



Society for Threatened Peoples

Submission to the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights for
Consideration to the Third Periodic Review of China

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**Submitted by
Society for Threatened Peoples (STP)**

I- Introduction

1. Society for Threatened Peoples submits this alternative report to the Working Group of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) with the backdrop of the committee's third periodic review of the People's Republic of China (PRC).
2. This submission gives an overview of violations of the economic, social and cultural rights of the Tibetan people by the People's Republic of China.
3. The report concludes with suggested questions for the committee to seek further details from the state party, and to uphold obligations under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

II- Issues relating to the provisions of the Covenant

Equality and Non-Discrimination (Article 2)

4. China claims all rights enshrined in the Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights are implemented and everyone enjoys equal rights under its laws and policies consistent with the Covenant.¹ However, Tibetans are systematically discriminated and denied from exercising equal rights often under the banner fight against "separatism" or in the name of "state stability" and "social security".²
5. The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) concluded its observation from the review of China in 2018 that "Tibetans are subjected to significant restrictions on movement within and beyond Tibet Autonomous Region". The usage of the Tibetan language has been significantly restricted that the committee further noted in the concluding observation that "Tibetan language teaching in schools in the Tibet Autonomous Region has not been placed on an equal footing in law, policy and practice with Chinese; and that Tibetans do not have access to Tibetan language translations during court proceedings, which are held in Mandarin".³

Right to Work (Article 6)

¹ "Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Reviews Initial Report of China", available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2009/10/committee-economic-social-and-cultural-rights-reviews-initial-report-china>

² "Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination reviews the report of China", available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2018/08/committee-elimination-racial-discrimination-reviews-report-china>

³ "Concluding observations on the combined fourteenth to seventeenth periodic reports of China", available at: https://savetibet.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Concl_Obs_CERD_C_CHN_CO_14-17_32237_E-1.pdf, page 8

- 6 Tibetan job applicants are mandated to renounce their loyalty and ties with the exiled spiritual leader Dalai Lama.⁴ The official directives announced in January 2022 stated Employees in Tibetans related offices must be “trustworthy and reliable citizens” and remain loyal to the ruling Chinese Communist Party. Such directives further restrict and reduce prospects of Tibetans working in government sectors.
- 7 In its replies to the LOIs, China said that “the Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy stipulates that the chairman of an autonomous region, the governor of an autonomous prefecture, and the head of an autonomous county shall be a citizen of the ethnic group” in that region. However, with the recent changes and appointment of new Chinese mayors for Tibetans cities and areas, including in the Tibetan capital city of Lhasa, Shigatse, Chamdo, and other COVID-hit Tibetan cities,⁵ Lhasa city is almost entirely run by Chinese. The head of the Lhasa government is also a Chinese person.

Protection of the family and children (Article 10)

- 8 China’s “ethnic policy in new era”, drive, a campaign to impose stay in line with “Xi-Jinping thought”, enforced millions of Tibetan children to stay away from their families. The network of “colonial-style” boarding schools in Tibet has caused serious concerns.⁶ These boarding schools not only violate multiple human rights including the rights of the child but also engender the continuation and the preservation of Tibetan language and culture. Reportedly, nearly one million Tibetan children are put in these colonial boarding schools where students are separated from their families, community and access to any cultural events.
- 9 In its replies to LOIs, China denied the separation of children from their families and instead stated that “parents can pick up their children every weekend or every month, and students reunite with their families during winter and summer vacations.” However, in some cases, Tibetan children are able to reunite with family only during annual vocations. Most of the time, Tibetan children could neither see their families back home for as long as three years, nor could they speak to them on the telephone, causing great psychological and emotional distress.

Right to Health (Article 12)

- 10 In normal circumstances, Tibetans do not have equal and easy access to medical services, especially Tibetans in rural areas. Former Tibetan political prisoners and families of political dissidents are barred from medical and social welfare schemes.

