



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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Agenda item 4

**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.

[7 February 2022]

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\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only. The views expressed in the present document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials.

## **Human Rights Situation in the Tibet Autonomous Region and adjacent areas where Tibetans live**

Society for Threatened People is concerned at the worsening situation of human rights in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and adjacent areas where Tibetans live. The widespread and relentless persecution of Tibetan people by the People's Republic of China has caused a cycle of unrest, including 155 self-immolation protests by Tibetans since 2009.

Violations of Cultural Rights by China:

China has systematically violated rights of Tibetans to take part in the Tibetan social and cultural life.

In the list of issues in relation to the third periodic review of China, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in April 2021, called upon China to ensure the cultural identity of Tibetans is “not undermined” by the assimilation and Sinicization policy of China.

Often the Chinese authorities banned, and further intensified deployment of security personnel in Tibetan areas in particular during Tibetan Buddhist cultural festivals and religious events. For instance, Saga Dawa, celebration of Tibetan Losar (Tibetan New Year), Sangsol (ritual Buddhist offering by burning juniper) and Gaden Ngamchoe.

Retired Tibetan officials and party members are banned from taking part in any kind of Tibetan cultural life, including visiting a Tibetan Buddhist monastery. Tibetan parents are strictly ordered to shun their children to give access to any form of Tibetan Buddhist religious and cultural life.

A leaked internal document titled “Code of Conduct for Communist Party Members in the Tibet Autonomous Region” which has been circulated internally since April 2021, explicitly forbidden religious conduct include wearing rosary beads or religious imagery; participation in religious and spiritual retreats and forwarding or liking religious audio, video or religious information or scriptures. The code of conduct enforces party members to undertake active roles in advising family members and relatives to downplay their religious activities, including not to set up religious imagery and altars in homes and seek party approval prior inviting religious personnel to conduct Tibetan Buddhist rituals for occasions like weddings and funerals.

Similarly, since November 2021, the Chinese authorities in Tsolho (Chinese:Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture stepped up restriction in carrying out religious activities of Tibetans, in particular, Tibetan party members and cadres. Tibetan party members are ordered to refrain from engaging in any kind of religious activities at home and to get rid of personal belongings associating the religious expression like religious altars and shrines.

On 21 August 2021, the Chinese authorities in Dza Wonpo arrested around 60 Tibetans including 19 monks and about 40 lay people for possessing the picture of the 14th Dalai Lama. Furthermore, against the will of Tibetans, the Chinese authorities distributed framed images of Xi Jinping and forced them to place portraits of Mao Zedong and Xi Jinping in Tibetan household altars. In April 2020, reportedly around 14,000 framed images of Xi Jinping were distributed to Tibetan families in the Dzoge Tibetan area. Unannounced checks and random night raids by the Chinese authorities into Tibetan homes in search of “unwanted” possession are rampant.

Demolitions of Tibetan Buddhist Religious Sites to Serve Chinese Government’s Poultry and Pig Farming Projects in Drakgo:

Since 2016, China began a wide-scale demolition of Larung Gar and Yachen Gar, the Tibetan largest Buddhist learning centres, situated in the Sichuan province. Thousands of Buddhist residents were expelled from the centres. The centre built in the 1980s is now on the verge of extinction. Citing the unbearable situation, three Tibetan nuns from the centre, Rigzen Dolma, Tsering Dolma and Semgha committed suicide.

The situation in Tibetan areas can be described as “return to cultural revolution”. In the span of one month, the Chinese authorities in Kham Drakgo demolished two Buddhist statues (99-foot-tall Buddha statue and 30-foot-tall Maitreya statue) dismantled 45 giant Buddhist prayer wheels and burned down all Tibetan prayer flags in December 2021.

Similarly, in early January 2022, the Chinese authorities started demolishing monks’ quarters at Gaden Namgyal Ling monastery in Drakgo. In the place of the dwellings and residential quarters of monks of the monastery, the Chinese government converted the space for carrying out the poultry and pig farming project. Local Tibetans are ordered to cooperate the farming project. Bringing animal farming in place of Tibetan Buddhist religious sites disregards Tibetan cultural and religious rights and grossly humiliates the cultural and religious sentiments of Tibetans.

