

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Human Rights Council
Sixty-first Regular Session
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Item 3: ID With the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights

*Statement delivered by Mélanie Blondelle on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights
Check against delivery*

Mr. President,

We thank the Special Rapporteur for her report.

While the Chinese government presents itself as preserving Tibetan culture, in reality, Chinese authorities are relentlessly eradicating Tibetan civilization, its language, religion and way of life through their policies, raising concerns about potential crimes against humanity committed in Tibet.

The Special Rapporteur on minority issues, in his report¹ to the Human Rights Council from 5 January, stated that [I quote] “the boarding school education system implemented by China in Tibet is aimed at erasing the Tibetan language and identity”.

On 22 January, UN experts² expressed deep concern regarding persistent allegations of forced labour affecting Tibetans. The experts highlighted: [I quote]

“Between 2000 and 2025 some 3.36 million Tibetans have been affected by government programmes requiring them to rebuild their house for nomads to become sedentary, whilst official statistics say that around 930,000 rural Tibetans have been relocated through either whole village relocation or individual household relocations.”

“In many cases, the coercive elements are so severe that they may amount to forcible transfer and/or enslavement as a crime against humanity,” they concluded.

¹ Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Nicolas Levrat, “Addressing minority issues through their root causes” A/HRC/61/41.

² OHCHR, „UN experts alarmed by reports of forced labour of Uyghur, Tibetan and other minorities across China”, 22 January.

We call on the Human Rights Council and its members and observer states to urge the Chinese government to end policies of cultural eradication in Tibet and allow Tibetans to enjoy their cultural rights, as guaranteed by international law.

Thank you.