⁴ “Renounce Dalai Lama to get jobs, China tells Tibetans”, Radio Free Asia:
<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/jobs-01272022173142.html>

⁵ New mayors appointed in COVID-hit Tibetan cities, *International Campaign for Tibet*, available at:
<https://savetibet.org/new-mayors-appointed-in-covid-hit-tibetan-cities/>

⁶ “Separated from their families, Hidden from the world”, *Tibet Action Institute*, available at:
https://s7712.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2021_TAI_ColonialBoardingSchoolReport_Digital.pdf

- 11 Living with the virus for years has been devastating. For Tibetans, the pandemic has become China's tool to further "suppress" and "restrict" any forms of expressions and movement. As the world slowly learned to recover from the pandemic, China's failed and mismanagement of so-called "Zero-COVID" policy in Tibet has multiplied the sense of insecurity, fear, rise in mental health issues and loss of lives.
- 12 Despite knowing the reprisals for voicing against mismanagement of "Zero-COVID" policy; the absence or poorly equipped quarantine quarters and medical services, Tibetans took risk to appear in the social media platforms and pleaded to the relevant authorities to provide hygienic food and healthcare to those locked in mass quarantine camps regardless of whether they were COVID positive or not. Lhasa officials acknowledged the mishandling of situation and offered a public apology only to retaliate by arbitrary arrests and detention of those Tibetans who raised concerns about the situation online on social media.⁷
- 13 The draconian "Zero COVID" policy along with poorly equipped medical services has pushed at least five known Tibetans to commit suicide in just three days between 23 and 25 September 2022 in Tibetan capital city of Lhasa.⁸ The five Tibetans were from Lhasa Comprehensive Protective Tariff Zone no. 2 (West Lhasa), the Bayi community (Southwest Norbulingka), Lanting apartment (near Tibet University), and Gakyiling neighborhood 3 (East of Lhasa).

Cultural Rights (Article 15)

- 14 Citing Chinese domestic laws and the bi-lingual education policy, China claims that Tibetans have access to education in their own language. However, China has systematically curtailed space and access for learning in the Tibetan language over a long period of time. In recent times, China has intensified its attempts to demolish and remove any classes taught in Tibetan language. For instance, in 2022, Tibetan school children in Lhasa were distressed to find that classes were taught in Chinese only when they returned from winter school break.⁹ Teachers were also made to under workshops on how to start teaching children in the Chinese language.¹⁰ A 16-year-old boy Palsang from Markham County and two girls, Sermo and Yangkyi, who are just 15 and 11 years

⁷ "China's Mismanaged Zero-Covid Policy Endangers Tibetan Lives in Tibet: Kashag's Press Statement", Tibet.net, available at: <https://tibet.net/chinas-mismanaged-zero-covid-policy-endangers-tibetan-lives-in-tibet/>

⁸ "China's zero-Covid policy pushes five Tibetans to commit suicide in three days", read at: <https://tchrd.org/chinas-zero-covid-policy-pushes-five-tibetans-to-commit-suicide-in-three-days/>

⁹ "Tibetan school year begins with classes taught only in Chinese", *Radio Free Asia*, available at: <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/classes-03092022122044.html>

¹⁰ "Tibetan parents forced to learn Chinese language to teach children", *Tibet Watch*, available at: <https://www.tibetwatch.org/news/2022/4/11/tibetan-parents-forced-to-learn-chinese-language-to-teach-children>

old respectively, were arrested from their secondary school in response to unease situation when all classes were replaced to teach in Chinese language.¹¹

