



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

UN must include strong language on Tibet in China review

<http://www.savetibet.org/un-must-include-strong-language-on-tibet-in-china-review>

January 11, 2024

As the United Nations prepares to take up China's report at the upcoming Universal Periodic Review at the end of January, the accelerating deterioration in Tibet demands that UN member states scrutinize China and that the UN adopts strong language on Tibet in its concluding report.

China's Universal Periodic Review will take place Jan. 23 in Geneva. The UPR is a mechanism of the Human Rights Council to assess the human rights record of every UN member state every four to five years.

In [July 2023 the International Campaign for Tibet and the International Federation for Human Rights submitted a joint report](#) detailing systematic and widespread patterns of rights violations in Tibet. The report particularly highlighted three aspects that indicate a shift to a more oppressive and destructive system:

- The so-called “residential boarding schools” in Tibet, which have coerced the separation of over 1 million Tibetan children from their families, and an attendant focus on uprooting the Tibetan language
- Forcible and coercive expulsion of nomads and rural agrarians from their traditional lands
- Punishment for religious expression coupled with an insidious infiltration of religious institutions.

Since the joint report, the situation in Tibet continues to show further deterioration. The Chinese government's policy of repression is clearly aimed at eradicating the authentic and self-determined Tibetan culture.

Alarming programs

More information has emerged about the alarming residential school system and the relocation programs that impact millions of Tibetans.

On [Dec. 14, 2023, the European Parliament passed a resolution](#) expressing its concern at the state of Tibetan children and forced assimilation practices through Chinese boarding schools in Tibet. The resolution, adopted with 477 voices in favor and 14 against, strongly condemns “the repressive assimilation policies throughout China, especially the boarding school system in Tibet” and calls on China to immediately abolish this system.

At a [side event at the UN Human Rights Council in September 2023 on the “State of Fundamental Freedoms in Tibet,”](#) ICT Germany Executive Director Kai Müller spoke on the forced resettlement of Tibetan nomads. Commending the UN Working Group against Enforced Disappearance, which highlighted 16 cases of missing Tibetans, he urged the member states of the Human Rights Council to ask the Chinese government in the upcoming 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.

In [December 2023, a bipartisan letter to Secretary of State Antony Blinken was sent by 24 members of the US House of Representatives](#) urging “the Biden Administration to ensure that the severe human rights violations being committed by the People’s Republic of China against the Tibetan people are front and center during the PRC’s upcoming Universal Periodic Review (UPR).”

The letter said, “The fourth UPR cycle for the PRC, scheduled for January 23, 2024, offers an important opportunity for the United States to shine a light on the human rights violations committed by the Chinese government in Tibet and against the Tibetan people. The U.S. delegation should raise the situation in Tibet in its advanced questions and offer specific recommendations to the PRC government during the process. By doing so, the United States can play a pivotal role in the protection of human rights and the preservation of the full range of human rights of the Tibetan people.”

[This week, over 35 multi-faith and human rights leaders sent a letter to the UN Human Rights Council president about China’s human rights record with a particular reference to religious freedom.](#) The letter says: “Since the third cycle of China’s Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2018, the situation has deteriorated significantly. Violations perpetrated by the Chinese Communist Party and those who do its bidding have been widespread and systematic.” The letter adds: “A few examples are illustrative: Policies to erode Tibetan Buddhism are expanding, including punishment for even the slightest expression affirming the leadership of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, participation in open religious ceremony, and the demand that Beijing approve designation of clergy.”

False promises

At the conclusion of China’s 2018 Universal Periodic Review, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister [Le Yucheng declared that his government had accepted 284 of 346 recommendations.](#) Le asserted that the high acceptance rate and “smooth and successful” review proved that Beijing’s human rights record enjoyed “wide recognition.”

However, [a briefing paper in December 2023](#) by The Network of Chinese Human Rights Defenders (CHRD), a coalition of Chinese and international human rights non-governmental organizations, said

the overwhelming majority of those accepted recommendations were so weak, vague, or based on flawed assumptions, that progress towards them cannot be meaningfully verified. Worse still, dozens of the accepted recommendations also clearly or implicitly endorse human rights violations. The Chinese government had not accepted 284 recommendations designed to fulfill the UPR’s original objective to “improve...the human rights situation on the ground” and “fulfill...the State’s human rights obligations and commitments.” Making and accepting recommendations that do nothing to halt the authorities’ assault on human rights and their defenders undermines the purpose of the UPR.

CHRD further said,

The Chinese government has, as in the past three rounds of UPR, systematically blocked victims and civil society from participating in the preparation of its State reports, even though States under review are supposed “to prepare the information through a broad consultation process at the national level with all relevant stakeholders.” The government silenced critical voices domestically and engaged in transnational repression to intimidate victims and NGOs internationally. China’s state reports inevitably did not present an “objective” assessment of its human rights record.

