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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.

[29 January 2021]

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

Human Rights Situation in the Tibet Autonomous Region, China and adjacent areas where Tibetans live

Society for Threatened People is concerned about the worsening situation of human rights in the Tibet Autonomous Region and adjacent areas where Tibetans live. The Government of the People's Republic of China has been consistently violating various facets of the basic human rights of Tibetans with impunity. The suppression of Tibetans by the Chinese Government has forced 155 Tibetans to self-immolate in Tibet Autonomous Region and adjacent areas where Tibetans live since 2009 as a mark of peaceful protest against the atrocities perpetrated on Tibetans.

Violation of Right to Freedom of Religion

The Chinese Government has consistently instituted repressive policies with a recurring pattern on the practice of Tibetan Buddhism with intense regulation of and control over religious institutions. Chinese authorities recently banned religious offering of "sangsol" in front of Jokhang temple, one of the holy sites in Lhasa for Tibetan Buddhists. The Tibetan prayer flags were banned and forcefully removed by the Chinese authorities. Tibetan children are banned from engaging in religious activities during vacations and elderly retired Tibetans are prohibited from going on kora (circumambulation of religious shrines) and from participating in religious activities. The admission of novices to religious institutions are not just regulated but also restricted. There are fixed quotas for the number of monks and nuns. The right to freedom of religion of Tibetans from every age group is violated. Recently, the Chinese Government instituted "monastic management committees" and forced Tibetan monks to study "the Seventh Central Tibet Work Forum" to enforce their political indoctrination. The Monks must pledge their allegiance to the Chinese Government and are forced to denounce the Dalai Lama. Possessing his image is illegal. Furthermore, the 11th Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyim remains undetectably since his enforced disappearance in 1995. The Chinese authorities failed to provide adequate information to queries made and concern expressed by the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and the Special Rapporteur on religious freedom or the Committee on Rights of Child. Moreover, the recent demolitions of Larung Gar and Yachen Gar, which started in 2016, created severe suffering for Tibetans and their religious and spiritual beliefs. More than 10,000 monks and nuns have since been forcefully evicted and put into so-called "re-education camps". The situation in these internment camps are so harsh that recently a Tibetan nun was driven to commit suicide to escape from the unbearable life of the camp.

Violations of Right to Food and Right to Housing

The Chinese government is forcefully removing Tibetans from their ancestral pastoral lands, depriving them of their right to food and right to housing. For extensive illegal mining supported by the Chinese authorities and for conversion of pastoral lands into national park, the Chinese government has been coercing 4,000 Tibetan farmers and herders living in Themchen county's Muru township and Suru and Drugkhyung villages to move to Golmud city in Qinghai by the end of 2020. This is not only depriving them of their sustainable life-style but also making them dependent on government's welfare schemes, which will be used as a coercive measure against them later on. Furthermore, over half a million Tibetans, around 15% of the population of the Tibet Autonomous Region, are subjected to forced labour. It is a widespread system of forced labour with over half a million Tibetans being subjected to coercive labour trainings with enforced indoctrination, intrusive surveillance, military-style enforcements and harsh punishments. The Chinese Government deprived the Tibetans of their livelihood by illegal agricultural land grabbing and forceful resettlement of the Tibetan nomads. In the name of 'poverty alleviation' and 'development', the Chinese Government is now rounding up Tibetans in labour camps and factories for subjugation.

Violations of Freedom from Torture and Incommunicado Detention

A 19-year-old Tibetan monk, Tenzin Nyima from Dza Wonpo, died on 19 January 2021 after being severely beaten and tortured by the Chinese authorities for staging peaceful protests in November 2019. Tenzin Nyima was arbitrarily detained on 9 November 2019 and was briefly released in May 2020 before being rearrested on 11 August, 2020. While in custody, Tenzin Nyima was tortured by the Chinese officials. He suffered severe beatings resulting in serious

injuries and was not given proper food, which led to a deteriorated health, eventually making him unable to move or speak. In early October 2020, prison authority informed Tenzin Nyima's family of his serious health condition and told them pick him up from the prison. In the hospital, the doctors declared his condition critical and the injuries were beyond treatment. He succumbed to his injuries on 19 January 2021. In August 2020, Lhamo, a 36-year old herdsman died in detention. She was detained in June 2020 for sending money to her relatives in India. In detention, she was tortured. Her family members were summoned in the hospital where she lay unrecognizable with severe bruises and was not in a condition to speak to her family members. Within two days of arrival of her family in the hospital, she died.

