



THE DALAI LAMA

## MESSAGE

I send my greetings to participants in this Geneva Forum on Human Rights in the People's Republic of China.

I have always maintained that China is an important country with which the rest of the world needs to engage. However, such engagement should always take into account the fundamental values that guide humanity. This means that the international community should not hesitate in pointing out unjustifiable actions on the part of the Chinese Government, whether in denial of basic rights to the citizens of the People's Republic of China or in actions across the globe. I hope this conference can help train a spotlight on the severe restrictions that religious communities are facing in the People's Republic of China.

Over the years, China has been changing and I hope it will follow the global trend towards transparency and freedom. The international community should support China in becoming a nation — with rule of law, respect for freedom and commitment to human rights. Such an outcome will be good for China's own future.

If China wishes to assume its rightful place in the community of nations, it will also have to shoulder the responsibilities that come with that position and uphold both basic freedoms and fundamental human rights.

31 October 2019

**Day 1:1 November 2021, Monday**

**Panel 1**  
**Social and Cultural Rights Violations by China**

**Speakers:**

- Tencho Gyatso  
Vice President, International Campaign for Tibet
- Dr. Michael Van Walt Van Praag  
Executive President of Kreddha and Senior Fellow of the  
Sompong Sucharitkul Center for Advanced  
International Legal Studies
- Dolkun Isa, President  
World Uyghur Congress
- Tsolmongerel Orkhonselenge Khatagin  
Secretary of the Intl. Human Rights Center for Mongolians.

**Chairperson:** Karma Choeying  
Secretary of Department of Information and International  
Relations, Central Tibetan Administration

**Panel 2**  
**Cultural Genocide in Tibet**

**Speakers:**

- Dr. Tenzin Desal  
Senior Research Fellow, Tibet Policy Institute
- Dr. Martin A. Mills  
Director, Scottish Center for Himalayan Research,  
Senior Lecturer in Anthropology, University of Aberdeen
- Pierre-Antoine Donnet  
French Journalist, Former Agence France-Presse (AFP)  
correspondent in Beijing & Former Editor at French desk,  
Paris
- Vijay Kranti  
Senior journalist & photographer specializes in Tibet &  
China

**Chairperson:** Sonam Frasi  
Representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama  
Office of Tibet, London

**Special Panel on Tibet's Stolen Child  
11th Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima**

**Speakers:**

- Hon'ble Sikyong Penpa Tsering  
Central Tibetan Administration
- Kai Muller  
Executive Director  
International Campaign for Tibet  
Germany
- Ven. Tenzin Thupten Rabgyal  
Abbot of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, South India
- Karma Choeying  
Secretary of Department of Information and International  
Relations, CTA

**Chairperson:** Dukthen Kyi  
Head of UN, EU, and Human Rights Desk (DIIR),  
Central Tibetan Administration

**Day 2: 2 November 2021, Tuesday**

**Special Panel with Tibet Brief 20/20 Author  
If Tibet is under the bridge, think again"**

**Speaker:**

**Dr. Michael Van Walt Van Praag**  
Executive President of Kreddha and Senior Fellow of the  
Sompong Sucharitkul Center for Advanced  
International Legal Studies

**Chairperson:** Kalden Tsomo  
UN Advocacy Officer, Tibet Bureau Geneva

**Book Launch -**

Tibet Was Never a Part of China but Middle Way Remain  
a Viable Solution- German & Italian

**Panel 3**

**Violations of Economic Rights by China**

**Speakers:**

- Dr. Adrian Zenz  
Senior Fellow in China Studies at the Victims of  
Communism Memorial Foundation, Washington, D.C
- Thinlay Chukki  
Former Special Appointee for Human Rights,  
Tibet Bureau Geneva
- Marco Respinti, Director in Charge, Bitter Winter

**Chairperson:** Tashi Phuntsok

Representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama  
Office of Tibet, Brussels

**Panel 4**

**China's Footprint Overseas Impacting Human Rights at  
Global Level and the Way Forward**

**Speakers:**

- Kelsang Gyaltzen  
Former Envoy of His Holiness the Dalai Lama
- Martin Hala, Director, Sinopsis
- Laura Harth  
Global Committee for Rule of Law
- Hon. André Gattolin  
Senator, French Parliament
- Sarah Brooks  
Program Manager and Human Rights Advocate,  
International Service for Human Rights

**Chairperson:** Dr. Tenzin Desal

Senior Research Fellow, Tibet Policy Institute

## **Theme 1**

### **Social and Cultural Rights Violations by China**

The International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights commits the signatories to grant all people the right of self-determination (Article 1). By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development. China, as one of the signatories to the Covenant, is obliged to promote and observe the rights recognized in the said Covenant. Social and Cultural rights are those human rights relating to the workplace, social security, family life, participation in cultural life, and access to housing, food, water, health care, and education.

Despite the upsurge in global outcry and criticism of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) violation of numerous international treaties along with its own constitution, it continues to carry out wide-ranging repressions under the pretence of "anti-separatism", "anti-extremism", and "counter-terrorism", in Tibet, East Turkestan, Southern Mongolia, Hong Kong and the rest of China.

The UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (CESCR) in its first review of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 2004 have asked China asked to justify the demolition of historic buildings and housing complexes in Lhasa, and the forced eviction of residents, mostly indigenous Tibetans as reported by the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing. Other concerns raised include: the adequate living standards for people who have been resettled to make way for large dam projects; questions on China's strategic plans on protection of UNESCO World Heritage site in Lhasa from the urban development and preservation of indigenous culture of the Mongolian as well as the Tibetan populations affected by the "China Western Poverty Alleviation Project", Particularly with the construction of a water storage dam and large-scale irrigation schemes in eastern part of Tibet and information on the enjoyment of religious freedom by

Tibetan Buddhists and other religious groups.

In China's second review in 2013, the Committee questioned the under-representation of persons belonging to ethnic minorities in public administration as well as in the police force and the military, and the high rate of unemployment among persons belonging to "ethnic minorities". The Committee also inquired about China's "Re-education Through Labor" in camps and the number of children and adults who remained in these camps and to what extent Tibetans, Inner Mongolians, and Uighurs enjoy equality in their conditions of work, business permits and loans. The Committee inquired about China's initiative to stop non-voluntary resettlement of nomadic herders from their traditional lands and non-voluntary relocation or rehousing programs of other rural residents, in particular in Tibet, Inner Mongolia and East Turkestan. Steps taken by the PRC to ensure the degree to which Tibetans and Uighurs are exercising their cultural rights including using and teaching their own languages, history and culture, as well as practising their religion freely without State interference were also questioned.

China's 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) with reference to Tibet, resources are devoted to "cranking up a construction industry of Tibetans workforce, willing to work hard at altitude year-round." For Tibetans, this means long term urbanisation of entire rural families, training of a Tibetan construction workforce, cancellation of rural land rights, mandatory schooling in *putonghua* Chinese as the language of construction and depopulation of the pastoral lands. The TAR 14th plan often mentions migrants coming into the construction industry, who in turn encourage more to migrate from rural Tibet into urban training and industry employment. Implicitly, the entire program is gendered to favour fit young men, leaving behind all others in an underinvested farms and pastures. This suggests an expanded credentialism, requiring years of apprenticeship in training programs which could readily become a curriculum for civilising the farmers and herders, inducting them not only into construction-specific skills, but into a wider practice of behavioural training in showing ap-

propriate gratitude to the party-state that has “rescued” them from their pasturelands. After the “*Plan for the Construction of Well-off Villages in the Border Areas of the Tibet Autonomous Region (2017-2020)*” failed miserably, at the Seventh Tibet Work Forum of August 2020, Xi invigorated the plan to “construct border areas and improve the border people’s living conditions.” The new plan called for a greater reliance on a Tibetanised workforce, mobilised by displacing Tibetans from their pastoral lands.

