

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Human Rights Council
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Item 3: Interactive Dialogue –Working Group on arbitrary detention

Statement delivered by Kai Mueller on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (HFHR)

Mr. President,

We wish to thank the Working Group on arbitrary detention for reporting on the arbitrary deprivation of liberties. This critical work ensures arbitrary detention is not normalized, as is often the intention of governments.

In the People's Republic of China, many Tibetans are regularly subjected to arbitrary detention. In these cases, either no information about the case is available, or individuals are detained incommunicado for extended periods of time, tortured, and sentenced for unknown charges without judicial due process. Such treatment is the norm for Tibetans who legitimately exercise their rights in social, cultural, religious, environmental or political spheres.

An illustrative example of this treatment is the case of nine Tibetans who were detained and sentenced to prison terms of five to 14 years for organizing celebrations for the Dalai Lama's birthday in 2015. In all nine cases, there has been no information about the nature of their trials, their access to lawyers, or the charges against them. No relatives were informed of the trial dates and only some were notified of the final sentence by mail.

We are grateful to the five UN Special Procedures who recently published their communication to the Chinese mission requesting further information on the nine Tibetans (AL CHN 5/2019).

We urge the Working Group on arbitrary detention and other relevant special procedures to continue to report on China without fear, and encourage the Chinese authorities to comply with national and international laws that protect civil and political rights.

As we all know, silence sets a dangerous norm of complicity. The United Nations is one of the few places Tibetans have a voice and an opportunity to challenge China on their sustained mistreatment of Tibetans; Tibetans inside understand this. Although the risks for Tibetans reporting on their lives has significantly increased, we continue to receive information on human rights abuses. Tibetans remain determined to report on injustices and we must continue to hold China accountable at the Human Rights Council.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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