

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Human Rights Council

Forty-Second Regular Session

September 17, 2019

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

Statement delivered by Christa Meindersma on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights

Mr. President,

Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights remains deeply concerned at the persistent and widespread human rights violations suffered by Tibetans in the People's Republic of China.

In recent years, the harsher Chinese policies towards Tibetans, in which cutting-edge surveillance technology is combined with the deployment of Party cadres in monasteries, schools and homes and campaigns to "Sinicize" Tibetan Buddhism, have greatly infringed upon Tibetans' freedom of religion or belief and cultural rights.

A recent example is the worsening situation at the Tibetan Buddhist institution of Yachen Gar, where over 7,000 Tibetan Buddhist practitioners have been expelled between May and July and large parts of the encampment have been demolished. According to reports, many of the monks and nuns evicted are now being forcefully sent to "political re-education" classes, most likely in detention at extra-legal facilities where they are at high risk of torture and ill-treatment.

Already in 2016, in a communication to the Chinese government, United Nations Special Mandate Holders had raised the situation at Yachen Gar, asking for information about the legal grounds for the demolitions and expulsions and their compatibility with human rights standards.¹

As their concerns and questions remained unanswered, we urge on the Council to call on China to respect the freedom of religion or belief, movement and cultural rights of Tibetan Buddhist practitioners at Yachen Gar, and to cease further expulsion and demolitions at the institute. The Chinese government should also ensure expelled residents are not subjected to political re-education or surveillance, and that they are supported in finding new accommodation and continuing their religious studies.

Thank you, Mr. President.

¹ AL CHN 10/2016, <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gId=22816>