Restrictions on Tibetans’ religious and cultural practices have increased in recent years. In 2019, the “TAR” officials ordered retired cadres and retired Party personnel not to engage in the religious act of circumambulation around sacred sites or temples. In May 2020, Chinese authorities in Lhasa continued to place restrictions on Tibetans from participating in religious activities to observe the Buddhist holy month of Saga Dawa, an important Buddhist festival, and in the same year they banned the celebration of *Losar* (Tibetan New Year), which comprises of various activities and practices significant to Tibetan culture and religion. In November 2020, Chinese authorities banned *Sangsol*, ritual offerings by burning juniper outside the Jokhang temple in Lhasa. In December 2019, Chinese authorities banned the celebration of Gaden Ngamchoe festival.

### **Violations of Right to Education in Mother Tongue**

**Language rights** are human rights and fundamental freedoms protected in a number of international conventions to which the PRC is legally bound to observe the responsibilities to protect the right to education. Indeed, China’s own constitution guarantees the protection of citizen’s right to an education in their native tongue. Article 10 of the 1984 Regional National Autonomy Law along with the PRC’s Constitution and other national laws and statutes provide for areas where minority languages and Chinese should be used as well as citizens and officials who should learn both minority languages and Chinese. But all these commitments, provisions, and safeguards are contravened by policy formulated and implemented under the pretence of “ethnic unity” and devel-

opment.. In early August, Chinese authorities in Kham Karze ordered Gyalten Getza Tibetan school, recognised for its outstanding contributions to the society, to change the school's curriculum and medium of instruction to Chinese and take the school's examinations in the Chinese language. The notice warned the staff to comply with the order or face a forced shutdown of the school.

This January, the National People's Congress declared the use of minority languages "unconstitutional" further cementing the Chinese party-state's aggressive attempts to assimilate minority nationalities into a single Chinese national identity. The PRC's National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020) makes use of 'patriotic education' to 'fortify students' faith and confidence in the Party's leadership and the socialist system. A new law on ethnic unity required schools to incorporate state ideology in their curriculum and parents to encourage compulsory bilingual kindergartens to immerse Tibetan children in Chinese language and state propaganda from a very young age.

The UNCESCR has questioned China how the "Bilingual Education Policy" in Tibet and East Turkestan guarantees equal respect and recognition for both the Chinese and the minority language, and the compulsory education of replacing ethnic minority languages including Uighur, Tibetan and Mongolian by Chinese as the medium of instruction in compulsory education is justified under the policy. Such a policy has resulted in parents refusing to send their children to school. The Committee highlighted reports that China has: a) attempted to eradicate the culture, religion and language of Uighurs and Tibetans through massive destruction of sacred cultural and religious sites and bans on the practice of religious rituals and on the use of the Uighur and Tibetan languages in schools.

On 8 July 2021, Chinese authorities ordered the closure of Sengdruk Taktse middle school in Darlak County without an official reason, arresting one of its longest serving teachers, Rinchen Kyi, accusing her of "inciting separatism" for her peaceful pro-



test. While a handful of students got enrolled in Chinese government-run schools, many from distant areas are denied admission to schools and accommodation in the region. Imprisonment of language rights advocate, Tashi Wangchuk, substantiates China's method of silencing voices against its flawed policy.

### **Violations of Right to an Adequate Standard of Living:**

By legal standards, China is obliged to provide to its citizens and ethnic minorities an adequate supply of nutritious food; access to clean drinking water; affordable housing with a certain degree of tenure security, and the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment. The PRC's development policy with its primary focus on expanding industrialization, urbanization, and mining has led to the steady disempowerment of local Tibetans from exercising their economic, social, and cultural rights. The adequate standard of living of Tibetan nomads and farmers is compromised by forcing them to leave their land under the "relocation policy". While it is generally understood that eviction from traditional farm and rangelands exposes the displaced to the risks of landlessness, joblessness, homelessness, marginalization, food insecurity, increased morbidity and mortality, loss of access to common resources and social disintegration. The production landscapes left behind are now open for use and exploitation by the Chinese government and private companies. Mining companies and damming operations have replaced pastures in many areas, leading to environmental degradation.

On 6 December 2019, A-nya Sengdra, a respected environmentalist, was sentenced to 7 year prison term after he and other local Tibetans were falsely charged with campaigns against corruption committed by the local government including illegal mining activities. On 13 October 2018, local Tibetan nomads launched a sit-in protest outside the government office in Kanlho TAP, after the authorities failed to pay compensation to 100 families that were ordered to either reduce or sell their livestock under the policy of tuimu huancao.

The human right to safe and clean drinking water, indispensable for leading a life of human dignity, is being undermined by mining, hydro-electric power projects, water diversion projects and glacial water bottling in Tibet. In November 2018, Chinese authorities carried out a project to divert water from a local river in Sertsang Township in Kanlho TAP, threatening the local drinking water source. On 1 June 2017, around 40 Tibetans were injured and at least seven hospitalized for resisting the diversion of the local river, the only source of water for Tibetan farmers in Takstang Township. On 10 July 2018, the water diversion project on Chakchu river commenced under strict watch of police and intelligence officers causing water scarcity for farmers in Chumar Township. There was no public consultation or assessment done to take into consideration the environmental and livelihood costs.

### **Violations of the Right to Health and Social Security:**

The right to health is a fundamental part of human rights and of understanding of a life in dignity. The right to health is relevant to all states: every state has ratified at least one international human rights treaty recognizing the right to health. During the initial stage of the coronavirus outbreak, the Chinese government withheld information from the public, under-reported the cases of infection, and dismissed the likelihood of transmission between humans. Authorities also detained “rumour-mongers” including activists, lawyers and others for independently reporting on the Wuhan-originated coronavirus outbreak. In Tibet, actual reports on cases of coronavirus infection remain uncertain because of the iron-clad information censorship in place. The UN’s CESCR has asked China to provide information on child malnutrition measures in rural areas and in Tibet, loss of farmland due to industrial development, urbanization, water pollution and soil erosion, water shortages in the rural areas due to dam and water-diversion projects.

Under the guise of “social stability maintenance,” Tibetans and Uighurs are under heavy surveillance and control. In Tibet, with the implementation of “grid-system of social management” since 2012, and imposition of over 600 “convenience police-posts”

with high-tech equipment to monitor daily life, particularly of “special groups” in the region, former prisoners and those who have returned from the exile community in India, among others are under constant watch. Under the system, a designated place is divided into smaller subdivisions and facilitates the officials to closely monitor and identify “potential trouble makers,” and gather real-time information from the community worker stationed within the areas. Every movement of the residents is monitored on screens in offices and information is fed to these officers by grid staff stationed in respective areas, further restricting freedom of expression, belief, association and movement of Tibetans.

