dalai Lama's pictures in their homes during random, unannounced inspection are denied access to government benefits. For example, a married couple Tsering and Lhamo from Tsosang village, Shungpa Township in Lithang were denied poverty alleviation benefits after officials found a photo of the Dalai Lama displayed in the couple's house.

During the Tibetan Buddhist holy month, *Saga Dawa*, last year, parents of a kindergarten school in Chamdo, TAR, were warned of severe consequences if their children miss school to take part in any religious festival or visited monastery. A similar warning was also issued to parents of an upper middle school in Lhasa, where parents were made to sign a compulsory "responsibility agreement" promising to keep their children away from any

religious activities. Similarly, in Lhoka municipality in TAR told children not to participate in any kind of religious activity.

Noting China's ongoing persecution of religious groups including Tibetan Buddhists, Christians, Falun Gong practitioners and Uighur Muslims, the US International Commission on Religious Freedom designated China as a "country of particular concern".

The Chinese government's policies tailored and targeted towards diminishing the Tibetan language have been extremely concerning, especially in the last few months. In January 2019, the renowned Tibetan language rights advocate Tashi Wangchuk was denied access to his lawyer, despite repeated international calls for his immediate release. Charged with "inciting separatism" after he featured in a *New York Times* documentary, Tashi Wangchuk was campaigning against the lack of opportunity for Tibetan children to learn Tibetan language in schools.

Some schools where Tibetan has been long taught are shrinking the space, like the Tibet Minzu University in China's Shaanxi province where couple thousand Tibetan students are said to be enrolled, has stopped using Tibetan language as mode of teaching instruction. The university's 11 specialization courses are all offered in Chinese language, even the traditional Tibetan medicines courses, beginning this year.

Tibetan children are banned from attending informal Tibetan classes in the local Tibetan monasteries during winter breaks. The ban notice titled "Urgent notice concerning stopping illegal study classes in monasteries" circulated in December 2018 in Nangchen County in Qinghai province, while calling on the local officials and Chinese Communist Party cadres to stop monasteries from running the informal language classes.

Freedom of expression is constantly abused as Tibetans staging peaceful protests are ruthlessly imprisoned, and thereby the number of Tibetans detained and arrested arbitrarily, and unjustly imprisoned continues to rise. On 10 December 2018, as the UN celebrated the 70th anniversary of Universal Declaration of Human Rights under the umbrella of "Stand up for human rights" campaign, Sangay Gyatso, a 17-year-old monk, was detained by local Chinese authorities in Ngaba County town in Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) TAP after he staged a peaceful protest calling for freedom in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and adjacent areas where Tibetans live continue. His wellbeing and whereabouts are still not known.

Lodoe Gyatso, 57-year-old former Tibetan political prisoner, and his wife Gakyi were secretly sentenced to 18 years and two years, respectively, after Lodoe Gyatso staged a peaceful protest in front of the Potala palace in Lhasa, and his wife for allegedly recording his video message just before the protest that was widely-shared on Chinese social media. They are from Sogkhar village in Tsadog Township, Sog County, Nagchu Prefecture, TAR.

In April 2019, a Chinese court in Rebkong (Chinese: Tongren) county, Malho (Chinese: Huangan) TAP in Qinghai Province in Amdo, sentenced nine Tibetans for varying prison terms. Gendun Soepa, Choesang, Bhende Dorje, Tashi Tsering, Sonam Gyal, Dhargye, Shawo Tsering, Khajam Gyal, and Dukbum Tsering were sentenced due to a long campaign launched by the villagers to reclaim community land confiscated by local government for unsuccessful brick factories.

In the same month, Sonam, a post graduate Tibetan student of Northwest Minzu University in Lanzhou, Gansu Province, was detained without notice after he wrote an essay lamenting the reducing numbers of seats for Tibetans aspiring for government jobs. His essay written in Chinese was widely shared on social networking sites, including Wechat. Sonam's current whereabouts remains unknown.

Wangchen, a 20-year-old Tibetan man from Sereshul County, Karze TAP, was arrested and sentenced just over a week apart for praying and calling for Panchen Gedhun Choekyi Nyima's release. Wangchen was sentenced to four and half years on 7 May 2019. His aunt Dolkar was accused of spreading information about the Wangchen's detention and was also sentenced to a year and three months.

Deaths of former political prisoners due to prolonged illness caused by torture they suffered in prison have dismally increased this year with three such reports received in less than a month's time: Lekshey Thupten from Phenpo Lhundrup County in Lhasa (died in April);

Pema Wangchen, 31, from Wongsang village in Karze county, Karze (Chinese: Ganzi) TAP (died on 26 April); and Yeshe Gyatso, 50, from Tsenmo Yarteng village, Rebgong County, Malho (Chinese: Huangnan) TAP (died on 1 May). This requires urgent attention and condemnation of Chinese authorities on the ill-treatment and torture in while in detention or imprisonment.

In conclusion, Society for Threatened Peoples urges the Human Rights Council to call on the Peoples' Republic of China to:

Respect the rights of the Tibetan people as guaranteed in the Chinese Constitution.

Release the 11th Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, Tashi Wangchuk, and all political prisoners.

Forbid torture and other acts of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, and torture-deaths of Tibetans detained or imprisoned in Chinese jails.

Provide unfettered access to foreign journalists, independent observers and allow UN mandate holders to travel and visit to the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and adjacent areas where Tibetans live continue

Enter into meaningful dialogue with the envoys of the Dalai Lama to peacefully resolve the issue of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR).
