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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by International Fellowship of Reconciliation, 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.

[22 August 2022]

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



Human Rights in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China and Other Tibetan Populated Areas in China

The International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) shares serious concerns regarding the protection of human rights in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China and Other Tibetan Populated Areas in China where Tibetan people are reported to be persecuted and discriminated and where arbitrary detention and torture, religious repression, violation of the freedom of expression and information and of education and language rights have been registered.

Upon Her visit to China, the High Commissioner stated the importance to protect “linguistic, religious and cultural identity of Tibetans, and that Tibetan people are allowed to participate fully and freely in decisions about their religious life”.^[1]

International standards on cultural rights are to be found in provisions relating to minorities and indigenous peoples such as in art. 27 of the ICCPR ^[2], in art. 15 of the International Covenant on Economical, Social and Cultural Rights and in the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities and indigenous peoples.

An ongoing “sinicization” policy has been registered at the expense of the ethnic and cultural minorities living in the different regions of the country. Tibetans who publicly and peacefully protest and resist are persecuted and are also targeted for sharing information.

Laws and regulations have been implemented to impose Chinese medium education, shutter alternative avenues for Tibetan medium education, and institutionalize party ideology and propaganda in the state education system. In September 2021, the “Children Homophony Plan” went into force, requiring the compulsory teaching of Putonghua (Chinese Mandarin) in preschool education.^[3] Preschool children in minority autonomous regions are now taught primarily in Putonghua and preschool teachers are required to attain a certain level of proficiency.

In July 2021, Chinese education authorities in the Tibetan autonomous prefectures of Malho (Chinese: Huangnan), Tsolho (Chinese: Hainan) and Yushu (Chinese: Kyegudo) in Qinghai Province issued a notice stating that Tibetan language will no longer be accorded more importance in school entrance exams. The change reduces Tibetan applicants’ chances of admission to the only national-level secondary schools still teaching some Tibetan.^[4]

In 2021, all Tibetan private schools were ordered to close and their students were sent to government schools.^[5] Those who failed to follow the order were threatened with imprisonment. Since then, six primary schools in Gemang, Bumser, Troshul, Asey, Warong and Phendey Chekyong in Tharshul village are known to have been closed.

The Regional National Autonomy Law, which contains provisions for minority nationalities to use and develop their own languages and cultures, has long been downgraded as official policy began promoting Putonghua as the ‘national common language’. For instance, the freedom to use and develop minority languages (Article 10) is undermined by numerous other provisions that obligate the state authorities to introduce measures to promote Putonghua as the national common language.^[6]

On 24 August 2021, Yangrik and Gyuldrak, both 19-year-old students at the Darlag County Middle School in Golok Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, were detained for commenting critically on the replacement of Tibetan language education by Chinese in a WeChat group.^[7]

The same language imposition has also been introduced in the Tibetan Buddhist institutions.

Tibetan Buddhism has also been affected through the banning of any display of religious articles or practices, also among school children. Possession of photos of the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan spiritual leader and Nobel Peace laureate, has long been banned and punished with detention in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China.^[8] In 2021, accounts from the ground revealed mass raids conducted as authorities seized mobile phones and scoured them for ‘illegal’ contents such as photos of the Dalai Lama.^[9] The raids covered entire villages in Wonpo and Denma Townships in Serashul County, Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture,

Sichuan Province. Many Tibetans were either detained incommunicado or held in extrajudicial detention.

The restrictions placed upon Tibetan monastic institutions and practitioners concerning the right to freedom of religion or belief have intensified ever since the Chinese President emphasized ‘sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism’ as one of the top ten strategies for ‘governing Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China in the new era’ in August 2020.[10]

Regulations such as the ‘Measures for the Administration of Religious Personnel’ that was enforced in May 2021, mostly incorporating existing policies on “sinicization of religions” (Article 7), prevent religious institutions, clergy, and general practitioners from fully practicing their religion or following the traditional Buddhist educational system.

