



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

ICT calls for information on disappeared Tibetans at UN Human Rights Council

<https://savetibet.org/ict-calls-for-information-on-disappeared-tibetans-at-un-human-rights-council>

September 20, 2023

BERLIN—At the 54th session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) has once again highlighted the worrying pattern of enforced disappearances and arbitrary arrests in Tibet.

In his statement on Sept. 19, 2023 on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, ICT Germany Director Kai Müller called on the member states of the Human Rights Council to urgently demand information from the Chinese government about the whereabouts and well-being of disappeared Tibetans.

“We welcome the fact that the UN Working Group against Enforced Disappearance, at its 129th session and in its current report, has highlighted 16 cases of missing Tibetans. The member states of the Human Rights Council should urge the Chinese government in the upcoming China Review (UPR) in January to disclose the whereabouts of “disappeared” Tibetans, to put an end to this deeply worrying pattern and to hold accountable those responsible for torture and ill-treatment in the Chinese state apparatus,” Müller said.

A day earlier, Mélanie Blondelle from ICT made another statement on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, pointing to so-called “labor transfers” and “labor programs” of the Chinese government for Tibetans. As early as July 2022, the Special Rapporteur on Contemporary Forms of Slavery had expressed concern about “labor transfer programs” also in the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region, which “in many cases showed signs of forced labor, thus indicating the involuntary nature of the work performed by the affected communities.”

Blondelle also called on member states of the UN Human Rights Council to urge the Chinese government in the upcoming review of China (UPR) at the UN Human Rights Council to make information publicly available about so-called “labor transfer and training programs” in Tibetan areas and to allow Tibetans to refuse to participate in these programs.

Statements

Below is the statement delivered by Kai Müller on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights:

Item 3: ID With the Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances

We thank the Working Group for its report A/HRC 54/22 and its activities undertaken, in particular detailed in its report A/HRC/WGEID/129/1 on communications transmitted and cases

examined. According to the report, during its 129th session, the Working Group raised the cases of 16 “disappeared” Tibetans.

Tibetans are being persecuted and “disappeared” when they peacefully express their opinions and beliefs, and when they protest against government policies. For example, Sherab Dorjee was arbitrarily detained on 16 August 2021 by the Chinese local police in Trotsik Township, Ngawa, Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture; it is believed that his detention was related to his involvement in student organizations and his opposition to the county government’s mandatory Chinese language policy in his school.

Tibetans continue to fall victim to this deeply disturbing pattern of enforced disappearances. Those who have been abducted to unknown locations often face torture and ill-treatment, while their families do not know where they are, what exactly they are accused of, whether they have access to a lawyer or whether they will receive appropriate medical care.

We urge the members states of the Human Rights Council to use the upcoming UPR of China to urge the Chinese government to disclose the whereabouts of “disappeared” Tibetans, to end this deeply concerning pattern and to hold accountable those responsible for torture or ill-treatment.

Thank you.

Below is the statement delivered by Mélanie Blondelle on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights.

Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery

Mr. President,

We thank the Special Rapporteur for his report.

In [April 2023, multiple UN experts](#), among them the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, have identified so-called “labor transfer” and “vocational training” programs inflicted on the Tibetan people as a smoke screen suppressing the Tibetan people’s right to religious, linguistic, and cultural identity. We are grateful for the Special Rapporteur’s co-signing of the relevant public statement.

In July 2022, the Special Rapporteur raised his concern regarding labor transfer programs also in the Tibet Autonomous Region, where “indicators of forced labour pointing to the involuntary nature of work rendered by affected communities have been present in many cases”, which in “some instances may amount to enslavement as a crime against humanity, meriting a further independent analysis.”

Contrary to claims of improving living conditions, research indicates military-style training, political indoctrination and assignment to workplaces - most likely not voluntarily – as well as the absence of clear remuneration.

UN experts also called on China to explain how it will align the programs with its obligations under international law to prevent forced labor.

We call on Human Rights Council members to use the upcoming UPR of China to urge the Chinese government to make information on labor transfer and training schemes in Tibetan areas publicly available and include provisions that allow Tibetans to opt out of these programs.

Thank you.



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