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

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.

[22 August 2021]

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



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

Society for Threatened People is concerned at the worsening situation of human rights in the Tibet Autonomous Region, China and adjacent areas where Tibetans live. The government of China has been consistently violating every facet of the basic human rights of Tibetans with impunity. The suppression of Tibetans by the Chinese government has led to the self-immolation of 155 Tibetans in the Tibet Autonomous Region and adjacent areas where Tibetans live since 2009 as a mark of peaceful protest against the atrocities perpetuated by China.

Arbitrary Detention with torture and cruel treatment

Arbitrary detention has become the “new normal” for every Tibetan human rights defender. It has often become the case where Tibetans- layperson and monastic people, are picked up from their respective places of residence in the middle of the night and nobody knows their whereabouts for months. The family members are not informed about the reasons for such detention nor are they informed of the location of detention. During the detention the human rights defenders are subjected to torture and other cruel, inhumane and degrading treatments forcing them to confess their “crimes”.

Lobsang Dorje, a monk from Ngaba County’s Kirti monastery was held under “incommunicado detention” since July 2018 and was later sentenced to three years after a hurried “trial” in September 2019. He was picked up from the monastery in the middle of the night on suspicion of contacting the outside world.

Lodoe Gyatso also known as Sogkhar Lodoe was arrested for staging a peaceful protest in front of the Potala Palace in Lhasa in January 2018. His wife Gakyi was arrested for shooting a video clip of him before going to the protest. Lodoe Gyatso was sentenced to 18 years and his wife Gakyi was sentenced to 2 years in prison after secret trials of which the family members got to know only in November 2018.

Sonam Palden, a monk from Kirti Monastery was arrested in Ngaba county in September 2019 for posting critical views on China’s policy on Tibetan language on WeChat, a social messaging app.

Wanchuk from Shigatse Prefecture was detained in March 2019 for sharing Tibetan books on Wechat.

Tsering Dorjee, resident of Peleb village in Tashi Zom Township, was detained on 20 February 2019 for having a phone conversation with his younger brother who is exile about the importance of Tibetan language. He was subjected to torture in detention.

Enforced Disappearances

It has been over 26 years since the enforced disappearance of 11th Panchen Lama Gedun Choekyi Nyima 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 freedom of religion or belief, the Committee on Rights of the Child.

This year marked the 26th year of enforced disappearance of Tibet’s 11th Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his entire family by China. Gedhun Choekyi Nyima was born on 25 April 1989 to Kunchok Phuntsog (father) and Dechen Chodon (mother) in Lhari district of Nagchu province in Tibet. When he was six-year-old, at the request of Chadrel Rinpoche, the Dalai Lama conducted elaborate religious rites and rituals for identification of the reincarnation and recognized Gedhun Choekyi Nyima as the 11th Panchen Lama on 14 May 1995. But within three days, on 17 May 1995 he and his entire family were kidnapped by the Chinese authorities. Chadrel Rinpoche was also arbitrarily detained. Since then China has

refused to divulge any sufficient and satisfactory information about their whereabouts. Instead in his place, China installed a son of communist party members.

The case of Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima's enforced disappearance is pending at the UN Special Procedure- Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearance as well as the Committee on the Rights of the Child since 1995. It continues to be one of the longest drawn cases of enforced disappearance in the world. Despite several interventions by the UN and international community, China has steadfastly refused to grant access to Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima. During this period, he has been deprived of the religious and scholastic education in Tibetan Buddhism.

Violation of Right to Freedom of Religion

The recent demolitions of Larung Gar and Yachen Gar started in 2016 have left an indelible scar on the religious and spiritual beliefs of Tibetans. More than 10,000 monks and nuns have since been forcefully evicted and put into internment camps for "political re-education." The situation in these camps are so harsh that recently a Tibetan nun was driven to commit suicide.

The restrictions on religious activities continue unabashedly. 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. The state agencies are directly interfering in the administration of monasteries and nunneries through so-called "monastic management committees." Even the process of recognizing the reincarnation of lamas, a sacred religious practice, is being meddled with and now the reincarnated lamas have to register their birth with the State agencies.

The European Parliament Intergroup on Freedom of Religion has ranked China as one of the worst violators of religious freedom in the world in 2018. The United States of America Commission on International Religious Freedom in its 2020 report has once again advised the United States of America Government to redesignate China as "'Country of Particular Concern' for engaging in systematic, ongoing, and egregious religious freedom violations."

Violation of Freedom of Expression and Opinion

There is absolutely no freedom of expression in the Tibet Autonomous Region and adjacent areas where Tibetans live. Tibetans inside Tibet are subjected to high-tech surveillance and censorship. They do not have access to free information and no platform to develop and discuss ideas. Tibetans cannot freely express their thoughts and opinions and those who try to do are punished and persecuted.

No Right to Education in Mother tongue-language-Tibetan

Tibetans, though considered "ethnic minorities" by China, do not have any language rights. Though on the face of it, China is practicing bilingual policy, 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. Language rights advocates like Tashi Wangchuk, Sonam Palden, Tsering Dorjee are all being persecuted by China. These violations have also been extensively reported by Human Rights Watch in their report titled "Tibetan Children Denied Mother-Tongue Classes."

Crackdown on Human Rights Defenders

China uses its vague terminologies and absurd interpretation of laws to frame Tibetan human rights defenders with criminal charges. The crackdown on land rights advocates, environmental activists, language rights advocates have raised serious questions on the abuse of laws. The land rights advocate and crusader of anti-corruption A-nya Sengdra was imprisoned and sentenced to 7 years in years in December 2019 for defending the rights of the local Tibetan nomads.

No Access to free, fair and independent judicial process

Tibetans are often subjected to unfair trial with no possibility of defending themselves. Firstly, all the court documents are in Chinese and not Tibetan. This was also highlighted by the Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination in its observations published in 2018. Secondly, Tibetans are not even given a copy of the court documents nor are they allowed to render any evidence in their defence. They do not even have access to lawyers to defend against the charges laid against them. Often the so-called trials are merely a façade. Even the family members and relatives of the imprisoned Tibetans get to know about it after they have already been tried and sentenced.

Society for Threatened Peoples calls upon the Human Rights Council and the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights to urge China to:

1. Release the 11th Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, his entire family, Chadrel Rinpoche and stop meddling in the religious practices of Tibetans;
2. Stop the practice of torture, incommunicado detention, harassment of Tibetan human rights defenders and release all Tibetan political prisoners;
3. Guarantee fair trials, an independent judiciary and access to legal counsel to all Tibetans;
4. Allow an independent fact-finding mission to assess the human rights violations perpetrated against Tibetans in Tibet and other regions in China;
5. 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 Universal Periodic Review.