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

Joint written statement* submitted by International Career Support Association, Japan Society for History Textbook, non-governmental organizations 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.

[20 August 2023]

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



Religious Repression in China

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, in Article 18 guarantees the freedom of religion by an individual or by a community. Among the large countries, China stands out as a repeat violator of this right.

The latest instance of such violation may be seen in the arrest of a pastor and his coworker for the offense of printing religious materials.

“A court in China’s Shandong province handed down jail terms to a pastor and a co-worker of an independent house church for alleged “illegal business operations.”

Pastor Qin Sifeng and co-worker Su Minjun of Beijing Lampstand Church were sentenced to five and a half years, and three and half years respectively, ChinaAid reported on June 6.

...

Local Christians said the arrest of Qin and Su came after the church printed some hymnals and theological materials for internal use. Local police started a probe leading to their detention.” *1

This arrest is part of a pattern of restriction on religious freedom imposed by China. Previously a couple had been charged with running an illegal business for printing and selling religious books.

“A Chinese couple has lost their appeal against seven-year prison sentences for selling Christian literature.

A court in China has upheld the sentences against booksellers Chang Yuchun, 53, and his wife, Li Chenhui, 44, for 'inciting subversion of State power'.

The charity Open Doors says that as well as each facing a seven-year jail term they must both pay fines of 250,000 yuan (approximately £29,700) for running an 'illegal business operation'.

...

The charity says that over the course of five years, Yuchun and Chenhui printed and sold Christian literature until their printing company was shut down by authorities in July 2021.

The couple was accused of running a company without a license as well as of 'inciting subversion of State power'.” *2

The United Nations Human Rights Council is called upon to urge China to right its wrongs.

1. Continued Reign of Terror of China in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China

China, from the very beginning of its invasion of Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China in 1950, has embarked on a long project of uprooting the Tibetans from their distinctive culture and identity. As part of their work in this direction, China often undertakes brutal measures which would not be acceptable in any civilized country.

The systemic segregation of Tibetan children from their families has come in for criticism-

This has involved implementing specific policies for Tibetan children, who were compelled to attend residential schools where they were taught in Mandarin and indoctrinated with communist ideology.

China's policies towards Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China have long been a source of controversy, UN Human Rights Council and human rights groups accusing the Chinese government of violating the rights of the Tibetan people. One of the most concerning aspects of this conflict is the forced segregation of Tibetan children from their families, as part of the Chinese government's efforts to assimilate Tibetans into Chinese culture in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China. *3

The United Nations Human Rights Council noted this problem in February 2023 and stated that –

“We are very disturbed that in recent years the residential school system for Tibetan children appears to act as a mandatory large-scale program intended to assimilate Tibetans into majority Han culture, contrary to international human rights standards,” the experts said.”

This is accompanied by the imposition of massive labour camps in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China where Tibetans are coerced into forced labour.

Beijing has forced more than half a million rural Tibetans into these military-style training and indoctrination facilities in just the past six months, Sangay said. Upon their release, thousands of rural laborers are sent to perform factory work or menial jobs in other parts of China, all under the guise of “poverty alleviation,” according to a September report by the Jamestown Foundation. Corroborating documents obtained by Reuters showed that Chinese Communist Party officials were given strict quotas for how many Tibetans to round up. *4

This was also noted by the UN Special Rapporteurs.

Just last month, six independent UN Special Rapporteurs released a statement expressing concern that China’s alleged “job transfer and vocational training programs” in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China are being used as a pretext “to undermine Tibet’s religion, language and culture, and to monitor and politically indoctrinate Tibetans.” *5

To ensure that news of their atrocities does not come to the attention of the international community, China has actively sought to cut off Tibetans’ ties with the world.

Efforts are being made on an alarming scale to cut off all contact between Tibetans living inside and outside Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China to ensure that China can hide its human rights violations in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China. Tibetans have been fired from their jobs, imprisoned, and tortured merely for staying in contact with relatives living abroad.

Tibetans have been forced to seek help from the world in their hope for some respite from continued oppression. *6

The violation of several fundamental human rights, including those under Article 5, a 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, should not go unchecked and unpunished.

