



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Tibet at the 60th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council

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At the 60th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), held in Geneva from 8 September to 8 October 2025, the situation in Tibet was a focal point of concern among governments and civil society organizations commenting on China's human rights record. Numerous interventions condemned China's ongoing repression in Tibet, with particular focus on forced assimilation, severe restrictions on religious freedom, and arbitrary detentions.

Governments speak out

Countries including Australia, Finland, Ireland, Sweden, Germany, Switzerland, Japan, and the United Kingdom voiced strong concerns about China's treatment of Tibetans. Australia explicitly condemned interference in the succession of the Dalai Lama, asserting that religious leadership should remain free from political manipulation. The UK and EU called for the release of Tibetan human rights defenders and urged China to cooperate with UN mechanisms and implement recommendations from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Civil society on Tibet

ICT's Franz Matzner, speaking under Item 4 on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, delivered a stark warning:

"The human rights violations the People's Republic of China inflict on the Tibetan people are not a stagnant status quo awaiting 'progress'. They are increasingly severe, pervasive, and systematic, reflecting a deliberate agenda to erase Tibet's civilization."

Matzner cited the lack of political voice and forced displacement of Tibetans due to China's development projects like hydropower dams, destruction of religious sites, and widespread surveillance. He called for a firm and transparent commitment by the OHCHR, the Human Rights Council, and member states to take concrete action against China's accelerating violations.

Under Item 3, ICT's Melanie Blondelle, on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, highlighted the arbitrary detention of Tibetans, including:

- Monks Drugdra, Lobsang Khedrup, and Lobsang Gephel, imprisoned for their peaceful expression of reverence for the Dalai Lama.
- Senior monks Sherab and Gonpo Tsering, sentenced for protesting the Kamtok dam project. Gonpo Tsering was reportedly tortured, leaving him blind and unable to speak.

Blondelle urged the Council to demand the immediate release of all Tibetans arbitrarily detained and to hold China accountable for its systematic efforts to silence dissent and erase Tibetan identity.

Phuntsok Topgyal, the UN Advocacy Officer from the Tibet Bureau Geneva, also delivered a statement detailing recent cases of repression in Tibet. These included:

- The custodial death of Tulku Palden Wangyal, a respected religious leader.
- The continued imprisonment of the Tibetan entrepreneur Tashi Dorjee and reprisals against his sister Gonpo Kyi.
- The detention of Tibetan singers for performing a song honoring the Dalai Lama's 90th birthday.
- The arrest of monks from Yena Monastery for protesting a hydropower project.

High Commissioner touches on Tibet – ICT: “More must be done”

In his global update, High Commissioner Volker Türk acknowledged the deteriorating human rights situation in Tibet, alongside concerns in East Turkestan and Hong Kong. He noted that progress on protecting the rights of Tibetans “has yet to materialise,” despite years of engagement with China. However, ICT expressed strong disappointment at the lack of direct and sustained engagement by Türk on Tibet-specific issues. While his remarks touched on repression and forced cultural assimilation, critics argue that the High Commissioner's office must take a more proactive stance, including country visits and stronger follow-up on UN communications.

China's Right of Reply

On 23 September, the Chinese delegation exercised its formal right of reply, delivering a harsh rebuttal to the wave of criticism from governments and NGOs. China accused critics of “politicizing human rights” and interfering in its internal affairs, asserting that Tibet enjoys stability, development, and religious freedom. This combative stance underscored China's continued resistance to international scrutiny, its rejection of UN recommendations, and its complete disregard for adhering to international human rights norms.



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