



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Tibet raised at UN Human Rights Council's 53rd session

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At the 53rd session of the UN Human Rights Council currently underway in Geneva, the International Campaign for Tibet along with a number of countries has once again urged China to put an end to its systematic rights violations in Tibet.

Opening the session with his [oral update](#) on global human rights developments on June 19, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk highlighted a number of concerns raised by UN treaty bodies with regard to human rights violations committed by the Chinese government—including “assimilation policies that undermine the identity of minorities, including Tibetan people.” “My Office is seeking further engagement with China on these and other issues,” Türk said, adding he also encouraged China to “seek the expertise of Special Procedures mandate holders.”

In their response to the High Commissioner’s presentation, several countries—[Australia](#), the [Czech Republic](#), Germany, [Switzerland](#), [Sweden](#) and the [United Kingdom](#)—also expressed concerns about the human rights situation in Tibet and called on the Chinese government to respect the rights of Tibetans. “The EU continues to urge China to abide by its obligations ... to respect, protect and fulfil human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, including Uyghurs, Tibetans and persons belonging to ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities across China,” the [European Union](#) delegate also said.

Later in the session, during an interactive debate with the Special Rapporteur on education Farida Shaheed, the United States also [commended](#) the Special Rapporteur for bringing attention to China’s boarding school system in Tibet, which it said “raises serious human rights concerns.” In February, the Special Rapporteur—together with the Special Rapporteurs in the field of cultural rights and on minority issues—had been one of the first UN experts to [publicly sound the alarm](#) about this harmful policy, which has separated nearly 1 million Tibetan children from their families and sent them to colonial-style boarding schools where they are forced to learn in Mandarin Chinese in a curriculum built around CCP-prescribed ideology.

Statements

ICT also delivered two statements on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights at this session.

The first one, delivered by ICT Germany’s Kai Müller on June 28 during the interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, drew attention to labour exploitation in Tibet, which “may amount to forced labour, trafficking for purposes of forced labour, marginalization of the Tibetan language, religion, way of life and forced political indoctrination of prisoners violating the freedoms of thought, conscience, opinion and expression,” Müller said.

Referring to the [Concluding Observations](#) of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women following its recent review of China, in which it called on China to “immediately halt” non-voluntary labour transfer and vocational training programs in the Tibet Autonomous Region, Müller urged the Chinese authorities to “clarify the measures in place for Tibetans to opt out of vocational

training and labour transfer programmes and to bring any such programs in conformity with international law.”

In a video statement during the interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on *extreme poverty* and human rights on June 30, Vincent Metten from ICT Europe also denounced the Chinese government’s policy of forcibly expelling millions of Tibetan nomads and farmers from their land to resettle them in urban dwellings under the pretext of poverty alleviation. While the Chinese government claims this policy is a successful example of the Chinese Communist Party’s benevolent rule, this is “counterfactual,” Metten said. He added that targeted Tibetans are in fact “rarely provided the ability to refuse dislocation nor do they receive proper compensation.”

Below are the two statements.

Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children

“Mr. President,

I would like to thank the Special Rapporteur for her report A/HRC/53/28.

In February and April this year UN experts expressed¹ deep concern about the serious human rights violations committed against Tibetans in the Tibet Autonomous Region and other Tibetan populated regions, particularly allegations of labour exploitation which may amount to forced labour, trafficking for purposes of forced labour, marginalization of the Tibetan language, religion, way of life and forced political indoctrination of prisoners violating the freedoms of thought, conscience, opinion and expression.

Likewise, in its Concluding Observations on China, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women called for to “immediately halt non-voluntary “labour transfer” and “vocational training” programmes in the Tibet Autonomous Region.”²

The Committee stated that it remains concerned, about the “absence of comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation and the lack of clarity as to whether the legislation of the State party criminalizes all forms of trafficking, including trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation, forced labour, forced marriage, organ removals and illegal adoption, especially among Uyghur and Tibetan communities.

We urge States to support the UN experts concerns and recommendations, and to call on the authorities to clarify the measures in place for Tibetans to opt out of vocational training and labour transfer programmes and to bring any such programs in conformity with international law.

Thank you.”

¹ OHCHR, AL CHN 14/2022, 6 February 2023,

<https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gld=27776>.

² CEDAW, Concluding Observations on China, CEDAW/C/CHN/CO/9, 30 May 2023,

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW%2FC%2FCHN%2FCO%2F9&Lang=en.

Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights

“Mr. President,

We thank the Special Rapporteur for his report on *The employment guarantee as a tool in the fight against Poverty*.³

According to Chinese State media, by the end of 2019, 628,000 people inside the Tibet Autonomous Region were “lifted” out of poverty.⁴ This included 266,000 farmers and herders who were expelled from their ancestral homelands and through force or coercion transferred into consolidated, urban dwellings.

The Chinese government claims this policy is a successful example of the Party’s benevolent rule. This is counterfactual. Based on Chinese government media sources explicitly addressing nomadic populations, at least 1.8 million nomads have been displaced.⁵ The uprooted families are then forced to accept low-paid, low-skilled work. Targeted Tibetans are rarely provided the ability to refuse dislocation nor do they receive proper compensation.

In sum, China’s purported strategy to meet development goals in Tibet have not been designed in a way that is culturally adequate, inclusive, or provides Tibetans any role in the decision-making process.

We urge the Special Rapporteur and Member States to demand China include local input in development and poverty reduction decisions as it is essential that Tibetans have the space and freedom to draw on their culture, needs, and expertise to define their vision for the future.

Thank you.”



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³ <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G23/071/64/PDF/G2307164.pdf?OpenElement>.

⁴ CGTN, 16 October 2020, ‘Tibet: How China’s toughest battleground defeated absolute poverty?’, <https://news.cgtn.com/news/2020-10-16/How-Tibet-eliminated-absolute-poverty-despite-harsh-climate--UDkSdO4J5S/index.html>.

⁵ China Daily, 6 July 2012: ‘Over 1 million Tibetan nomads choose settlement’, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-07/06/content_15555645.htm; Xinhua, 1 December 2012: ‘Massive nomad settlement to protect “mother river”’, <http://en.people.cn/90882/8041990.html>; China Daily, 6 July 2012: ‘Over 1 million Tibetan nomads choose settlement’, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2012-07/06/content_15555645.htm; and Central People’s Government of the People’s Republic of China, 5 December 2009, ‘青海3万多户农牧民迁新居：“小财政”托起“大民生”[Ch. ‘Qinghai san wan duo hu nong mu min qian xinju: “xiao caizheng “tuoqi” da minsheng’, ‘More than 30,000 farmers and herdsmen in Qinghai moved to their new homes: microfinance support the people’s livelihood], http://www.gov.cn/jrzq/2009-12/05/content_1481036.htm; Human Rights Watch, ‘They Say We Should Be Grateful’, 2013, https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/tibet0613webwcover_0.pdf, page 4; China Daily, 7 August 2015, ‘Families moving into the modern era’, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/tibet50years/2015-08/07/content_21525294.htm.

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