#### QUESTIONS AND ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED

- 1) How can we ensure that the international norms on human rights such as social and cultural rights remain universal?
- 2) China’s recent policies have further marginalized Tibetan language. Under such an environment, what are the ways through which we could mobilize the protection of the Tibetan language? Language policy is outlawing the use of any languages other than Chinese in a rapid manner. What are the steps that need to be taken before it completes the total subjugation of minority languages?
- 3) Is the international community in need of a *new* strategy to ensure the social and cultural rights in China? How can relying on the old strategy will ensure those rights?
- 4) How should the international community coordinate and take a multilateral approach to challenge and condemn the CCP’s grave human rights abuses in Tibet, East Turkestan and Southern Mongolia?
- 5) With China’s deteriorating human rights record, what implications would it have on the universal idea of human rights?.

## Speaker's Biographies

- 1. Tencho Gyatso**, is Interim Vice President and Director of Outreach at the International Campaign for Tibet. Born as a Tibetan refugee in the small hill town of Dharamsala, India, the seat of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the exile Tibetan administration, she was educated at the Tibetan Children's Village school, Dharamsala and St Bedes College in Shimla, India. She served as an elected member of the Tibetan Parliament-in-exile for two terms (1991 - 1997) during which time, she traveled widely to Tibetan settlements in India to strengthen understanding of the democratic system of the exile Tibetan government and to speak on Tibet to various governmental and NGO groups in Europe and the United States. After moving to the United States in 1998, she continued her activism as a private individual, and also served as a community leader and event organizer in raising awareness about Tibet. She joined the staff of the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), based in Washington DC as Special Assistant for Advocacy in 2008. At ICT, she expanded her activism to spotlight Tibet, through working to organize annual Tibet lobby action days at the US Congress, Tibetan-American youth leadership training programs, ICT member outreach through numerous talks, events and engagement programs.
- 2. Dr. Michael van Walt van Praag** is the Executive President of Kreddha and Senior Fellow of the Sompong Sucharitkul Center for Advanced International Legal Studies. He served as UN Senior Legal Advisor to the Foreign Minister of East Timor during the country's transition to independence, and as legal advisor to the Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama from 1985 to 2011. He was appointed Visiting Professor of Modern International Relations and International Law at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton from 2011-2015 and taught at universities in Rome, Delhi, San Francisco and Monterey. From 1991 to 1998 Michael served as General

Secretary of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, headquartered in The Hague. He has practiced law, including public international law, with the law offices of Wilmer, Cutler & Pickering (now Wilmer Hale) in Washington D.C. and London, and of Pettit & Martin in San Francisco. His publications include Tibet Brief 20/20, co-authored with Miek Boltjes in 2020; Sacred Mandates: Asian International Relations Since Chinggis Khan (co-authored/edited with Timothy Brook and Miek Boltjes, 2018); The Implementation of the Right to Self-Determination as a Contribution to Conflict Prevention, Report of the International Conference of Experts (21 to 27 November 1998), UNESCO Division of Human Rights, Democracy and Peace/UNESCO Centre of Catalonia (Barcelona, 1999); and The Status of Tibet: History, Rights and Prospects in International Law (Westview 1987).

3. **Dolkun Isa** is a former student-leader of the pro-democracy demonstrations in East Turkistan in 1988. After having endured persecution at the hands of the Chinese government, Isa fled China in 1994 and sought asylum in Europe, and acquired German citizenship in 2006. Currently, he is the President of the World Uyghur Congress and Vice-President of the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation (UNPO). He has consistently advocated for the rights of the Uyghur people and has raised the issue in the United Nations, the institutions of the European Union and in individual states and other international fora.
4. **Tsolmongerel Orkhonselenge Khatagin** is from Mongolia and is currently a doctoral student at the University of Bern. She is a committee member of Association Mongole de Suisse Romande. Since this year, she has been serving as a secretary of the International Human Rights Center for Mongolians.

## **Theme 2**

### **Cultural Genocide in Tibet**

#### **Introduction**

Raphael Lemkin, who coined the term 'Genocide' has included the concept of cultural genocide in his original definition for genocides. As he explains eight dimensions of genocide, broadly constituting as "political, social, cultural, economic, biological, physical, religious, and moral genocide." According to Professor Yvonne Donders, Cultural Genocide is "the destruction by the State or State organs of the culture of a community in its broad sense of the term, including the distinctive spiritual material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, encompassing in addition to art and literature and lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs".

The U.N Declarations of Human Rights, and the Article 1 and 27 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) contain provisions that protect minority cultural rights, and Article 15 specifically recognizes the right to "take part in cultural life."

The Chinese Communist party's elaborate and deliberate assault on Tibet's religion, language, education, and the way of life with the clear intent to destroy Tibetan identity and culture are not just gross violation of international laws but also a representation of the CCP's cultural genocidal intent and practices in Tibet. This act of cultural genocide in Tibet is explicitly asserted in the reports by the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) (1960, 1991 and 1997).

#### **1. The Physical and Non-physical Destruction of Tibetan Culture**

Robert Badinter in 1989, was the first to use the term "Cultural Genocide" in the wake of severe cultural destructions unleashed by the Communist China in Tibet. It is noteworthy that cultural genocides can happen along with physical genocide and

that more so, the act of physical genocide is adjacent to campaigns of cultural extinction.

Both the physical and non-physical of the CCP's destruction of Tibetan Buddhism aimed towards its obliteration is a clear case of cultural genocidal intent and practices.

The Physical destruction of Tibetan Buddhism includes the demolition and forced closure of thousands of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and eviction of Tibetan monks, nuns, and practitioners. The Chinese authority has repeatedly carried out arbitrary arrests, torture, physical abuse, and detentions of Tibetan monks, nuns, and lay practitioners due to their beliefs and practices.

Non-physical form of destruction is seen in the Chinese authorities' deployment of Orwellian techniques and interference in the daily lives of the monks and nuns and other practitioners. By linking Tibetan Buddhist monasteries with "separatism," China has intensified criminalization and securitization through arbitrary detentions and mass indoctrination.

To a greater extent, it is also safe to say that the survival of the Tibetan identity is crucially dependent on the survival of Tibetan Buddhism. Therefore, from the beginning of CCP's rule in Tibet, they have seemed to understand that the annihilation of Tibetan Buddhism would lead to the termination of the Tibetan identity.

## **2. Damage and Destruction of Tibetan Culture and Identity**

### **2.1 Destruction of Tibetan Buddhist Centers of Learning**

The Chinese government from Mao to Xi's era has primarily targeted Tibetan Buddhism for the complete eradication of Tibetan identity. The history of Tibet, since the Chinese occupation shows a chain of destructive practices and policies towards the Tibetan monasteries, nunneries, and other religious sites.

The 10th Panchen Lama's famous 70,000-character petition written in 1962 to the CCP reported that "more than 97 percent of mon-

asteries and nunneries were destroyed and the number of monks and nuns living in the monasteries was reduced by 93 per cent.”

The Cultural Revolution has taken countless Tibetan lives and at the same time important religious institutions and sites were also destroyed. During this period, Beijing has unleashed physical traumas and torture on Tibetans through public "struggle session" and mass imprisonment of the Tibetans. The Central Tibetan Administration reported that at least 92,000 Tibetans who were subjected to "struggle session" died or committed suicide and around 173,000 died in prison, or in "Reform through Labor camps."

