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Verein Tibeter Jugend in Europa
Tibetan Youth Association in Europe



21 SEPTEMBER 2023

Honorable Minister of Foreign Affairs,

We, a global coalition of over 143 Tibet-related organisations, are writing to you concerning the upcoming UN Human Rights Council election on 10 October in which China is running for a seat.

As you will be aware, members of the Human Rights Council are expected to maintain the highest standards of human rights and to fully cooperate with the Council, neither of which China has upheld.

To date, there are at least 25 outstanding visit requests to China by UN experts, some outstanding for over 15 years¹ while the last UN High Commissioner for Human Rights who was granted access to Tibet was Mary Robinson in 1998. Tibetans who have cooperated with the United Nations, its representative, and mechanisms have been subject to reprisals and intimidation by the Chinese government,² as noted by the UN Secretary General's report.³

At the same time, China has failed to respect and protect human rights, both at home and abroad, and repression in Tibet has gone from bad to worse. Tibet is ranked by Freedom House as the least free place in the world alongside Syria for civil and political rights.⁴

Over the past 12 months alone, multiple UN human rights bodies have raised alarm at the escalation of human rights abuses in Tibet, including the residential school system that has seen almost 1 million Tibetan children separated from their families and communities:⁵

- **In November 2022**, four Special Rapporteurs issued a joint 17-page communication⁶ to China raising concern about the residential school system in Tibet and broader forced assimilation policies facing the Tibetan people.
- **In February 2023**, UN experts warned that this school system was “aimed at assimilating Tibetan people culturally, religiously and linguistically” through “a series of oppressive actions against Tibetan educational, religious and linguistic institutions”.⁷

¹ <https://spinternet.ohchr.org/ViewCountryVisits.aspx?visitType=all&country=CHN&Lang=en>

² Human Rights Watch, ‘The Costs of International Advocacy: China’s Interference in United Nations Human Rights Mechanisms’ 5 September 2017: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/09/05/costs-international-advocacy/chinas-interference-united-nations-human-rights>

³ Reporting mandate of the Secretary-General on intimidation and reprisals for cooperation with the UN in the field of human rights, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Reprisals/Pages/Reporting.aspx>

⁴ ‘Freedom in the World 2023’, Freedom House, 9 March 2023: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/tibet/freedom-world/2023>

⁵ ‘Separated From Their Families, Hidden From the World: China’s Vast System of Colonial Boarding Schools Inside Tibet’, Tibet Action Institute, 2021: https://tibetaction.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2021_TAI_ColonialBoardingSchoolReport_Digital.pdf

⁶ <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?glid=27444>

⁷ OHCHR, China: UN experts alarmed by separation of 1 million Tibetan children from families and forced assimilation at residential schools, 6 February 2023: [https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/02/china-un-experts-alarmed-separation-1-million-tibetan-children-families-and#:~:text=GENEVA%20\(6%20February%202023\)%20-%2C%20UN%20experts*%20warned%20today](https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/02/china-un-experts-alarmed-separation-1-million-tibetan-children-families-and#:~:text=GENEVA%20(6%20February%202023)%20-%2C%20UN%20experts*%20warned%20today)

- **In March 2023**, the UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights called for the coercive residential school system in Tibet to be immediately abolished and raised concerns over the use of the Tibetan language instruction in Tibetan schools.⁸
- **In April 2023**, six Special Rapporteurs issued a communication to China raising concern about the extensive labour transfer programme in Tibet that poses “serious concerns regarding the voluntary nature of the programme” and the risks it is posing to the Tibetan language, cultural practices and religion.⁹
- **In May 2023**, the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women¹⁰ called on China to abolish the residential school system imposed on Tibetan girls; authorise the establishment of and subsidise private Tibetan schools; ensure that Tibetan women and girls have access to instruction in their mother tongue; and reverse the closure of schools providing instruction in the Tibetan language.
- **In August 2023**, three UN experts called on China to share information concerning nine Tibetan environmental human rights defenders serving prison sentences in relation to “their peaceful work to protect the area’s fragile environment”. The Special Rapporteurs stated they believe the “lack of information provided by Chinese authorities could be seen as a deliberate attempt to make the world forget about these human rights defenders as they spend year after year in isolation.”¹¹

This growing catalogue of assault on human rights coupled with abject failures to cooperate with the United Nations, and systematic efforts to undermine freedoms globally, make it utterly untenable for UN Member States to support China’s election bid.

Granting China a seat at the Council will undercut the Council’s credibility and send a dangerous signal that the Human Rights Council is not fit for the purpose it was created.

In the interest of safeguarding the integrity of the Human Rights Council and fulfilling the vision of its creators, we urge your delegation to the UN General Assembly to apply the membership criteria of its own resolution when casting their secret ballots; China clearly falls very short of those standards. We also call on your government to commit itself publicly to support a competitive, genuinely contested and principled electoral process for Human Rights Council elections.

