



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

UN experts challenge China’s “Ethnic Unity and Progress Law,” citing numerous rights violations

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The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) welcomes the [statement released this week](#) by eight United Nations special mandate holders challenging China’s enactment of its “Ethnic Unity and Progress Law” as the latest tool for the Chinese Communist Party to further its “Sinicization” goal of forced cultural and linguistic assimilation of Tibetans and members of other communities.

“We would like to draw attention to risks that the Law on Promoting Ethnic Unity and Progress could entrench a uniform approach to ethnic relations across all regions of China, thereby potentially amplifying restrictions on minority rights,” the Special Rapporteurs said. The Law, which goes into effect on July 1, “...could transform temporary or experimental regional measures into binding nationwide obligations, which could have serious implications for the linguistic, cultural, and religious autonomy of ethnic communities, including Tibetans, Uyghurs, and Mongols.”

On the Law’s treatment of language education, the Special Rapporteurs pointed out that requiring Tibetan to “be subordinate to Mandarin ‘in position, order, and so forth’ in public settings reinforces linguistic hierarchy.” Furthermore, the experts said that the Law’s vague prohibition on “obstructing” individuals in the PRC from learning Mandarin “could be turned against educators, parents, or advocates who prioritize” learning the Tibetan language.

On cultural preservation, the Special Rapporteurs said the Law “appears to centralize interpretive authority over what constitutes acceptable cultural expression, which could constrain the practical exercise of cultural autonomy, contradicting Article 38 of the Law of the People’s Republic of China on Regional National Autonomy.”

On freedom of religion, the Special Rapporteurs said the Law “would appear to undermine” its enjoyment because “it conditions religion or belief practice on State-mandated ideological alignment, while interfering with the autonomy of religious doctrine, the independence of religious and belief institutions, and the right of individuals and communities to manifest their beliefs free from State coercion.”

On transnational repression, Article 63 of the law provides a pretext for Beijing to target individuals outside of China for acts which “undermine ethnic unity and progress or create ethnic division.” Such vaguely defined language could lead to an expansion of China’s transnational repression against members of the Tibetan, Uyghur, and Mongolian diaspora, among others, who exercise their internationally recognized right to speak freely and criticize China’s policies.

The Special Rapporteurs’ observations track closely with ICT’s [independent analysis](#) that the Law reflects China’s abandonment of its domestic and international human rights commitments. The CCP’s intention to forcibly assimilate Tibetans and members of other communities is made even more clear in its [15th Five-Year Plan](#).

“ICT welcomes these expert findings as they clearly expose and unmask the CCP’s intention to erode Tibet’s unique cultural, linguistic and religious heritage and assimilate Tibetans. The long list of serious rights violations resulting from this law is breathtaking,” said ICT President Tencho Gyatso. “ICT is grateful for the professional, independent and unbiased analysis conducted by these UN Special Rapporteurs.”

ICT joins UN experts in calling for unhindered access to China and Tibet for independent UN human rights mechanisms. At the same time, ICT appeals to the United States, the European Union, likeminded governments and other international partners to integrate the findings of the UN experts into upcoming meetings with Chinese officials and within United Nations and other multilateral venues.

Eight UN special rapporteurs collaborated to reach these findings. They are the Special Rapporteur on minority issues; the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights; the Special Rapporteur on the right to development; the Special Rapporteur on the right to education; the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context; and the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief. These individuals are independent human rights experts appointed by the UN Human Rights Council.

ICT is a non-partisan, public interest group dedicated to promoting human rights and democratic freedoms for the people of Tibet. We monitor and report on human rights, environmental and socio-economic conditions in Tibet. Learn more and join our work at www.savetibet.org. Please send press inquiries to press@savetibet.org.



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