



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Petition by 100 Tibetan scholars to UN High Commissioner calls for an end to school closures and cultural assimilation policies in Tibet

<http://www.savetibet.org/petition-by-100-tibetan-scholars-to-un-high-commissioner-calls-for-an-end-to-school-closures-and-cultural-assimilation-policies-in-tibet>

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The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) welcomes a petition to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk calling for an end to China's forced assimilation policies in Tibet. In the petition 100 Tibetan professors, scientists and doctoral students in exile express their deep concern about the Chinese government's systematic closure of Tibetan monastic and public schools.

"This appeal by Tibetan scholars emphasizes the urgency of the situation in Tibet. The suppression of the Tibetan language and culture in everyday life through targeted school closures, indoctrination and propaganda in the educational sector are a core element of the Chinese government's assimilation policy. We expressly support the demands articulated in the petition. Tibetan students must have the opportunity to study at schools that celebrate their language and culture, Tibetan schools must not be closed, and the system of coercive boarding schools must be abolished," the International Campaign for Tibet stated.

The appeal was initiated by the [Tibet Times](#), which is published in Dharamsala, India.

Campaign of school closures

A recent example of the cultural assimilation policies in Tibet is the closure of the [Gangjong Sherig Norbu Lobling School in Ragya](#) in July 2024. The Norbu Lobling School was the first private Tibetan school in the Golog region's Machen county (Chinese: Maqin qian) and was particularly well known for promoting the Tibetan language and culture. After its foundation in 1994, it made a name for itself as a vocational school, primarily through its Tibetan language courses.

Human rights organizations have been observing with growing concern how the Chinese Communist Party has been replacing Tibetan textbooks with Chinese ones in primary and secondary schools in Tibet. Content in Tibetan is being systematically replaced by Chinese as the language of literature and instruction. At the same time, more and more public schools run by Tibetan monasteries and individuals have been forcibly closed by the Chinese authorities in recent years.

The petition has been submitted to the UN High Commissioner on 29 July by 100 professors, doctoral students and academics from the Tibetan exile community, and has also been signed by scholars who are attached to Tibetan culture.

It urges the UN High Commissioner to:

- Urge for an end to forced school closures and ensure restoration; protect private and monastic schools for their continued existence throughout Tibet and enable the immediate reopening of all forcibly closed schools.
- Call for an immediate end of the boarding school system in Tibet.
- Raise his voice to protect the Tibetan language, culture and religion and speak out publicly on the human rights situation in Tibet.

Press for accountability and urge the Chinese government to comply with international education rights standards, as China has ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Urge those responsible for violations to be held accountable.

Petition text

The signatories of the petition have requested that their names not be made public. The UN High Commissioner has received an unredacted version of the petition. ICT publishes the petition text hereafter, without indicating the names of the signatories:

Your Excellency,

The human rights situation in Tibet has been severely deteriorating. The PRC's assault on Tibetan cultural identity is evident in its accelerated implementation of what it calls 'bilingual education'. This policy undermines the Tibetan education system and uses the national curriculum to promote indoctrination and assimilation. In this context, we, the undersigned, express our deep concern over the Chinese government's systematic closure of privately-operated Tibetan schools.

Since 2010, the Chinese government's cultural assimilation policy has forced all schools in Tibet to use Chinese as the primary language, beginning from kindergarten. From primary school onward, all Tibetan students must take examinations in spoken Mandarin. In addition, colonial style boarding schools in Tibet separate Tibetan children from their families and communities, thus depriving them of their language, culture, and traditions from the grassroot level.

The recent closure of the reputed Ragya Gangjong Sherig Norbuling School in Golog Machen County, Qinghai Province, Tibet, on July 14, 2024, is particularly disheartening and alarming for Tibetans both within and outside of Tibet. This school has faced relentless pressure from the Chinese government through various means, including false allegations that elements of their logo were symbols of the Tibetan national flag, and false allegations charges against its founder, Ven. Jigme Gyaltsen (charges that were later dismissed), among other political accusations.

The Chinese government's cultural assimilation policy is ostensibly meant to provide better and equal job opportunities for Tibetans. However, in reality, privately-owned Tibetan schools have offered greater benefits and opportunities for the Tibetan people in general. One such example is Ragya School.

Ragya Gangjong Sherig Norbuling School was formally established in August 1994 with permission from the so-called Golog Local People's Government. It was the first privately-operated school in Qinghai Province. Over time, it became a specialized vocational school offering classes in Tibetan language, English, computer science, engineering, medicine, videography, and physical education. Since its inception, over 2,300 students have graduated, including at least 800 university students,

50 researchers, 90 doctors, 110 government employees, 250 university teachers, 13 headmasters, 110 monastic workers, and 260 entrepreneurs.

This is not the first instance of such closures. The Chinese government is targeting privately-operated schools, especially those engaged in promoting and preserving Tibetan culture and language. As per record of the Tibet Times, a Tibetan media outlet monitoring developments in Tibet from Dharamsala, India, out of 16 known private owned schools in Golog regions, since 2021, eight schools have already been shut down and most of the remaining schools under threat of closure through constant allegation and administrative pressure. For detailed reports on the Ragya School shutdown, please refer to this 'Tibet Times' news link:

<https://en.tibettimes.net/2024/07/14/chinese-government-forcefully-shuts-down-ragya-gangjong-sherig-norbuling-school/>

Buddhist philosophy based on Tibetan language offers numerous benefits to today's modern world, addressing both individual well-being and societal harmony. Concepts and practices from the Tibetan tradition are increasingly embraced and applied by a global audience. It is in every individual's interest to fight to preserve these invaluable ways of learning and living.

The United Nations promotes diversity and inclusion as fundamental principles across its agenda and it is also evident across its various programs and initiatives, aiming to build a more equitable and just world. This richness of Tibetan language, culture, and tradition offers much towards this diversity. The increasingly marginalized Tibetan language and culture should be protected and secured according to the principles and aims promoted by the United Nations.

As members of the global community, we urge the United Nations to take immediate and decisive action to address these critical issues and to preserve basic human rights and freedoms of the Tibetan people inside Tibet.

Given the severity and wide-reaching consequences of these educational restrictions, we respectfully request Your Excellency to:

- *Urge for an end to forced school closures and ensure restoration; protect private and monastic schools for their continued existence throughout Tibet and enable the immediate reopening of all forcibly closed schools.*
- *Call for an immediate end of the boarding school system in Tibet.*
- *Raise your voice to protect the Tibetan language, culture and religion and speak out publicly on the human rights situation in Tibet.*
- *Press for accountability and urge the Chinese government to comply with international education rights standards, as China has ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Urge those responsible for violations to be held accountable.*

We believe these measures will significantly improve the right to education and cultural rights of the Tibetan people, their identity and cultural traditions, which in turn will help promote peace, security, and justice for the Tibetan people.

We have gathered signatures from Tibetans and those from other Himalayan regions - professors, lecturers, PhDs and Scholars from outside of Tibet - who have tremendous concern over the education crisis in Tibet. Their signatures below demonstrate widespread support for this letter and a collective desire for meaningful action and protection of fundamental human rights in Tibet.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to your prompt response. Together, we can work towards a more just and humane world for all.

Sincerely,

[Names redacted]



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