Yours sincerely

Gloria Montgomery
UN Advocacy Director
Tibet Justice Center

Mandie McKeown
Executive Director
International Tibet Network

Pema Doma
Executive Director
Students for a Free Tibet

Tenzin Zöchbauer
Executive Director
Tibet Initiative Deutschland

Lhadon Tethong
Director
Tibet Action Institute

Tsering Gonpa
President
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On behalf of the Member Groups of the International Tibet Network listed below:

⁸ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Concluding Observations, 6 March 2023:

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=E%2FC.12%2FCHN%2FCO%2F3&Lang=en

⁹ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/04/china-vocational-training-programmes-threaten-tibetan-identity-carry-risk>

¹⁰ Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, Concluding Observations, 30 May 2023:

https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW%2FC%2FCHN%2FCO%2F9&Lang=en

¹¹ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/08/china-un-experts-seek-clarification-about-nine-imprisoned-tibetan-human>

<p>Aide aux Refugies Tibetains Alaskans for Tibet Amigos de Tibet, Colômbia Amigos de Tibet, La Unión Chile Amigos del Tibet, El Salvador Amigos del Tibet, Santiago de Chile Anterrashtriya Bharat - Tibbet Sahyog Samiti Asociación Cultural Peruano Tibetana Asociación Cultural Tibetano Costarricense Association Cognizance Tibet, North Carolina Association Drôme Ardèche-Tibet Associazione Italia-Tibet Australia Tibet Council Baljara Foundation - Maharashtra Bay Area Friends of Tibet Bharat Tibbat Sahyog Manch Bharat Tibbat Samanvay Sangh Bharat Tibet Sangh - India Bharat Tibet Sangh - Jammu Bharrat Tibbat Samvad Manch, India Boston Tibet Network Briancon05 Urgence Tibet CADAL Canada Tibet Committee Casa del Tibet – Spain Casa Tibet México Centro Cultural Columbo Tibetano Centro De Cultura Tibetana, Brazil Centro para la Apertura y el Desarrollo de América Latina Circle of Friends (Philippines) Comité de Apoyo al Tibet (CAT) Committee of 100 for Tibet Core Group for Tibetan Cause, India Czechs Support Tibet Dream for Children, Japan EcoTibet Ireland Foundation for Universal Responsibility of H. H. the Dalai Lama France-Tibet Free Indo-Pacific Alliance Free Tibet Free Tibet Fukuoka Friends of Tibet Costa Rica Friends of Tibet in Bulgaria Friends of Tibet in Finland Friends of Tibet New Zealand Ganasamannay Kolkata Grupo de Apoio ao Tibete, Portugal Himalayan Committee for Action on Tibet - Kinnaur Human Rights Network for Tibet & Taiwan India Tibet Friendship Society India Tibet Friendship Society - Bihar India Tibet Friendship Society - Dashthrapuni India Tibet Friendship Society - Delhi India Tibet Friendship Society - Muzaffarpur International Campaign for Tibet International Society for Human Rights Munich Chapter International Tibet Independence Movement Israeli friends of the Tibetan People Jal Kalyan Seva Samiti, Rajasthan Japan Association of Monks for Tibet (Super Sangha) Le Club Français - Paraguay Les Amis du Tibet Luxembourg Liberté au Tibet (Colmar, France) Lions Des Neiges Mont Blanc, France LUNGTA – Actief voor Tibet Maison des Himalayas Maison du Tibet – Tibet Info National Campaign for Free Tibet Support, India</p>	<p>National Democratic Party of Tibet Objectif Tibet Passeport Tibetain Phagma Drolma-Arya Tara RangZen: Movimento Tibete Livre, Brasil RBA Réseau Bouddhisme et Action, France Roof of the World Foundation, Indonesia Sakya Trinley Ling Santa Barbara Friends of Tibet Save Tibet Foundation Save Tibet, Austria SFT Japan SFT Taiwan SFT-India Sierra Friends of Tibet Students for a Free Tibet – Canada Students for a Free Tibet – France Students for a Free Tibet Denmark Swedish Tibet Committee Swiss Tibetan Friendship Association (GSTF) Taiwan Friends of Tibet Tashi Delek Bordeaux The Global Alliance for Tibet & Persecuted Minorities The Norwegian Tibet Committee The Youth Liberation Front of Tibet, East-Turkestan, Manchuria & Inner-Mongolia Tibet Action Group of Western Australia Tibet cesky (Tibet in Czech) Tibet Committee of Fairbanks Tibet Friendship and Cooperation Society Tibet Group, Panama Tibet Lives Tibet Patria Libre, Uruguay Tibet Rescue Initiative in Africa Tibet Society of South Africa Tibet Solidarity Tibet Support Association Hungary Tibet Support Committee Denmark Tibet Support Group – Netherlands Tibet Support Group Adelaide - Australia Tibet Support Group Ireland Tibet Support Group Kenya Tibet Support Group Kiku, Japan Tibet Support Group, Costa Rica Tibetan Association of Germany Tibetan Association of Ithaca Tibetan Association of Northern California Tibetan Association of Philadelphia Tibetan Community Austria Tibetan Community in Australia (Queensland) Tibetan Community in Britain Tibetan Community in Denmark Tibetan Community in France Tibetan Community in Ireland Tibetan Community in Japan Tibetan Community of Australia (Victoria) Tibetan Community of Italy Tibetan Community Sweden Tibetan Cultural Association – Quebec Tibetan Programme of The Other Space Foundation Tibetan Women's Association (Central) Tibetans of Mixed Heritage Tibetisches Zentrum Hamburg TIBETmichigan TSG – Slovenia U.S. Tibet Committee United Nations for a Free Tibet (UNFFT) Voces de Tibet, México World League for Freedom and Democracy</p>
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