



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Torture, repression of Tibetan environmental defenders raised at UN human rights session

<https://savetibet.org/torture-repression-of-tibetan-environmental-defenders-raised-at-un-human-rights-session>

March 16, 2023

At the ongoing 52nd session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, the International Campaign for Tibet's Vincent Metten delivered two statements on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights stressing China's use of torture and the repression of environmental defenders in Tibet.

The first statement was given during the Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, Ms. Alice Jill Edwards. Metten emphasized the continued and systematic infliction of torture on Tibetans, as illustrated by the case of [Dorjee Tashi](#), a Tibetan businessman and philanthropist whose testimony of the torture he endured while in Chinese detention reveals in concrete terms a pervasive culture of impunity for Chinese authorities.

The second statement was delivered today, March 15, 2023, during the Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, Ms. Mary Lawlor. Metten, referring to a previous [ICT report on environmental defenders in Tibet](#), raised the increased persecution they face for their vital efforts to protect their lands and natural resources against extensive mining, damming and harmful infrastructure projects.

Statements

Below are the statements delivered by Vincent Metten on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights:

Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

"Mr. Vice- President,

We thank the Special rapporteur for her report A/HRC/52/30 and welcome strengthened protocols around the world to ensure acts of torture are not met with impunity.

We are particularly alarmed by the continued and blatant use of torture against Tibetans by the People's Republic of China. As concluded by the Committee Against Torture, "the practice of torture and ill treatment is still deeply entrenched in the criminal justice system."

Distressingly, this statement by the Committee on China from 2015 is still relevant today.

Torture is routinely inflicted to silence, permanently injure and even cause death when Tibetans are arbitrarily detained for peacefully expressing their opinion or practicing their

religion. A dangerous pattern of death due to torture has been observed, including the recent deaths of 19-year-old monk Tenzin Nyima and 51-year old tour guide Kunchok Jinpa. We emphasize that in both cases, as with many others, an investigation into deaths in custody and a prosecution of those responsible for them was never undertaken by the Chinese authorities.

Given this pattern, we are concerned for the wellbeing of Dorjee Tashi, who is serving a life sentence for “loan fraud”. His testimony of torture endured while in Chinese detention reveals in concrete terms the pervasive culture of impunity.

We urge the Special Rapporteur on torture to investigate this pattern of death by torture during CCP detention. The international community must hold those responsible for acts of torture and abuse to account. We also call on all member states to refocus energies on eliminating torture, especially in countries, such as China, that are party to the Convention Against Torture.

Thank you.”

Item 3: ID With the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

“Mr. President,

We thank the Special Rapporteur for her report A/HRC/52/29, and for acknowledging the importance of raising the difficulties faced by human rights defenders, while celebrating their successes.

We would like to draw the attention of the Council to the situation of Tibetan environmental defenders, who face increased persecution for their vital efforts to protect their distinct way of life, their lands and natural resources against extensive mining, damming and infrastructure projects.

In a report, the International Campaign for Tibet documented 50 environmental defenders detained arbitrarily, arrested, tried, and/or sentenced since 2008.¹ Of the 50 Tibetan environmental defenders’ cases surveyed:

- 21 are serving prison sentences with an average sentence length of 8.5 years.
- Five have completed their sentences, but it is not certain that all five have been released.
- The whereabouts of 20 individuals remain unknown.
- Four have died due to abuse by state agents: one fatally shot during a protest, and three died in custody.

Tibetan environmental defenders are critical for the protection of the fragile environment of the Tibetan plateau, and they should never be punished for their work.

We urge the Human Rights Council to press China to uphold and protect the rights of Tibetan environmental defenders – including their rights to freely express their opinion, associate,

¹ International Campaign for Tibet, June 2022, “Environmental defenders of Tibet”, https://savetibet.de/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/2205-ICFT-Report_V8.pdf.

assemble and participate in decision-making – and to immediately release all those detained, among them prominent defenders Anya Sengdra² and Karma Samdrup³.

Thank you.”



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² OHCHR, 19 May 2020, “UN experts urge China to drop charges against jailed Tibetan minority human rights defender”, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2020/05/un-experts-urge-china-drop-charges-against-jailed-tibetan-minority-human?LangID=E&NewsID=25894>.

³ International Campaign for Tibet, August 4, 2010 <https://savetibet.org/a-sharp-knife-above-his-head-the-trials-and-sentencing-of-three-environmentalist-brothers-in-tibet/>