It has been reported that at the end of 2021 two giant Buddha statues, prayer wheels, and a monastic school with over 100 students in Drango County, Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, were torn down [10] and many Tibetans, detained during the consequent crackdown in January 2022 on suspicion of sharing information about the demolition [11], were held in a ‘re-education’ facility, another extrajudicial detention facility, located at Thangnakma near Dropa.[12]

In recent years there have been many cases of Tibetans detained in ‘re-education’ facilities where the conditions are reported to be deplorable.[13]

On 17 February 2021, a Tibetan high school student named S.T. was detained along with two others [14] in Tridu (Chinese: Chenduo) County and taken to the Yushu City Detention Center and after almost ten months into detention, the Yushu City police called her father asking him to collect his daughter from a hotel room in Kyegudo.¹⁵

It is also concerning the persecution of Tibetan educators, intellectuals and cultural leaders, and cultural rights defenders, many of whom have been detained incommunicado and sentenced in secret.

In December 2021, eminent Tibetan scholar Go Sherab Gyatso AKA ‘Gosher’ was sentenced to 10 years in prison, on the charge of “inciting secession”, in a secret trial in Lhasa.[16] Gosher has been forthright about his views of the damaging effects of Chinese policies on the individual and collective rights of the Tibetan people.

Other Tibetan writers such as Gendun Lhundup and Dhi Lhaden [17], have been sentenced to 4 to 10 years’ prison terms following lengthy periods of detention in undisclosed locations. In most of these cases, information about the exact charges, sentencing dates, and current whereabouts remains unclear.

Controls and restrictions on online communication in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China have been made communication with the outside world exceedingly difficult and even life-threatening for locals; online chat groups are reported to be targeted and their founders are often detained incommunicado.

A monk from the local Wonpo monastery, Tamey, was detained along with other monks in November 2019 for taking part in a peaceful protest and after his release in May 2020 he was again detained on 11 August for sharing news of his detention online.[18]

Recommendations

IFOR supports the call to China addressed by UN experts, ahead of the 50th session of the Human Rights Council, to fully cooperate with the UN human rights system and protect fundamental freedoms.[19]

IFOR calls on the member States of the Human Rights Council to support China in the implementation of all human rights, including cultural rights.

IFOR calls on the High Commissioner and UN mechanisms to assist China in fulfilling its obligations under international human rights law.

- [1] <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/05/statement-un-high-commissioner-human-rights-michelle-bachelet-after-official>
- [2] <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>
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- [4] “New Scoring System on Entrance Exams Raises Bar For Tibetans Pursuing Native Language Studies”, Radio Free Asia, 21 July 2021, rfa.org/english/news/tibet/scoring-07212021203026.html
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- [6] Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law of the People's Republic of China. <https://www.cecc.gov/resources/legal-provisions/regional-ethnic-autonomy-law-of-the-peoples-republic-of-china-amended>
- [7] “Two Tibetan Students Detained for Opposing Chinese-Only Instruction in School”, Radio Free Asia, 27 August 2021, rfa.org/english/news/tibet/students-08272021182339.html
- [8] “China in New Push Against Dalai Lama Photos in Kardze”, Radio Free Asia, 9 April 2021, rfa.org/english/news/tibet/photos-04092021131635.html
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- [10] CCP issues Administrative Measures for Religious Institutions, effective September 1, China Aid, May 19, 2021, available at <https://www.chinaaid.org/2021/05/ccp-issues-administrative-measures-for.html>
- [11] “The Chinese government destroys another Buddha statue in Tibet, and many Tibetans are arrested”, TCHRD, January 2022, cn.tchrd.org/%e4%b8%ad%e5%9b%bd%e6%94%bf%e5%ba%9c%e5%9c%a8%e8%a5%bf%e8%97%8f%e5%8f%88%e6%af%81%e4%b8%80%e4%bd%9b%e5%83%8f%ef%bc%8c%e5%a4%9a%e5%90%8d%e8%97%8f%e4%ba%ba%e8%a2%ab%e6%8d%95
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- [14] “Tibetan monk’s account reveals rampant use of torture and sexual abuse in China’s ‘political re-education’ centres”, TCHRD, May 2018, tchrd.org/tibetan-monks-account-reveals-rampant-use-of-torture-and-sexual-abuse-in-chinas-political-re-education-centres/
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