Scholar Peter Dzedzic reported that nearly 90 percent of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries were destroyed in this period, and the population of Buddhist monks and nuns declined by 93 per cent, owing to executions and imprisonment during the Cultural Revolution.

From 1966 till the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976, the number of the demolished monasteries and religious institutions in Tibet is reported to be more than 6000. In addition, millions of ancient and priceless manuscripts were burnt. Many temples and monasteries were looted by the CCP as statues within the temples which were made of gold, silver, or bronze were removed and sent to China.

“Report on International Religious Freedom” by the U.S Department of the State in 2019, stated that between 6,000 to 17,000 Tibetan monks and nuns from Larung Gar and Yarchen Gar are forced out of the institutes by the Chinese authorities. The physical destruction and the damage inflicted on Larung Gar and Yarchen Gar monasteries in recent years is the testament towards continuation of the CCP’s destruction of Tibetan culture to this day.

## **2.2 Curtailment of Religious Freedom:**

China is among the worst violators of Freedom of Religion or Belief and Religious Tolerance in the world as reported



by the European Parliament's intergroup on Freedom of Religion. The Freedom House report "Freedom in the World 2021: Democracy under Siege" ranked Tibet as the least free country along with Syria. The curtailment of religious freedom by the CCP constitutes the destruction of the intangible manifestations of Tibetan culture and identity.

### **The Tibet Work Forum**

The built-in "systematic" element is quintessential to the crime of cultural genocide. The Tibet Work Forum is the articulation of China's shifting policies in Tibet.

At the seventh Tibet Work Forum held in August 2020, Xi laid out a "strategy of governing Tibet in the new era" that includes "Sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism." This is a continuation of Beijing's repressive policies and practices from the previous Forums. Thereafter, Xi specifically said that "it is necessary to guide the people of all ethnic groups to establish a "correct view" of the country, history, nationality, culture, and religion.

The Third National forum on the Work in Tibet is the embodiment of how TWF serves as a tool for religious suppression. The forum led to the reemergence of the notorious denunciation campaigns against the Dalai Lama and other religious leaders, which once prevailed during the Cultural Revolution. Religious activity within the monasteries, nunneries and other religious institutes were brutally suppressed.

### **Democratic Management Committee (DMC)**

Democratic Management Committee serves as an instrument through which the repressive policies were implemented within the religious institutions. These Monastic Management Committees (MMC) have taken over the regulation of monasteries from traditional Tibetan leadership. According to state media reports, in the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region, China has established over 1787 democratic management committees.

## **Ban on religious ceremonies and the image of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama**

The CCP's emphasis on restrictions on religious activities and prohibition on the possession of pictures of His Holiness the Dalai Lama is an example of how the core values and beliefs of the Tibetan are getting abused. One of the major components of the Third TWF meeting was the ban on the images of the Dalai Lama in both private and public places.

Since August 2021, Chinese authorities have intensified its religious crackdown in the Tibetan town of Dza Wonpo. The situation remains bleak as over 121 Tibetans have been arbitrarily detained over the possessions of the Dalai Lama's portrait. Most of them except for three were released with strict orders, following more than a month-long detention which included military programs, torture, indoctrination and mistreatments. To the Tibetan Buddhists, His Holiness the Dalai Lama is the manifestation of the Bodhisattva and is revered as their spiritual teacher and the savior. Tibetan monks, nuns, and laypeople who showed any sign of devotion and faith towards His Holiness the Dalai lama face severe consequences and are described as "the scum of Buddhism" and "the loyal running dog of the Dalai clique."

The Human Rights Watch reported that the notice issued in early August 2019 banned retired Tibetan government employees from taking part in any religious activities. Similarly, Tibetan students were prohibited from participating in any form of religious activities during vacation in July 2018, as the Chinese state-controlled media Global Times reported that "Tibetan underage students banned from religious activity by law." The Central Tibetan Administration reported that the Chinese authority has imposed a month-long ban on Tibetan families from participation in any religious activities during the month Saka Dawa festival, which holds the similar importance as Ramadan to Muslims.

## **Strike Hard campaign in Tibet**

Bradley Campbell in 2009 shed new light on the notion of genocide as social control, as he shares that genocide also in-

cludes a top-down moralistic correction of ‘deviant’ behaviour by an increasingly powerful and violent state.

Beijing launched its “Strike Hard Campaign against Violent Terrorism” in May 2014 and the international community witnessed the horrors and the genocidal impact that it brought on the Uighur people and other "minorities" in East Turkestan (Ch. Xinjiang). But in Tibet, the Strike Hard Campaign had already begun in May 1996.

Through the Strike Hard campaign, a reeducation campaign was mandated along the line of rooting out Tibetan Buddhism similar to erasure of Islamic faith in East Turkestan.

The reeducation campaign was systematically implemented by Beijing through the placement of a work team at a particular monastery, with armed troops accompanying them. The monks and the nuns within the religious institutions were forced to adopt the party’s version of history, religious policy, knowledge of the law, and mainly the party’s propaganda. Fifty-eight work teams were sent to key monasteries and nunneries in Nagchu Prefecture alone. According to the party, 700 monasteries and nunneries and 35,000 monks and nuns have been “rectified.” Patriotic education was extended to every segment of Tibetan society as it was implemented in towns, cities, agricultural communities, governmental organs, and schools.

The latest development from the Seventh TWF is the ramping up of their ongoing mass re-education campaign in Tibet as Xi said at the meeting that “We must attach importance to strengthening ideological and political education in schools, but the spirit of patriotism throughout the entire process of school education at all levels and types, sow the seeds of loving China in the depths of the hearts of every teenager.”

### **2.3 Marginalization of Tibetan Language and Education**

Language is not only fundamental to cultural identity but it is through that culture survives and loss of it would mean the

loss of culture. For decades, Tibetan and international organizations have raised serious concerns against the CCP's repressive language policy in Tibet.

In 2016, the Chinese authority arbitrarily and unjustly detained and later sentenced Tashi Wangchuk for five years in prison on the charge of "inciting separatism." Before his arrest, Wangchuk raised his concern over the removal of the Tibetan language in schools and everyday lives in a New York Times documentary. During his trial, Wangchuk expressed that he simply wanted the right to use their language, which is enshrined in the Chinese constitution under "ethnic minorities' rights."

On 24th November 2020, The United Nations Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) conveyed their concerns to the Chinese government on replacing Tibetan with the Chinese language as the medium of instruction in schools and persecution of the Tibetan language rights advocates.

Beijing has a long history of misusing educational institutions as one of the tools for the eradication of the Tibetan language. Moreover, for the sinicization in Tibet, the Tibetan children from an early age are indoctrinated with the party's propaganda and fed lies about their identity.

### **Bilingual education**

China has emphasized and implemented the "Bilingual education," policy. But in practice, all the subjects in primary schools throughout the region are taught in Mandarin except Tibetan language classes. In fact, since the 1960s, Mandarin has been the medium of instruction in almost all middle and high schools in the "Tibetan Autonomous Region"(TAR). The Chinese authority has systematically and structurally discriminated against and discouraged the use of the Tibetan language in nearly every area of Tibet society.