Another Tibetan woman, Tsering Tso, was arbitrarily detained on 12 November 2020 and subjected to ill-treatment and inhumane interrogation for her vocal advocacy work against corrupt local Chinese officials. She is currently released. However, she remains under extensive surveillance by the Chinese authorities. A Tibetan monk from Ngaba region, who was arbitrarily arrested by the local Chinese authorities almost a year and a half ago, continues to remain untraceable. Rinchen Tsultrim, a monk at Nangshig monastery in Ngaba and a strong advocate of Tibetan language preservation, was detained on 1 August 2019. Along with Rinchen Tsultrim, two other monks from Kordo, Ngaba county were detained but released after a few days. However, Rinchen Tsultrim was abducted to an undisclosed location by the Ngaba county police and his family members have not been able to trace his whereabouts and health condition since then.

Crackdown on Human Rights Defenders

China uses its vague terminologies and interpretation of laws to frame Tibetan human rights defenders with criminal charges. The crackdown on land rights advocates, environmental activists and language rights advocates have raised serious questions on the abuse of laws. For example, Tashi Wangchuk was sentenced to five years in prison for "inciting separatism" after he spoke to the New York Times about Tibetan language education, causing an international outcry about China's intensified crackdown on human rights defenders. Sonam Palden, a monk from Kirti Monastery, was arrested in Ngaba county in September 2019 for posting critical views on the Chinese Government's policy on Tibetan language on WeChat, a social messaging app. The land rights advocate and anti-corruption activist A-nya Sengdra was imprisoned and sentenced to seven years in detention in December 2019 for defending the rights of the local Tibetan nomads.

Violation of Cultural Rights

The cultural rights of Tibetans are being violated extensively with the aim of oppression and Sinicization, leading to cultural genocide. Tibetans, though considered "ethnic minorities" in China, do not have any language rights. Under its so-called "bilingual policy" practiced by the Chinese Government, Tibetan language has been replaced by Mandarin as a medium of instruction in Tibetan schools. Monasteries, which were the secondary source for learning Tibetan, have been banned from teaching the Tibetan language during vacations to school children. Tibetan students graduating with specialisation in Tibetan language are deprived of any job prospects. Lhundrub Dakpa, a popular Tibetan singer from Kham Driru in Nagchu has been sentenced by Chinese authorities to six years in prison for singing Tibetan songs criticising China's repressive policies in the Tibet Autonomous Region and adjacent areas where Tibetans live in June 2020. Lhundrub Dakpa was held in arbitrary detention for more than a year during which he was subjected to beatings and harsh interrogations.

Society for Threatened Peoples therefore calls upon the UN Human Rights Council to urge the Government of the People's Republic of China to:

- release the 11th Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, his family as well as Chadrel Rinpoche and stop interfering in the religious practices of the Tibetans,
- stop the practice of torture, incommunicado detention, harassment of Tibetan human rights defenders and release all Tibetan political prisoners,

- guarantee fair trials, an independent judiciary and access to legal counsel to all Tibetans,
 - allow an independent fact-finding mission to assess the human rights violations perpetrated against Tibetans in the Tibet Autonomous Region and adjacent areas where Tibetans live,
 - fulfil its obligations accepted by it to protect and guarantee the basic human rights of Tibetans including their language rights, religious freedom, freedom of speech and expression, movement and assembly in the Tibet Autonomous Region and adjacent areas where Tibetans live during its third cycle of UPR.
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