

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Human Rights Council
Sixty-first Regular Session

March 2, 2026

Item 3: ID With the Special Rapporteur on torture

*Statement delivered by Vincent Metten on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights
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Mr. President,

We thank the Special Rapporteur for her report.

In Tibet, we continue to observe a systemic pattern of torture and ill-treatment resulting in deaths in custody or shortly after release. Since 2014, at least fifteen Tibetans have died in such circumstances. These cases consistently involve incommunicado detention, denial of access to legal counsel and family members, beatings, and the withholding of adequate medical care. No independent investigations are known to have been conducted; families are routinely denied information and access to autopsies.

In 2019, Norsang, a 36-year-old father of six, died in detention after refusing so-called political re-education. Gonpo Namgyal, a village leader detained in May 2024 for promoting the Tibetan language, was released on 18 December 2024 in critical condition and died three days later. These deaths were foreseeable and remain uninvestigated.

We are also deeply concerned about Zhang Yadi,¹ a 22-year-old human rights defender who advocated for Tibetan rights. Detained since 31 July 2025 and charged with “inciting separatism,” she faces up to 15 years imprisonment. She is reportedly held incommunicado in a detention centre in her hometown of Changsha. Without access to her family or a lawyer, she is at serious risk of torture and ill-treatment.

We call on China to end the practice of incommunicado detention and conduct prompt, independent and impartial investigations into all custodial deaths and all allegations of torture. We urge States to ensure accountability for these violations.

Thank you.

¹ FIDH, 12 February 2026, “China: Incommunicado detention and possible sentencing of Ms Zhang Yadi, young defender of Tibetan rights”, <https://www.fidh.org/en/issues/human-rights-defenders/china-incommunicado-detention-and-possible-sentencing-of-ms-zhang>.