In the words of a Tibetan university professor to Human Rights Watch in 2018 "so this is bilingual education: in theory,

it means you can do both languages. It sounds beautiful. But in practice, the working language in schools and offices even at the township rural level is becoming Chinese.”

Recently Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) reported the announcement made by the Chinese government that " Starting from the fall semester of 2021, all kindergartens in ethnic areas and rural areas that have not used the national standard language for childcare and education activities will use the national standard language for activities to create a good Mandarin education environment for children." This reveals the new height in their history of language suppression against the occupied peoples. Through these radical policies, it is clear that Beijing wants to further marginalize the Tibetan language.

## **2.4 Destruction of Tibetan nomadic way of Life**

Beijing's systematic effort to destroy and eliminate Tibetan culture is present in every spectrum of Tibetan society as seen in Tibetan religious and educational institutions. And it continues to the Tibetans nomadic populations.

In the discourse of cultural genocide, the destruction of the way of life is widely accepted as a means of cultural genocide. The majority of the Tibetan population are nomads and pastoral farmers and being a nomad and pastoral farmers is a crucial part of their life and their identity. CCP has labelled the way of life of the Tibetan nomads as 'primitive' and 'unscientific'. The permanent resettlement through forced relocation policy and western development campaign, population transfer, and intermarriage policy all come under Beijing's master plan to specifically aim to destroy and eradicate the Tibetan way of life and culture and their identity.

### **Permanent Resettlement**

Professor Balakrishnan Rajagopal from MIT argued that the impact of development-based resettlement is often “a soft form of genocide or crime against humanity involving systematic and deliberate destruction of ethnic, racial and religious minorities and indigenous [peoples].”

Since 2006, under the pretense of the policy referred to as "Comfortable Housing", the CCP have stepped up the permanent resettlement of Tibetan villagers and nomads. Such actions are not only a matter of detrimental impact on their life but also a matter of survival. Testament from the region of Gyama (Ch. Jiama) in Tibet Autonomous Region says that "People in the village are desperate about abandoning their homes and having to resettle. They don't have any other skills than farming, and won't have any herd or land worth speaking of anymore. Before the introduction of "Comfortable Housing" the permanent resettlement of Tibetan nomads was already getting momentum with the 'Western Development' campaign in the 1990s.

### **Population Invasion**

In tandem with the permanent resettlement campaign, Beijing has been transferring a large number of the Chinese population into Tibet. At the cost of the Tibetan population, Beijing has always deliberately facilitated favorable conditions and encouraged extensive Chinese migration into Tibet. The Xifang also called 'downward transfer to the countryside' launched in 1956, was a campaign to move millions of Chinese from the cities of eastern China to the remote and less populated regions intent towards the assimilation of Tibetans in the occupied region. Over the period, a large number of Chinese populations moved into Tibet as more than 600,000 Chinese were sent to Amdo, Gansu, Ningxia, East Turkestan, and Inner Mongolia. The population's transfer of the Chinese into Tibet is still undergoing.

### **Intermarriage Policy**

The CCP's policy to encourage intermarriage in Tibet needs to be examined in the context of their policies of relocation of Tibetan people and influx of Chinese migrants.

The former Party Secretary of "TAR" on June 18, 2014, appealed to its party and government officials to act as "match-makers." In August 2014, Chen Quanguo ordered to run stories in local newspapers promoting marriages. According to Tsering Woeser, a Beijing-based prominent Tibetan blogger "There is nothing

objectionable about couples as people from different backgrounds coming together naturally. However, when the authorities use it as a tool and create policies to encourage it, it feels wrong."

On the whole, the permanent resettlements programs, population transfer, and its intermarriage policy is deteriorating Tibetan's way of life and in addition. It indicates Beijing's objective of gaining full control over the ethnic makeup of Tibet.

### QUESTIONS AND ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED

- 1) What are the most pressing issues regarding the protection and preservation of Tibetan cultural identities?
- 2) What are the ramifications of the exclusion of cultural genocide in the Genocide Convention of 1948?
- 3) How can the history of Tibet since the CCP's annexation can shed a light on Beijing's cultural genocidal practice in Tibet?
- 4) What are the tactics and responses used by the Chinese authority to undermine and downplay the international criticism on the cultural destruction in Tibet?
- 5) Within the framework of cultural genocide, how can we interpret Beijing's policy of forced assimilation and Sinicization in Tibet, East Turkestan and Southern Mongolia?

## Speaker's Biographies

- 1. Dr. Tenzin Desal** is currently a Senior research fellow at the Tibet Policy Institute, researching on “Development in Tibet and Ethnic Policy in China”. He has done his early education from TCV Ladakh and completed his doctoral studies in Anthropology from the University of Mysore. His research interests include Ethnic Policy, Cartography, and Tibetan History. He has written many articles and briefs including *Rule by Law: China's New “Ethnic Unity” Regulation in “TAR” (2020)*, *The Tibetan Tradition of Reincarnation and CCP's Assertion to Reign Sovereignty over “Living Buddhas” (2019)*, *Another White Paper on “Religious Freedom” to Evade UN Scrutiny (2018)*, *When the Empires Fall Apart: Managing Diversity in Two Asian Giants — An essay (2017)*, and *Dilemma of development: Tibet's development project and reductionist reading (2015)*.
- 2. Dr Martin Mills** is the Director of the Scottish Centre for Himalayan Research at the University of Aberdeen, and previously acted as briefing officer and secretary to the Scottish Parliament's Cross-Party Group on Tibet. A specialist on Tibet and the Himalayans since the early 1990s, he has written extensively on a wide variety of topics, from the region's religious communities, its history and governance, and is the author of *Identity, Ritual and State in Tibetan Buddhism*. From 2019-2021, he oversaw the Scottish parliamentary Third Pole Climate Change Inquiry, which concluded earlier this year with the publication of *Climate Change on the Third Pole: Causes, Processes and Consequences*, a public review of international scientific findings on the mechanisms and developing effects of climate change on the Tibetan Plateau, both for the region itself and for surrounding areas of Asia.



3. **Donnet Pierre-Antoine** is a French journalist and former editor-in-chief of Agence France-Presse (AFP). He received his PhD degree in political science from the Institute of Political Studies in Strasbourg in 1979 and graduated in Chinese language studies from the National Institute of Oriental Languages and Civilizations in 1982. He was AFP correspondent in Beijing from 1984 to 1989. A specialist in China, he began to take an interest in Tibet in 1985, during a first trip to Tibet commissioned by AFP. The extent of the destruction, and the terrifying tales he collects, led him to write a book, "Tibet Dead or Alive", which received the Alexandra-David-Néel / Lama-Yongden Prize in 1990. Pierre-Antoine Donnet was then appointed AFP Japan correspondent in Tokyo from 1993 to 1998; then director of the Warsaw office in Poland from 1999. He was regional editor-in-chief for the Middle East, then in 2005 was appointed central editor-in-chief of AFP. He was the director of the Strasbourg office from 2006 to 2009; then was appointed the UN Correspondent at the United Nations, New York. In 2012, he was the AFP foreign rights editor in Paris until 2015. He was then appointed as the AFP editor at the French desk, Paris until 2018. He is also the author of around fifteen books devoted to China, Japan, Tibet, India and major Asian challenges. In 2020, he published "World leadership in question, The clash between China and the United States" with Editions de l'Aube. His latest book, "China, the great predator", was published in 2021 by Éditions de l'Aube.
4. **Vijay Kranti** is a senior media professional of Kashmir origin. With over 50 years of experience in Print Media, TV, Radio, Photography, Media Education and Corporate Communications, he has been on the staff of some leading media groups which include India Today, BBC WORLD TV, Deutsche Welle (German Radio), Radio Voice of America, Aaj Tak TV, Zee News and DD News. As a journalist, his main subjects of specialization are Tibet, China and Jammu & Kashmir. He has written over a dozen books including 'DALAI LAMA SPEAKS', his famous coffee table book on the Dalai Lama, and his Hindi style book for the Discovery Channel. He is

