



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/2001/NGO/167
12 March 2001

Original: ENGLISH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-seventh session
Item 11(a) of the provisional agenda

CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF:
TORTURE AND DETENTION

Written statement*/ submitted by the 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.

[5 February 2001]

*/ This written statement is issued, unedited, as received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

1. The People's Republic of China is party to several UN human rights instruments and standards all of which adhere to provide the fullest form of protection to detainees, including those held for their political or religious beliefs. China is now even a signatory of the UN Convention on Civil and Political Rights. In November, 2000, Beijing also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Office of UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.
2. The steps taken by China to bring its human rights behaviour closer to international norms and standards on human rights and fundamental freedoms is always a welcome sign. However, when applauding Beijing for taking these steps, the international community must not ignore the ground realities as far as promotion and protection of human rights, particularly the protection of detainees from persecution, including that of torture, summary execution and solitary confinement.
3. In Tibet, for example, each year Tibetan political prisoners die in custody. The mysterious deaths of five Tibetan nuns following the May 1998 Drapchi Prison Protests is but one example. The recent death in custody of 60-year-old Sholpa Dawa, a prominent Tibetan political prisoner, on 19 November 2000, at a hospital outside Drapchi Prison is another. His body was not even handed over to his family members to perform the last rites. He had been arrested three times. The third time for collecting names of political prisoners and communicating these to the outside world.
4. On 9 May, 2000, the Committee Against Torture, in its concluding observation on China's Third Periodic Report, expressed concern "about the continuing allegations of serious incidents of torture, especially involving Tibetans and other national minorities."
5. We welcome that the Chinese authorities finally permitted Mrs. Sonam Dekyi who lives in India to visit her imprisoned son Ngawang Choephel. Ngawang Choephel was secretly sentenced to 18 years on the charges of "espionage." His case has been repeatedly raised at the Commission on Human Rights.
6. In this written submission, we include a statement issued on 19 August, 2000 in New Delhi, India by Mrs. Sonam Dekyi following her meeting with her son: "I was filled with mixed emotions when I received permission from the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi to travel into Tibet to visit my son, Ngawang Choephel, who is serving 18 years prison sentence in Tibet.When I saw my son in a huge prison complex near Chengdu Railway Station, I could not even recognise him. In front of me, separated by two counters and two layers of wire-netting, stood this frail body with mere skin and bones. Tears rolled down incessantly from my eyes and I asked him if he was indeed my son. All he could say in response was, "please don't cry." I immediately recognised my son's voice. There were three prison guards with him, one at the back and two beside him. When I inquired after his health, he held his chest and told me that he had constant pain in the chest. With his forehead down on the counter, he broke down in front of me. We all cried for a long time until we were told that the visit would be terminated if we did not stop crying. I was desperate to have physical contact with him and so I requested if I could touch his forehead and hold his hands. I could hear my son requesting for the same. But our pleadings fell on deaf ear.

My son told me that he had written numerous appeals for medical treatment and also to be allowed to see his mother but was not able to submit them. He was told he has no illness and that he was just pretending. Frustrated with the indifference, he went on a hunger strike.....I am 66 years old and my only child is serving 18 years prison sentence since 1995. My son is suffering from a serious physical and mental trauma in prison. His health is deteriorating day by day and if he does not receive timely and adequate medical treatment, he may not survive. I make an urgent appeal to the international community and in particular to the Chinese government to hand over my only son to me for medical treatment."

7. In conclusion, we urge all the members of the Commission on Human Rights to seriously review its approach on the human rights situation in China and Tibet. In order to maintain its credibility, the Commission on Human Rights, is urged to adopt a resolution on China which calls for the release of all political prisoners held by Beijing.