3. China’s Crackdown upon Hui Muslims

An overwhelming majority of the Chinese population belongs to the Han ethnicity. Apart from this, China recognizes 55 ethnic groups as minorities. All 55 ethnic groups are subject to some form of repression at some or the other time. Just as the Uyghurs and the Tibetans have been facing oppression from the Chinese government, the Hui Muslims are also beginning to face brutal action.

In 2018, the administration of China issued a directive aimed as the Sinicization of Muslims in China. *7

Keeping with the pattern of repression observed in the actions of the government of China against other ethnic minorities, one of the aspects has been an attempt to destroy a distinctive identity of the ethnic minority.

This has also been accompanied by the closure of mosques and the cancellation of licenses of imams. *8

The mere practice of their religion has been criminalized.

“Like Uyghurs and other predominantly Muslim minorities, authorities held Hui individuals in formal detention and mass internment camps in the XUAR for actions related to Islam that are protected under international law. Reasons for detention included the following:

- advocating for religious freedom for Muslims;
- reading the Quran in a mosque;
- teaching the Quran via WeChat;
- conducting an Islamic funeral;

- viewing online religious media content;
- funding mosque construction;
- “privately preaching the Quran;” and
- living and studying in Pakistan.

Hui individuals have also been detained in mass internment camps for contacting a landlord abroad via WhatsApp, and using a virtual private network.” *9

The campaign for the Sinicization of Islam has also resulted in severe crackdowns: -

“In 2015, Party General Secretary Xi Jinping announced “the need to uphold the Sinicization of religion in order to actively guide religions to adapt to socialist society.” The resulting “Sinicization” campaign aims to bring religion in China under closer Party control and in line with officially sanctioned interpretations of Chinese culture. Christians and Muslims in China have been particular targets of the Sinicization campaign due to government fears of foreign influence and extremism.

In various platforms, the Chinese government has called on Muslims throughout China to promote “Sinicization” and resist “Arabization,” “Saudization,” and the “generalization of halal” in their communities. International reporting has linked government statements on the “Sinicization” of Islam to the crackdown on Islamic practices and the destruction, closure, and alteration of buildings.

This “Sinicization” campaign has extended to Hui communities in the Linxia Autonomous Prefecture in Gansu province. Linxia Autonomous Prefecture in Gansu Province is often described as China’s “Little Mecca,” and has a thriving Hui Muslim community with a majority Muslim population, a significant number of mosques, and visible displays of Muslim dress. However, as part of the “Sinicization” campaign, authorities in Linxia Autonomous Prefecture in Gansu Province and the surrounding villages have:

- demolished mosques;
- replaced Arabic-style minarets with Chinese-style ones;
- stopped restaurants from using the word “halal” in Arabic to reduce Arab influence;
- prohibited the Muslim call to prayer; and
- prevented children from attending Arabic or religious schooling.

The brutal repression meted out by China to its ethnic minorities amounts to a gross violation of provisions of the ICCPR and every other humanitarian concept and treaty. The UN is called upon to act upon it at the earliest.

GRich: Global Research Institute for Comprehensive Human Rights iRich: International Research Institute for Controversial Histories, NGO(s) without consultative status, also share the views expressed in this statement.

*1 <https://www.ucanews.com/news/chinese-christians-jailed-for-printing-religious-materials/101607>

*2 <https://premierchristian.news/en/news/article/chinese-couple-lose-their-appeal-against-seven-year-prison-sentence-for-selling-christian-literature>

*3 <https://www.indiatoday.in/world/story/tibetan-children-forcefully-separated-from-their-families-by-china-2337110-2023-02-20>

*4 https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/chinas-atrocities-in-tibet-are-growing-too-big-to-ignore/2020/12/24/ba9d5c4e-4624-11eb-b0e4-0f182923a025_story.html

*5 G7 leaders concerned about Tibetan human rights, forced labor - International Campaign for Tibet (savetibet.org)

*6 Tibet urges Australia for taking rigorous action against human rights abuse in China (thestatesman.com)

*7 <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/21/world/asia/china-islam-crackdown.html>

*8 <https://www.npr.org/2019/09/26/763356996/afraid-we-will-become-the-next-xinjiang-chinas-hui-muslims-face-crackdown>

*9 Hui Muslims and the “Xinjiang Model” of State Suppression of Religion | Congressional-Executive Commission on China (cecc.gov)