a recipient of the coveted K.K. Birla Foundation Fellowship in journalism for his work on Tibet. His latest comic book "DALAI LAMA - THE SOLDIER OF PEACE" has been published in English, Tibetan, Hindi and Spanish. He is also an internationally acclaimed photographer, known for his aesthetic photo study of Tibetan life in India and inside Tibet as well as Indian Himalayan Buddhist culture. His photography on Tibet is considered to be the largest one-man work on this subject. He has been invited worldwide for his photo-exhibitions, photo-based talk-shows on Tibet and Tibetan Buddhist culture. He has presented over a dozen solo photo exhibitions in India, Europe, Australia and North America.

### **Theme 3**

## **Economics Rights Violations by China**

The Chinese Communist Party's claim of unprecedented economic success in Tibet demonstrates its desperate attempt to legitimize its illegal and oppressive rule over Tibet.

In 1986, The United Nations General Assembly passed the Declaration on the Right to Development and is defined as a “comprehensive economic, social, cultural and political process, which aims at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals, on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of benefits resulting therefrom.”

On 21 May 2021, The Chinese Communist Party in their latest White Paper titled "Tibet Since 1951: Liberation, Development and Prosperity" reasserted China's claim of guiding Tibet towards economic salvation and fanfaronade over the achievement of rapid economic growth and infrastructure development in Tibet. On the contrary, the CCP's claims remain visibly inaccurate and false in the face of their colonialist endeavors in Tibet. Questions arise from the need to look into who the development in Tibet is for, as the record consistently shows that the development of Tibet is a means to an end to fulfill CCP's interests. In contrast, the developmental model that Beijing has implemented in Tibet has regularly marginalized and neglected the fulfillment of the needs of the Tibetan people, raising serious implications over the social, economic, and cultural rights of the Tibetan people and its ecology.

According to the Central Tibetan Administration's response to aforementioned China's White Paper, “The establishment and operation of an alien political economy in Tibet has further deepened the overdependence and extreme disempowerment in terms of not having a form of government run by and for the Tibetan people to promote and protect their interests.”

A long list of roads, railways, and airports is omnipresent throughout its white paper on Tibet, as CCP never fails to laud themselves over the infrastructure boom that they have bestowed upon Tibetan people. Within the first two decades after the occupation, massive road building and bridges in Tibet were a main priority for the occupying forces of the CCP to consolidate and facilitate the movement of its massive armies and weapons into Tibet. Noticeably, the majority of the airports and railways are strategically placed close to the Indo-Tibet border, or either near their military and administrative quarters.

The infrastructure development in Tibet serves the CCP's colonial desire in their pursuit towards exploitation and extraction of Tibet's rich resources and environment. Railways are selectively built along with the high mineral concentrated areas such as Gyama and Shetongmon where copper and gold are found in abundance, Chromium, and Iron in Norbusa, lithium in Drag ye Tsaka, and the list of exploited areas goes on. China's extraction of Tibetan minerals is reportedly worth around \$128 billion. The production of mobile phones and laptops which constitute a significant part of China's exports is dependent on lithium, and 90% of China's Lithium reserves are extracted from the Tibetan Plateau. Furthermore, the exploitation of Tibet's rich natural resources continues in logging of timber through massive deforestation, damming of rivers, poaching of wild animals resulting in severe environmental destruction.

Instead of empowering the local economy and its people, the subsidy-induced development of Tibet has made the Tibet economy crippled, extremely disempowered, overdependent, and more susceptible to domination by CCP.

For mass surveillance and solidification of its ironclad control over Tibet, for a long time, China has pursued a campaign to end the Tibetan nomadic way of life through mass resettlement programs and criminalization of pastoralism, impoverishing the local Tibetans all under the euphemism of "poverty alleviation" and "development". Since 2012, ecological and poverty allevia-

tion programs such as the ‘pairing assistance’ program in Tibet have led to the nationwide deployment of party members and local cadres. Within “TAR”, a total of 22,000 party members and government cadres were posted in 5,467 villages including 1700 religious’ institutions in 2016.

The report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food in December 2010 elucidated on the destruction of Tibetan’s livelihood sources of nomadic and farming communities and deprivation of their economic independence by stating that China’s resettlement policy has led to “loss of land, limited ability to keep livestock, relocation in areas unsuitable to agriculture, and generally a disruption of traditional patterns of livelihood.”

Since the advent of CCP's oppressive rule in Tibet, the development policies and practices adopted in Tibet in the last seven decades have consistently undermined and blatantly violated the economic rights enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural rights.

The UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights was established in 1985 and is tasked with the responsibility to monitor the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights by its state parties.

On 27 March 2001, China ratified the ICESCR. The third periodic report on China by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights questioned China over its lack of implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Concerning the protection of the economic rights of the Tibetan people, the report outlined serious violation and non-compliance of Articles 6 and 7 of the International Covenant of Social, Economic, and Cultural Rights.

Beijing's enforcement of the militarized labor camps across the so-called “Tibet Autonomous Region” is in direct violation of the Right to Work and Right to a Fair Wage and Safe Working Conditions of the Tibetan People. In September 2020, China’s

implementation of the militarized vocational training system in Tibet came to the surface through a Jamestown Foundation report authored by Adrian Zenz, an independent researcher specializing in Tibet and East Turkestan. Under the guise of alleviating poverty, China introduced new policies coercing thousands of Tibetans in the region into mass labor through a militarised system in the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). According to the report, the training initially began with 543,000 laborers of which 49,000 were transferred to other parts of TAR after the completion of 7 months of training. A total of 3109 laborers were transferred to other parts of China. It is said that by the end of 2020, the labor scheme must cover the whole of TAR. Tibetans in these coercive labor training have to forcibly undergo indoctrination, intensive surveillance, military-style enforcement, and harsh treatments. The study also reported that transferred laborers were assigned to low-paid jobs in road construction, mining, cooking, and driving, etc.

The Committee also reported that China is in breach of two relevant conventions, - Forced Labor Convention and Abolition of Forced Labor Convention, prompting the Committee to urge China to stop the inflictions of the brutal mental and physical torture and abuses of the Tibetans and other “ethnic minorities groups through the vocational training programs and forced labor. The report also raised concern over the lack of free choice of jobs and access to employment in China. Moreover, the committee stressed the need to take steps towards the prohibition of discrimination by public and private employers against persons belonging to “ethnic minorities”. Moreover, the report also raised concern over the lack of free choice of jobs and access to employment in China

Beijing's violations of economic rights of the Tibetan people and Uighur and other "minority" populations is both systemic and structural. Tibetans, Uighur, and other “minority” peoples are systematically and structurally marginalized and discriminated against in terms of their employment in both public and private sectors. The CCP has deliberately neglected the core obligation of a state in Article 6 of the Covenant to avoid measures that

discriminate against marginalized groups and have significantly undermined the right to access to employment. Tibetans face disadvantages and exclusion in the working environment, due to the dominance of the culture and the language of the Chinese majority, and it is becoming increasingly prominent and mandatory. The encouragement and subsidization provided for the Chinese Workers and recent graduates to migrants and work in Tibet introduced through programs like 'Western Development Strategy' only accentuate Beijing's malicious characteristics of its development model.

