



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Twofold increase in states raising Tibet at UN China review

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An unprecedented number of UN member states raised China's oppression in Tibet during the Chinese government's Universal Periodic Review at the UN Human Rights Council today in Geneva.

Twenty states took to the floor to challenge China's human rights record in Tibet and to offer recommendations. That number is more than twice the nine states that raised Tibet during China's last Universal Periodic Review in 2018. The increase also reflects the rise in so-called Advanced Questions, which doubled compared to 2018.

Member states also made 24 recommendations on Tibet, up from 11 in 2018.

The Universal Periodic Review is a mechanism of the Human Rights Council to assess the human rights record of every UN member state every four to five years.

The states that raised Tibet at China's review this year were: the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, France, Lithuania, Japan, Sweden, Norway, Austria, Switzerland, Poland, the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Ireland, Montenegro, New Zealand, Canada, Denmark and Estonia.

"We welcome the considerable rise in statements and concern among states with regard to Chinese policies in Tibet," said the International Campaign for Tibet.

"Tibetans from Tibet have not had the chance to contribute to this review and raise their voices. We are therefore grateful to all states that raised China's coercive boarding schools and relocation policies in Tibet and called for religious freedom, cultural rights for Tibetans and unfettered access to Tibet. Now the international community needs to follow up in bilateral relations with China and continue to raise Tibet."

Boarding schools, arbitrary detentions and lack of access

The statements by the member states raised the religious and cultural rights of Tibetans. They highlighted in particular the boarding schools that have [separated over 1 million Tibetan children from their families, language, religion and culture](#).

States called for the abolition of the boarding schools. They also called for the release of [arbitrarily detained Tibetans](#) and for [unfettered access to Tibet](#), which China keeps largely cut off to foreign diplomats and journalists.

The Chinese government refrained from responding to the issue of boarding schools and flatly claimed that religious freedom and cultural rights of Tibetans were protected, citing numbers of temples, religious personnel or teachers.

Regarding relocation policies, the Chinese delegation claimed to relocate Tibetans from high altitudes with their consent, in the absence of an independent judiciary and rule of law and in a pervasive climate of fear. With what appeared to be an aggressive tone, the Chinese ambassador rebutted criticism and denounced allegations as smears, lies and an attempt at defamation.

Tense climate

The review took place in a tense climate, with the Chinese government present with an unusually large delegation, comprising more than 40 diplomats. Beijing also mobilized a considerable number of Chinese NGOs (known as GONGOs—government-organized NGOs) that merely parrot the party line.

The Human Rights Council also restricted access to the review for civil society, with NGOs initially only having 15 seats available in the room, which were taken up by Chinese GONGOs.

Moreover, the unusually high number of states wanting to take the floor reduced each statement to within 45 seconds. At the same time, a large number of states merely used their speaking time for bluntly affirmative statements ignoring the reality on the ground.

Side event

On the eve of China's review, the International Campaign for Tibet participated in a side event at the Human Rights Council organized by the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights.

Panelists included the Representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama Thinlay Chukki; Lhadon Tethong, director of the Tibet Action Institute; and Bhuchung Tsering, head of the Research and Monitoring Unit at the International Campaign for Tibet.

[US Under Secretary of State Uzra Zeya](#), who serves as the US special coordinator for Tibetan issues, and Ambassador Michèle Taylor delivered statements at the panel, with Zeya's pre-recorded and Taylor's delivered on the floor.



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