- 15 China persecutes Tibetan Buddhists and systematically restricts any possible expressions of Tibetan Buddhist cultural identity. For instances, the demolition of Tibetan Buddhist learning centers such as Larung Gar and Yachen Gar; expulsion of Tibetan Buddhist students from centers and the destruction of Tibetan Buddhist statues and a monastic school in Tibet's Drakgo (Ch: Luhuo) County in Kham Karze between December 2021 and January 2022.¹²
- 16 In addition to hi-tech surveillance in place to control cultural and religious life of Tibetan people, the Chinese government carrying out a mass DNA collection of Tibetans¹³ and a compulsory iris scan targeting Tibetans¹⁴ are of serious concern. Tibetans from all walks of life, including children as young as five years old to elderly people up to 65 years old, are subjected to enroll mass DNA sample collection under the guise of a mass health program.¹⁵ An estimated of 920,000 to 1.2 million DNA samples have already been collected in so-called Tibet Autonomous Regions over the past six years, accounting for almost one-quarter to one-third of the total population.¹⁶ China justifies the move as to fight against crime, locate missing persons, and ensure social stability. The mass DNA collection by Chinese officials is of serious concern as this further imposes a climate of fear and encroaches every aspect of public and private life.

III- Suggested questions for the Committee

- 1- What is China doing to ensure the Tibetan language is equally respected and Tibetans have easy and safe access to the Tibetan language? Does the Tibetan have access to Tibetan language translation for official business conduct?
- 2- What are the policies and programs in place to ensure Tibetan people can practice and express their cultural identity, voluntarily, at community and grass root level?

¹¹ "Three Children Arrested After New Language Restriction Announced", *Tibet Watch*, available at: <https://www.tibetwatch.org/news/2022/4/1/three-children-arrested-after-new-language-restriction-announced>

¹² "Cultural Revolution like crackdown": China demolished a sky-high Buddha statue and 45 huge prayer wheels in Drakgo, Tibet, *Tibet.net*, available at: <https://tibet.net/cultural-revolution-like-crackdown-china-demolished-a-sky-high-buddha-stature-and-45-huge-prayer-wheels-in-drakgo-tibet/>

¹³ "Reported mass DNA collection aims to undermine Tibetan identity", *International Campaign for Tibet*, available at: <https://savetibet.org/reported-mass-dna-collection-aims-to-undermine-tibetan-identity/>

¹⁴ Mass Iris scan collection in Qinghai from 2019-2022, <https://citizenlab.ca/2022/12/mass-iris-scan-collection-in-qinghai/>

¹⁵ "China: New Evidence of Mass DNA Collection in Tibet", *Human Rights Watch*, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/09/05/china-new-evidence-mass-dna-collection-tibet>

¹⁶ "Mass DNA Collection in the Tibet Autonomous Region from 2016–2022" <https://citizenlab.ca/2022/09/mass-dna-collection-in-the-tibet-autonomous-region/>

3- In its replies to the list of issues, China claims 71 percent of the Tibet Autonomous Region are members of the Tibetan and other ethnic minorities. Furthermore, Chinese law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy law stipulates that chairman/head of the autonomy region, prefectures and county shall be from “the ethnic group” of the region. What is the current composition of heads and mayors of the Tibetan cities, including Lhasa, Shigatse and Chamdo?

4- Research report indicates that nearly one million Tibetan children are separated from their families, community and Tibetan cultural life. Testimonies of Tibetan children who have gone through “colonial style” boarding schools, against their will, have shared psychological and emotional distress that they were subjected to. What is the actual number of Tibetan children who are currently enlisted in these boarding schools? What do their daily programs and activities look like? How often can these children meet their family and have safe and easy access to their cultural activities and identity?

5- What are steps taken to ensure required medical services and support are extended in a timely and non-discriminatory manner to COVID affected regions, including Tibetan areas? How did the state ensure the mental health of people affected by “Zero-Covid” policy, in particular, worse hit Tibetan areas, were taken into account, and what are support and services extended to protect the mental/psychological wellbeing of the Tibetan people affected by the policy?

6- What is China doing with mass DNA sample collection and iris scans targeting Tibetans? What is an official data on actual DNA samples that have already been collected in Tibet Autonomous Region? What is the process in place for prior information and consent from Tibetans to collect biometric information of individuals, and how this information is stored and used?

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