In 2014, the UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights revealed that there is a higher rate of unemployment among Tibetans, Uighurs, and Inner Mongolians owing to the high influx of Chinese migration into these regions. Tibetans and other “minority” populations face further marginalization in terms of employment, which regularly discriminates and puts them in a disadvantaged position. On May 25 2020, an announcement for “Public Recruitment of Police Auxiliary Personnel” was issued by eight departments in Lithang County revealing participation or support for “ethnic separatist activities” as a disqualifying condition. Such practices are discriminatory towards Tibetans as according to the Chinese government, “separatist activities” also include expressions and celebration by the Tibetan of their unique culture and religion.

## QUESTIONS AND ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED

- 1) What are the flaws in China's model of economic development of Tibet, East Turkestan, and Southern Mongolia?
- 2) How does the development of Tibet serve the CCP's interests?
- 3) How has China's economic development model violated the economic rights of the Tibetans, Uighurs, and Southern Mongolians and further marginalised them?
- 4) What are the repercussions of China's attempts to promote Tibet as an ideal developmental model on International Human Rights law?
- 5) How has China employed the use of euphemisms such as "poverty alleviation" and "development" to cause damage and destruction to Tibetan nomads?



## Speaker's Biographies

- 1. Dr. Adrian Zenz** is a Senior Fellow in China Studies at the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, Washington, D.C. (non-resident), and supervises PhD students at the European School of Culture and Theology, Korntal, Germany. His research focus is on China's ethnic policy, public recruitment in Tibet and Xinjiang, Beijing's internment campaign in Xinjiang, and China's domestic security budgets. Dr. Zenz is the author of *Tibetanness under Threat* and co-editor of *Mapping Amdo: Dynamics of Change*. He has played a leading role in the analysis of leaked Chinese government documents, to include the "China Cables" and the "Karakax List." Dr. Zenz is an advisor to the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China, and a frequent contributor to the international media.
- 2. Thinlay Chukki** graduated from Harvard Law School with a Master's Degree in Law (LL.M) in 2018 and joined the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) on her return to India. For two years, she worked at the Tibet Bureau Geneva as a Special Appointee for Human Rights till 27 August 2021. Prior to this, she worked as a researcher at the UN, EU, and Human Rights Desk, Department of Information and International Relations, CTA. She worked as a researcher at the UN, EU and Human Rights Desk, she also worked as an in-house Counsel at TATA Motors Ltd., heading its South- India Legal Department as Regional Legal Manager, South-India for almost 5 years. She received her Bachelor's Degree in Law (LL. B) from SDM Law College, Mangalore University with distinction and gold medals in 2010 and received her Master's Degree in Law (LL.M) from National Law School of India University, Bangalore in 2012.

- 3. Marco Respinti** is an Italian professional journalist, essayist, translator, and lecturer. He contributes to several journals and magazines both in print and online, both in Italy and abroad. One of his books, published in 2008, concerns human rights in China. A Senior fellow at the Russell Kirk Center for Cultural Renewal, a non-partisan, non-profit U.S. educational organization based in Mecosta, Michigan, he is also a founding member as well as a Board member of the Center for European Renewal, a non-profit, non-partisan pan-European educational organization based in The Hague, The Netherlands. He serves as Director-in-Charge of The Journal of CESNUR and Bitter Winter. Marco was awarded the 2019 FIRMA (International Festival of Religions, Music, and Arts) Award for journalism promoting religious liberty, to honor personalities who promoted religious liberty and interreligious dialogue throughout the world.

## Theme 4

### **China's Footprint Overseas: Impacting Human Rights at the Global Level and the Way Forward**

With China's expanding footprint across continents and economic sectors, reports of human rights violations linked to Chinese political and economic influences in other countries, and more pertinently within the international human rights system are on the rise.

The list of foreign companies and brands bowing to China's economic influence is growing. Dozens of foreign companies are forced to publicly apologize after expressing opinions or making statements that are seen to "deviate" from CCP's narrative. The U.S National Basketball Association is the latest foreign organization joining the list of foreign brands that bowed to China. The Houston Rockets general manager, Daryla Morey had to apologize to China for tweeting "Fight For Freedom. Stand with Hong Kong" in October 2019. The following team faced backlash from Chinese broadcasters and streaming platforms that they would no longer broadcast Rockets games. Similarly, Mercedes-Benz, a German Car company, had to apologize to China for an Instagram post with its luxury cars along with a quote from Dalai Lama saying "Look at the situations from all angles, and you will become more open." The foreign firms and institutions factoring in self-censorship for the Chinese market and investment have shown how much influence China holds over international companies.

A significant number of studies have revealed China's growing influence within the international human rights system to redefine the universality of human rights in favour of its agenda. Beijing's consistent efforts to distort the international human rights order by promoting the contentious concept of "Human Rights with Chinese characteristics" threatens the fundamental principle of rights-based approach of the international human rights system.

Beijing's concept of "Human Rights with Chinese Characteristics," emphasizes a development-first approach. This not only serves as a tool to legitimize China's human rights abuses, but also conveniently encourages other authoritarian regimes. Due to distribution of regional seats and voting pattern within the UN system, Beijing's hand in sponsoring, tabling and blocking the human rights resolutions in the UN Human Rights system has set a new challenge for the relevant human rights protection mechanism. For instance, in response to joint statements by 44 UN member states during the 47th UN Human Rights Council session, expressing concern over arbitrary detention, forced labour and transfer of Uighur people, and deteriorating situation in Tibet and Hong Kong, China teamed up with 37 UN member states in its defence and issued a statement justifying the human rights violation in regions under China's control.

China's current engagement and strategies to interplay between China's human rights record and global environment is no longer confined to avoiding international scrutiny of its human rights abuses. China has taken an active role to undercut the human rights protection work of the UN Human Rights Council and other relevant agencies by seeking to undermine existing human rights discourse and presenting China's growing economic power as a rising model to be adopted by other developing countries. China's effort to exert its influence in various international platforms began to grow with increasing financial contributions to international organizations, in particular from 2012, since Xi Jinping came to power.

The increasing activity of China on human rights issues at the UN reflects China's ambitions to reshape global governance and norms. In 2012, a research report by Chatham House titled "China and the International Human Rights System" has remarked that "China's general approach within the Human Rights Council has been a near-perfect execution of Deng Xiaoping's famous maxim: 'calmly observe, secure your position, deal with things calmly, hide brightness and cherish obscurity, protect our advantages, never seek leadership, and attain some achievements.'" This

general approach began to change when Xi Jinping assumed the presidential role in 2012. Following this, the launch of Xi's signature project "Belt and Road Initiative" in 2013, seeking to create a new economic corridor to further strengthen PRC's influence across Asia and Europe.