Recommendations for the UN and China

As UN Member States prepare for China's January 2024 UPR, they should firmly and clearly focus on the goal of making positive changes inside the country at a time when rights are under severe attack. As importantly, diplomats should be acutely aware that they—unlike the victims of Chinese government atrocity crimes or even ordinary citizens—are afforded an opportunity to participate in an assessment of the Chinese government's rights records in the room during the UPR dialogue. Member States must speak truth to power—before, during and after the January dialogue, inside and beyond the halls at the Palais des Nations.

Following are the [recommendations made by the International Campaign for Tibet and the International Federation for Human Rights to the government of China in our joint submission](#) for the fourth cycle of China's UPR on Jan. 23.

Relocation and resettlement programs

- Halt coercive relocation and resettlement policies in Tibet, and allow for the principles of Free, Prior, and Informed Consent to be applied, in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.
- Respect the principles of equal treatment, community participation, information transparency, freedom of speech, and fair treatment of local communities with regard to the planning and implementation of environmental policies.
- Provide access to justice via an independent judiciary for individuals subjected to relocation programs.
- Provide detailed information on cases of redress, remedy, and compensation sought by affected Tibetans, including those rejected or granted by the authorities.

Labor transfer programs

- Halt and review labor transfer and training schemes in the Tibet Autonomous Region.
- Make information on the design and implementation of labor transfer and training schemes in the Tibet Autonomous Region and other Tibetan regions publicly available and include provisions that allow Tibetans to opt out.
- Provide access to justice via an independent judiciary for individuals subjected to labor transfer and training schemes in the Tibet Autonomous Region.

Boarding schools

- Immediately abolish the boarding school and preschool system imposed on Tibetan children and authorize and subsidize the establishment of private Tibetan schools.
- Revise the “bilingual education” policy that replaces Tibetan with Mandarin as the medium of education, ensure that all Tibetan children are able to use Tibetan in every aspect of their schooling, and reverse the closure of schools providing education in the Tibetan language.
- Halt indoctrination, based on political ideology and disregard for child rights at all levels of the school curricula, and ensure that Tibetan students are permitted to learn about their own history, culture, and religion.

Religious freedom and language

- End policies of “Sinicization” that eradicate core tenets of Tibetan culture, such as language, religious beliefs, and ways of life.

- Recognize, respect, and protect Tibetan culture and the right of Tibetans to practice their traditions, customs, religious beliefs, language, and other manifestations of their cultural identity, free from state intervention, in accordance with international law.
- End the persecution of Tibetans exercising their right to freedom of religion or belief, and end intervention into the appointment of Tibetan Buddhist clergy.
- Release information on the whereabouts of the 11th Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, grant independent access to him, and allow him to exercise his right to freedom of movement.
- End policies that uproot the use of Tibetan language, re-introduce Tibetan language as a medium of education in schools, and allow for privately run Tibetan language schools, particularly in Tibetan Buddhist monasteries.

Arbitrary detention, torture, and ill-treatment in Tibet

- Immediately ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and ensure that its provisions are applicable to the Tibet Autonomous Region.
- Effectively address threats, attacks, harassment, and intimidation against Tibetan human rights defenders, including by thoroughly, promptly, and independently investigating human rights violations and abuses against them, bringing the perpetrators to justice in fair trials, and providing effective remedies and adequate reparation to the victims.
- End the persecution of independent cultural expression and release all those detained for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of thought and expression, including the Tibetans Go Sherab Gyatso, Anya Sengdra, Rinchen Tsultrim, and Dorjee Tashi.
- Urgently release all those Tibetans who have documented the consequences of land use policies, mining, damming or poaching, and advocated for redress.

Access to Tibet and cooperation with UN mechanisms

- Allow immediate and unfettered access to Tibet for journalists and independent observers, including the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and UN special procedures' mandate holders.

Sino-Tibetan dialogue

- Resume the dialogue with representatives of the Dalai Lama without preconditions with a view to implement a mutually beneficial and lasting resolution to the Sino- Tibetan conflict that allows the Tibetan people to protect their culture and preserve their identity.

[Read the joint submission by the International Campaign for Tibet and the International Federation for Human Rights.](#)



International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) | 1825 Jefferson Place NW | Washington, DC 20036 | United States of America
Phone: (202) 785-1515 | Fax: (202) 785-4343 | info@savetibet.org

ICT Europe
Funenpark 1D | 1018 AK
Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Phone: +31 (0)20 3308265
Fax: +31 (0)20 3308266
icteurope@savetibet.nl

ICT Deutschland e.V.
Schönhauser Allee 163 | 10435
Berlin, Germany
Phone: +49 (0)30 27879086
Fax: +49 (0)30 27879087
info@savetibet.de

ICT Brussels
11, rue de la linière | 1060
Brussels, Belgium
Phone: +32 (0)2 609 44 10
Fax: +32 (0)2 609 44 32
info@savetibet.eu