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**Annual report of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights and reports of the Office of the
High Commissioner and the Secretary-General**

Written statement* submitted by Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[26 May 2025]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



Ongoing Systematic Human Rights Violations in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China and Adjacent Regions Where Tibetans Live and the Urgent Need for International Accountability

Introduction

The human rights situation in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China and adjacent areas where Tibetans live continues to deteriorate under the rule of China, with increasing evidence of systematic repression targeting Tibetan culture, religion, language, and identity. This statement draws urgent attention to the patterns of enforced disappearances, cultural destruction, religious persecution, language eradication, custodial deaths, and incommunicado detentions affecting the Tibetan people. The actions taken by the Chinese government amount to grave violations of international human rights law.

The international community has an obligation to uphold universal values of justice and dignity, particularly where state sovereignty is invoked to shield egregious abuses from scrutiny. According to the NGO Freedom House the freedom score in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China remains at zero for two consecutive years. Hence, it is imperative that the Human Rights Council take meaningful action to confront these violations and ensure the protection of the Tibetan people's fundamental rights.

Cultural and Religious Repression

Since China's occupation of the Tibetan region in 1950, successive policies have sought to dismantle Tibetan identity. Current strategies of Sinicization aim to erase Tibetan culture and faith traditions, as seen in restrictions around key religious festivals such as Losar, Saga Dawa, Shoton, and Ngari Flag Raising Festival. Monasteries and religious heritage sites have become targets for surveillance, control, and destruction. Notably, Chinese authorities have limited access to sacred sites like Nyenpo Yurtse, undermining Tibetan religious practices such as burning juniper and unfurling prayer flags.

The destruction of murals and artifacts through hydroelectric dam construction and surveillance measures at religious sites like the Larung Gar Monastery represent both an ecological and spiritual assault. Over 1,000 monastics have been expelled since November 2024, under the pretense of lacking documentation. These actions threaten Tibetan's cultural legacy and violate Article 27 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which protects the rights of minorities to practice their culture and religion.

Enforced Disappearances and Arbitrary Detentions

2025 marks 30 years since the enforced disappearance of the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, who was abducted by Chinese authorities at the age of six. Despite repeated appeals from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, and several national governments, no independent verification of his well-being or whereabouts has been permitted. His disappearance remains one of the longest unresolved enforced disappearances in modern history.

Recent detentions further highlight systemic abuse: The Tibetan monks Lobsang Samten, Lobsang Trinley, Tsering Tashi, and Wangkyi remain missing following arrests in Ngaba County. In February 2025, the environmental activist Tsongon Tsering received an additional prison sentence after exposing illegal sand extraction. The Tibetan singer Gegjom, the teacher Pema, and the activist Palden were detained for peaceful expressions of cultural and political dissent. These acts of repression contravene Articles 9 and 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), guaranteeing protection against arbitrary detention and the right to freedom of expression.

Deaths in Custody and Torture

There is overwhelming evidence of torture and inhuman treatment of Tibetan detainees. Multiple custodial deaths have occurred under suspicious or confirmed abusive circumstances. The Tibetan student Tsedon died after arrest in Nyemo County in late 2023, with her family denied access to her body. In another case, monk Losel died following beatings and denial of medical care. The pattern continues with deaths of Chukdhar and Geshe Phende Gyaltsen, and the severe mistreatment of Ludup and Karma Samdrup, who were released from prison in critically poor health.

These cases reveal a deliberate strategy of silencing dissent through intimidation, torture, and permanent psychological and physical harm. They demand investigation under the Convention against Torture (CAT) and relevant human rights norms.

Suppression of Tibetan Language and Education

China's education policy represents an insidious form of cultural eradication. Since the 1990s, the Tibetan language has been systematically removed from public education in favor of Mandarin. The 1995 Law on Education and the 2000 Law on National Standard Spoken and Written Language have entrenched Mandarin as the dominant instructional language, undermining constitutional guarantees of minority rights.