In a sign of growing confidence, China tabled its first-ever Human Rights Council's resolution in June 2017, titled "The contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights." In March 2018, China followed up with another resolution, "Promoting mutually beneficial cooperation in the field of human rights." Both resolutions sought to exert "Xi Jinping's thought" into the UN language and bring the UN system in advancing "Human Rights with Chinese characteristics."

### **BRI and Human Rights Violations**

There are growing reports of human rights violations in project sites and countries under the BRI flagship project. China's long arm has seen support for authoritarian regimes, weakening of democratic institutions, and bailing out of countries that have committed human rights abuses.

A study carried by the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre has reported that since the launch of the BRI (2013), the centre has registered 679 publicly available information of human rights violations linked to Chinese businesses conducted abroad till 2020. These include land conflicts, destruction of livelihoods, environmental pollution, labour rights violations and the use of violence. The report is based on research by local and international NGOs and media reports. The study has also indicated higher rates of human rights abuses in countries with weaker governance where Chinese investments are dominant.

According to study conducted by AidData lab at William & Mary, a university based in Virginia, US, in a period of over 18-year period, China has granted loans to 13,427 infrastructure projects worth \$843 bn across 165 countries. Much of the loans are linked to China's Belt and Road strategy.

The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic which was first detected in the Wuhan city of China has exposed China's orthodox interpretations of non-interference in internal affairs that has weakened international norms on human rights, transparency and accountability. These are not new, but have revealed assertive tactics employed by Chinese officials to alter the global governance in China's favour.

The growing role and influence of China in global politics and human rights discourse extend beyond question in securing greater say for China, thus transforming from "norm-taker" to "norm-shaper" on human rights standards and principles.

China's assertiveness and its global human rights implications are reflected in Xi-Jinping's address to the 19<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party of China in October 2017:

*"China champions the development of a community with a shared future for mankind, and has encouraged the evolution of the global governance system. With this we have seen a further rise in China's international influence, ability to inspire, and power to shape; and China has made great new contributions to global peace and development."*

In the light of China's growing political and economic weight which is seeking to redefine international order and the idea of universality of human rights, democratic norms and institutions, many countries are reconsidering their position and approach to China. For instance, the European Union has acknowledged China has increasingly become a strategic competitor for the EU. Likewise, the US has shifted from viewing China as a strategic partner to strategic competitor.

### QUESTIONS AND ISSUES TO BE CONSIDERED

- 1) To what extent China poses challenges to international human rights principles and norms.
- 2) What role can democratic states and civil societies take to ensure international human rights protection mechanisms, such as UN special procedures and treaty bodies, are safeguarded from Chinese attempts to exert its influence?
- 3) What are the implications of China's growing geo-political influence, in particular China's attempt at redefining the current international order?
- 4) How do we collectively address the CCP's footprint overseas and the challenges it posed to the universality of human rights?

## Speaker's Biographies

1. **Kelsang Gyaltzen** was one of the two Envoys of His Holiness the Dalai Lama entrusted with the responsibility of conducting the dialogue with the Chinese leadership. He engaged in nine rounds of formal discussions and one informal meeting with representatives of the Chinese leadership (2002-2010). He also served as the Representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama for Central and Eastern Europe (1985- 1992). He also served as the secretary to His Holiness for international relations at the Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala. In 1999, he returned to Switzerland and continued to serve as the Envoy of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Europe, heading the Office of Tibet, Brussels (2001-2005) and the Office of Tibet in Geneva (2005-2008). After serving as the Special Representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Europe and as acting head of the Office of Tibet in Brussels he retired in July 2016.
2. **Hon. André Gattolin** is a French politician and academic. Since October 2011, he is a member of the French Senate, currently serving as vice-chair of the Foreign Affairs and Defence Committee and also vice-chair of the European Affairs Committee. He is the vice-president of the International Information Group on Tibet and also the Senate-Taiwan exchange and study group of the French Senate. Author and co-author of two reports of the French Senate on China in September 2021. He is actively involved in the promotion of human rights, especially in South-East Asia and Tibet. Since 2016, he has chaired the France-Northern Europe (Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden) parliamentary friendship group of the French Senate. On behalf of the European Affairs Committee, he authored three reports on the geopolitics of the Arctic. Born in 1960, he studied at the Paris Institute of Political Studies. Holding a PhD in information and communication sciences, he regularly teaches at the New Sorbonne University of Paris.



3. **Dr. Martin Hala** was educated in Prague, Shanghai, Berkeley and Harvard. He taught in Prague and Bratislava and is the founder and director of Synopsis.cz, a joint project between Academia and the Institute of East Asian Studies at Charles University in Prague. In 2014-15, he was the Regional Manager for Asia Pacific at the Open Society Foundations.
4. **Laura Harth** is an Italian political activist for human rights and the rule of law with a focus on China and the Campaign Director at Safeguard Defenders. She has a Master of Arts degree in international law, human rights and international relations, and regularly contributes to Italian news outlets and serves as a regional liaison for the Inter Parliamentary Alliance on China (IPAC) and on the Advisory Group of Hong Kong Watch.
5. **Sarah Brooks** is a graduate from Vanderbilt University and the University of Michigan. Sarah leads International Service for Human Rights' work (ISHR) to support human rights defenders in Asia, as well as defenders of migrants' rights globally. She also acts as liaison for ISHR with respect to EU institutions. Prior to joining ISHR, Sarah worked to advance US foreign policy in the area of worker rights and supply chains.

## Speaker's Biographies

### Special Panel on Tibet's Stolen Child

- 1. Tenzin Thupten Rabgyal**, Tehor Khanze Zeekgyab Tulku, is the current Abbot of the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in South India, and the 5th reincarnation of Kachen Lobsang Thupten Nyendak Namgyal (4th Zeekgyab Tulku). After his Enthronement Ceremony at Tashi Lhunpo in 1986, Rinpoche started learning Tibetan reading and writing and the memorization of prayers. In 1989, Zeekgyab Rinpoche received his Novice vows from His Holiness the Dalai Lama. At Gaden Jangtse Monastery, Rinpoche started the study of the five major Buddhist Texts under his Teacher, Khensur Jetsun Lobsang Choney's guidance. Rinpoche received his Fully Ordained vows from His Holiness the Dalai Lama and in 2000, gave his examination in front of the Monks Assembly of Gaden Jangtse Monastery. In 2008 due to poor health, Rinpoche was instructed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama to complete his Geshe Examination. In 2010, Rinpoche went to Gyudmed Tantric Monastery to study Tantra for one year. In the same year, Rinpoche completed his Kachen Examination at Tashi Lhunpo Monastery. From 2011 to present, Rinpoche has been teaching at Tashi Lhunpo Monastery. At the end of 2018, Rinpoche received confirmation of the appointment of Abbot of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. On February 11, 2019, Rinpoche had the official Enthronement Ceremony as Abbot of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery.

- 2. Kai Müller:** Mr Kai Müller has been the executive director of the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) in Germany since 2005. The association promotes the self-determination and human rights of Tibetans and maintains offices in Washington, Brussels, Berlin and Amsterdam. The organization is supported by around 15,000 people in Germany. Mr Müller is a jurist and social scientist with a specialization in Social Studies, Political Science, Public Administration by training, having graduated from Humboldt University in Berlin.

