



## INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

### Rights groups raise China's systematic human rights violations in Tibet at UN Human Rights Council

<https://savetibet.org/rights-groups-raise-chinas-systematic-human-rights-violations-in-tibet-at-un-human-rights-council/>

July 3, 2019

China's ongoing, systematic human rights violations in Tibet have again been raised at the current session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

Speaking on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights during the session's general debate on July 3, Vincent Metten, EU policy director of the International Campaign for Tibet, stressed the importance of continuing to refer expressly to the human rights situation in Tibet, particularly because of China's efforts to isolate and silence Tibetans.

"The Chinese policies to accelerate assimilation and consolidate political control through an expanded surveillance system strive to erase Tibetan identity and conceal the region from external scrutiny," Metten said before once again urging unfettered and independent access to Tibetan area for UN experts. Metten's statement followed specific expressions of concern about the situation in Tibet by the European Union, Czech Republic, Finland, Sweden, Germany and the UK.

One day earlier, Metten participated in a side event on religious freedom in Tibet hosted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, where he gave an overview of China's repression of Tibetan Buddhists. He explained how China has "Sinicized"—a term meaning to bring something under Chinese control—and securitized religion for political purposes and expressed concerns about China's attempt to interfere in the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama.

"Beijing must respect all religions in China including Islam, Christianity and Buddhism and let religious communities practice their religion freely without any state interference as guaranteed by the article 36 of the Chinese Constitution and international human rights law," Metten said.

The event, which was well-attended by representatives of several governments' permanent missions and NGOs, also included a presentation by Ven. Lobsang Dorjee, director of the Central Association of Panchen Lama.

As in recent Human Rights Council sessions, China deployed aggressive tactics to counter criticism of its record, including biased statements by the China Society for Human Rights Studies, an astroturf group that calls itself an NGO but is backed by Beijing. The organization also sponsored a number of side events aimed at promoting China's human rights "progress" and "protection" of ethnic minorities.

When Dolma Yaklha, the representative of the Society for Threatened Peoples, spoke about the situation in Tibet during her statement in the general debate on July 3, she was interrupted twice by the Chinese delegation, who accused her of using "inappropriate language." The chair of the council did not accept their accusation and allowed Yaklha to finish her statement.

*Statement by Vincent Metten, EU Policy Director of the International Campaign for Tibet:*

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Human Rights Council

Forty-First Regular Session

July 3, 2019

Item 4: General Debate - Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Statement delivered by Vincent Metten on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights

Mr. President,

Systematic human rights violations against Tibetans remain deeply troubling. The Chinese policies to accelerate assimilation and consolidate political control through an expanded surveillance system strive to erase Tibetan identity and conceal the region from external scrutiny.

The rise of protest by self-immolation has been one consequence of the deteriorating situation. Since 2009, 155 Tibetans have self-immolated in Tibet and China in direct opposition to Chinese rule. In its 2019 Freedom in the World Report, Freedom House listed the region as the second-least-free region of the world.

We would like to stress that it remains extremely important to expressively refer to the situation in Tibet or to Tibetan cases at the Human Rights Council as China's efforts to isolate and silence Tibetans should not be rewarded or normalised. Both visible and less visible forms of repression should be condemned, in particular when they are rooted in the policy principle of ethnic discrimination. States should also uphold the precedent of reporting on Tibet and China without fear.

We call on Member States to

- urge respect for freedom of religion or belief and cultural rights of Tibetans
- urge prompt, unfettered and independent access to all parts of the country, including in particular Tibetan areas, by independent international human rights experts, including the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and relevant UN Special Rapporteurs
- call for the immediate release of Tibetan human rights defender and language advocate Tashi Wangchuk.

Finally, we urge governments to challenge the Chinese "development approach to human rights." This includes urging the Chinese government to refrain from implementing top-down resource and energy related projects, such as dams and mines, which are harmful to Tibetans and the environment.

Thank you, Mr. President.