Tibetans in Drakgo were arrested and detained for sharing information: In December 2021, the Chinese authorities arrested the abbot of Drakgo monastery Paga, and his assistant Nyima, another monk by the same name Nyima and Tashi Dorjee without giving any official explanation. Furthermore, scores of other local Drakgo residents, including a Tibetan sculptor Lhamo Yangkyab and Norpa Tsering Samdup, were arbitrarily taken away from their home. They were reportedly suspected for sharing information to the outside about the demolition of Buddhist statues and Chinese authorities’ crackdown in the area.

Detainees were subjected to inhuman beating and torture, including denial of proper food and making them to stand out without putting cloths in the midst of freezing winter weather.

#### Closure of Remaining Tibetan Medium Schools:

Recent Chinese officials’ speeches and documents have increasingly put pressure on the local officials to assimilate culture and identity through changes in education, including phasing out or de-emphasize the teaching the Tibetan language.

The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural rights raised concern over the language policy in schools in the list of issues to China for the third period review cycle. The Committee has highlighted concern over parents who do not send their Children to school because of language policy that discards the right to access education in their mother tongue.

The remaining Tibetan medium language schools are increasingly facing forcible closure and subject to comply with restrictive directives. In early August 2021, Gyalten Getsa (Charity) school in Tehor Rongbatsa (Chinese: Rongbacha) Township in Kardze was issued a closure warning notice by the local government. The school had been warned of severe consequences, including closure, if the school does not switch into teaching the state-compiled textbooks and start using Chinese language as the medium of instruction including conducting the school annual examination in Mandarin.

In July 2021, the Sengdruk Taktse Middle School in the Golog (Chinese: Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture area was forced to shut down. A long-serving teacher of the school Rinchen Kyi was arrested on 1 August for “inciting separatism”, after holding a hunger strike in protest against the school closure.

In October 2021, Drakgo Monastery school which offered both Tibetan traditional and modern education, was demolished. Students of the school, around 130 Tibetan children, have been forced to return home without access to alternative schools with Tibetan language and cultural education.

Crackdown on Tibetan language and Environmental Rights Defenders:

The Chinese government uses vague terminologies and an arbitrary interpretation of laws to persecute Tibetan human rights defenders with criminal charges. The crackdown on land rights advocates, environmental activists, language rights advocates has raised serious questions on the abuse of laws.

The Tibetan language rights defender Tashi Wangchuk, who was released after five years in prison earlier last year, continued to be under close monitoring and intimidation by the Chinese authorities. He was summoned by the Chinese authorities earlier this year, and interrogated him who had asked him to advocate for the use of the Tibetan language. In his first public posting on Weibo, he expressed concerns over how local Chinese officials are intimidating and silencing the dissident voices rather than addressing the concerns.

Go Sherab Gyatso, known for his intellectual work and voices against the Chinese government controls over monastic education and literature, disappeared for almost a year and later sentenced to 10 years in a secret trial in November 2021 under alleged charge of “inciting secession”.

The land rights advocate and crusader of anti-corruption A-nya Sengdra was imprisoned and sentenced to 7 years in December 2019 for defending the rights of the local Tibetan nomads.

Dhongye, a 50-year-old imprisoned Tibetan environmental right defender is currently under “a near-death” failing health condition.

Conclusion:

Society for Threatened Peoples calls on the Human Rights Council to:

- Follow up with the UN experts called decisive measures to protect fundamental freedom in China by convening a special session to evaluate the rage of violations perpetrated by China;
- Urge China to give free access for Tibetan Children to receive education in mother tongue, the Tibetan language;
- Urge China to respect fundamental rights of Tibetan people and address the issues by entering into a dialogue with the representatives of Tibetan people without any preset conditions;
- Urge China to give unfettered access to independent UN human rights monitoring mechanisms and media to assess the situation in the TAR and adjacent areas where Tibetans live;
- Call upon China to reveal the whereabouts and fate of the 11th Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, his family and release all political prisoners.

