

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Human Rights Council
Fifty fifth Regular Session
March 7, 2024

Item 3: ID with the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights

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

Mr. President,

We thank the Special Rapporteur for her report.

We are deeply concerned regarding the Chinese government's persistent and pervasive agenda to erode essential pillars of the Tibetan heritage, including language, religious practice, and physical destruction of cultural sites.

A dam construction project in the eastern Tibetan area of Derge (Dege) will force the relocation of approx. 2,000 Tibetans from their homes and lead to the destruction of six monasteries holding numerous artifacts of religious significance, including murals that date back to the 13th century.

Moreover, the Chinese government routinely blocks vital religious proceedings demonstrating a stark pattern of violating the right to religious practice. On July 19, 2023, Chinese police halted the sacred Kalachakra initiation ceremony. Officers detained the organizers for interrogation and shoved and beat the crowd of pleading devotees. Buddhist rituals like these are vital to Tibetan spiritual education.

Several UN bodies already have censured Beijing's boarding school system designed to uproot the source of generational cultural transmission. A central feature of this system is political indoctrination. For example, Chinese state media in June, 2023 reported the establishment of a model kindergarten in Lhasa, with the mission of "penetrat[ing] the blood and soul" of the children with adherence to Party doctrine and Han-centric identity.

These examples alone evidence an irrefutable dismissal of cultural rights as defined in multiple UN treaties and demand condemnation.

Thank you.