



GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Human Rights Council

Sixty-first Regular Session

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Item 4: General Debate - Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Statement delivered by Mélanie Blondelle on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights

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Mr. President,

We welcome the recent statements by UN experts and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights¹ expressing their deep concern about policies by the Chinese government “aimed at erasing the Tibetan language and identity”, labour issues and religious and cultural freedoms in Tibetan areas, and forced resettlement.

At the same time, the Chinese National People's Congress has passed a “Law on Promoting Ethnic Unity and Progress”² that cements and accelerates the Chinese Communist Party's policy of forced assimilation, particularly in Tibet. One example in the law is the severe restrictions on the use of the Tibetan language in schools, government settings, and many other contexts. This constitutes a flagrant violation of the cultural rights of Tibetans - rights that China has also committed to uphold, inter alia under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Beyond its impact on the Tibetan language, the law's extraterritorial reach is troubling, as it foresees potential criminal liability for actions committed outside China's territory that are vaguely deemed to undermine “ethnic unity.” This will exacerbate China's transnational repression, as it could for example criminalize this very statement.

The Human Rights Council, its member and observer states, must therefore call out how the new law and China's ongoing policies in Tibet violate China's international human rights commitments and protect those who dissent, here and in Tibet.

Thank you.

¹ See *UN experts alarmed by reports of forced labour of Uyghur, Tibetan and other minorities across China*, OHCHR, 22 January 2026; and Report of the Special Rapporteur on minority issues Nicolas Levrat, “Addressing minority issues through their root causes” A/HRC/61/41.

² <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-set-pass-new-ethnic-minority-law-prioritise-use-mandarin-language-2026-03-12/>