In 2024 and 2025, this policy has intensified. In Dzoge County, over 600 young monks were forcibly disrobed and transferred to state-run schools, where Tibetan is no longer the primary medium of instruction. China's "bilingual education" model in practice means Chinese-only instruction for key subjects, starting from kindergarten. Nearly one million Tibetan children are currently being subjected to forced assimilation in colonial-style boarding schools, isolated from their families, beliefs, and linguistic heritage.

Language advocates and parents protesting these policies face persecution. In May 2024, over 20 villagers in Ponkor Village were arrested for defending Tibetan language rights. This practice stands in direct violation of UNESCO declarations on linguistic rights and Articles 28 and 29 of the CRC, which mandate respect for cultural identity in education.

Death of Hungkar Rinpoche and International Silence

The suspicious death of Hungkar Rinpoche, a revered Tibetan Buddhist leader and critic of Chinese policies, in Vietnam in March 2024 raises serious concerns about transnational repression. His rapid cremation, reportedly under Chinese diplomatic pressure, precluded independent investigation. China's censorship and information blackout following his death suggest state complicity and represent a chilling warning for Tibetan leaders in exile.

Despite calls for an independent inquiry, no transparent investigation has been permitted. This raises questions about the ability of authoritarian states to project power beyond their borders with impunity, even targeting religious figures receiving treatment abroad.

Gendered Impact and Collective Trauma

Women, such as Gonpo Kyi, have faced abuse, repeated detention, and threats for seeking justice for imprisoned family members. Gonpo's struggle to secure a retrial for her falsely imprisoned brother, Dorjee Tashi, underscores the personal costs of resistance in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China and adjacent areas where Tibetans live. The grief experienced by families like Phudé, whose son's incommunicado detention led to her psychological breakdown and death, illustrates the devastating impact of state terror on entire communities.

These cases are emblematic of China's broader use of collective punishment and psychological warfare to silence dissent. The UNHRC must prioritize support for female human rights defenders and recognize the intersection of gender and political repression in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China and adjacent areas where Tibetans live.

Environmental Exploitation and Criminalization of Activism

Environmental degradation in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China and adjacent areas where Tibetans live has worsened due to large-scale infrastructure projects, dam construction, and unregulated mining—often justified under the guise of development. Activists like A-Nya Sengdra and Tsongon Tsering have been punished for exposing environmental crimes, facing arbitrary detention, torture, and lengthy prison sentences. Their persecution illustrates the criminalization of environmental defense, in breach of UN Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders recommendations.

Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China's unique ecological importance as the source of Asia's major rivers necessitates urgent protection. Instead, the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China and adjacent areas where Tibetans live are subjected to militarized development that disregards both indigenous rights and environmental sustainability.

Recommendations to the UNHRC and Member States

Given the escalating repression and widespread violations in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China and adjacent areas where Tibetans live, the following actions are urgently recommended:

- Establish a UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights Situation in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China and adjacent areas where Tibetans live to monitor ongoing abuses and report annually to the Human Rights Council and General Assembly.
- Demand immediate access to the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China and adjacent areas where Tibetans live for UN human rights mechanisms, including the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and mandate independent verification of the Panchen Lama's condition.
- Call for the immediate release of all arbitrarily detained Tibetans, including writers, environmentalists, religious leaders, and language advocates.
- Investigate cases of custodial death and torture through international mechanisms, including the Committee against Torture, and push for China's accountability under the CAT and ICCPR.
- Condemn forced assimilation and call for the preservation of the Tibetan language, with urgent attention to the impact of colonial boarding schools on Tibetan children and families.
- Support independent investigations into the suspicious death of Hungkar Rinpoche, and challenge transnational repression against Tibetan leaders abroad.
- Protect Tibetan environmental defenders and insist on a moratorium on ecologically destructive projects in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China and adjacent areas where Tibetans live until full environmental and human rights assessments are conducted.