

**UN Committee on the Rights of the Child  
Pre-session on China, June 2005**

**Statement by Nima R. Taylor, Tibet Justice Centre Board of Directors**

Good morning, my name is Nima Taylor. I am a Tibetan lawyer practicing in New York, here on behalf of the Tibet Justice Centre. I am honoured to have the opportunity to speak before you today. Given our limited time, I would like to focus on steps the Committee can take to address the Chinese government's systematically discriminatory policies on education in Tibet.

The policies that negatively impact Tibetan children should be seen in their full context. Five decades after invading Tibet, China still remains primarily concerned with securing its control over Tibetans who refuse to abandon their desire for self-determination and freedom. China's Tibet policies are therefore focused on, one, fighting expressions of the Tibetan identity, and two, marginalizing Tibetans by encouraging a massive influx of Chinese settlers.

These two focuses are clearly reflected in how Tibetan children suffer discriminatory content and discriminatory access in the area of education.

In discriminatory content, much of the curriculum today aims to indoctrinate children that Tibet belongs to China, and to reduce Buddhism's influence by aggressively pushing atheism and making it illegal to teach religion to minors under 16. Most classes are not taught in Tibetan, and all state board exams are in Chinese only.

China's Second Periodic Report claims that its laws guarantee "nationalities" such as Tibetans the right to develop and use their language and culture, but in practice this is not the case. In 2004, as in past years, half the Tibetan refugees trying to reach India were children seeking a modern education that is respectful of Tibetan language and culture.

The Tibet Justice Centre therefore urges the Committee to call upon China to allow free expression in schools, particularly concerning Tibetan history, culture and religion. The Committee should urge China to immediately cease policies that suppress the teaching of Tibetan Buddhism. Finally, the Committee should urge China to permit and encourage teaching and testing in the Tibetan language at all levels of education.

In discriminatory access to education, there are two main problems, which both result from China choosing to spend its resources to benefit Chinese settlers in Tibet rather than Tibetans.

First is lack of schools in rural areas, where 80% of Tibetans and almost no Chinese live, combined with forcible closure of privately organized schools. China's Second Periodic Report makes grand claims about school funding. To the degree these unverified numbers are true, such spending primarily benefits the urban children of Chinese settlers. The Special Rapporteur on Education recently reported that illiteracy among Tibetan children stood at an astounding 39.5%, basically unchanged since 10 years ago.

The other related impediment to access to education is school fees. Although China says primary schools may not charge school fees, in practice they charge miscellaneous fees that amount to the same thing. Fees range from 10 to 300 yuan per month, in a region where average monthly wages are about 150 yuan per month.

The Tibet Justice Centre therefore urges the Committee to ask China how it can justify the large gap in urban/rural spending in Tibet, and how China will ensure rural areas will get a fair allocation of resources. China should also be asked that, given the majority of students at Tibet University are Chinese, what steps China will take to ensure that stated preferential policies in admissions benefit Tibetans rather than Chinese who move to Tibet.

Finally, I ask the Committee to urge China to abolish all fees for primary schools, regardless of label, and to allow privately organized schools to remain open.

Thank you.

(The full text of the Tibet Justice Centre report is available at <http://www.tibetjustice.org/reports/CRC2005.pdf>)