



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

International Campaign for Tibet's oral statement at the UN CERD 96th session in Geneva on August 7, 2018

<https://www.savetibet.org/international-campaign-for-tibets-oral-statement-at-the-un-cerd-96th-session-in-geneva-on-august-7-2018/>

August 7, 2018

Following is the statement by the International Campaign for Tibet at the UN Committee to Eliminate Racial Discrimination (CERD) session in Geneva, which was delivered by ICT Germany Executive Director Kai Mueller on August 7, 2018. This CERD session began on August 6 and it will consider China's state report on August 10, 2018. ICT submitted a report to CERD on China's policy towards Tibetans.

The International Campaign for Tibet wishes to draw attention to discriminatory policies, regulations and measures, as well as to discriminatory public narratives against Tibetans in the People's Republic of China.

Tibetans cannot practice their religion freely, nor can they protect their culture and language in a meaningful way. Instead, they suffer from repressive laws that deem any expression of their identity as extremist or even terrorist. Official Chinese propaganda has spread derogatory and racist narratives about Tibetans to ordinary Chinese, particularly since the time of widespread—and largely peaceful—protests in Tibet in 2008. In this context, I would like to mention the introduction of a so-called “Serfs Emancipation Day” in 2009.

Tibetans are frequently beaten, arrested and tortured for attempting to practice their faith, advocate for their rights and show their allegiance to the Dalai Lama, their spiritual leader. Recently, Tibetan schoolchildren were banned from religious activities altogether, during their holidays. Tibetans are systematically denied passports to travel abroad, unlike Chinese. They have to face restrictions of movement even within Tibet. As our research in Chinese social media has shown, when Chinese visit Tibet as tourists, they are often shocked to see the extent of their government's repression.

Chinese authorities must end their narrative on Tibetans' ‘backwardness’ and start promoting a view of Tibetan culture that neither reduces Tibetans to folklore, nor falsely promotes notions of the superiority of Chinese culture.

Tibetans should be allowed to steward their own affairs from the bottom up. Laws and policies that criminalize Tibetan life, control and surveil religious practitioners and force Tibetan nomads and herders off of their ancestral lands must end. Among them are religious regulations and laws that are said to combat terrorism but, in reality, merely oppress ordinary Tibetans. Notably, Tibetans are banned, in effect, from forming associations, e.g. in environmental affairs, unlike Chinese citizens.

We lament the detention of Tibetans like Tashi Wangchuk, who was recently sentenced to five years in prison after he advocated for Tibetan language rights, and Karma Samdrup, a Tibetan environmentalist who was tortured by police and sent to jail for 15 years. Another unresolved case of arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance is the fate of the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, who has not appeared in public since he was reportedly abducted two decades ago by the Chinese government at age six.

We urge the Committee to hold China accountable for its numerous rights violations that particularly target vulnerable groups such as Tibetans and others, and to thereby uphold international and universal rights standards which must not be diluted nor undermined.