



བོད་ཀྱི་འགྲོ་བ་མིའི་ཐོབ་ཐང་དང་མང་གཞི་འཕེལ་ཀྱས་ལྗེ་གནས་ཁང་།
TIBETAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY

1 June 2022

President Xi Jinping
General Secretary Office
Central Committee of the Communist Party of China
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People's Republic of China

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Re: End Forced Cultural Assimilation Policy in Tibet

Dear President Xi,

Today on 'Children's Day' 儿童节, we write to you on behalf of the Tibetan people inside Tibet whose identity is now under attack due to the implementation of laws, policies and campaigns that threaten the survival of the Tibetan linguistic and cultural identity.

The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) is a non-governmental organization committed to advancing human rights and democracy in Tibet and the exiled Tibetan community by empowering Tibetan advocates and monitoring, documenting, and campaigning against human rights abuses.

The People's Republic of China was founded as a multiethnic state and promises to respect ethnic diversity. The preamble of the Constitution affirms that the state makes every effort to promote the prosperity of all ethnic groups. However, the PRC's laws and policies, especially on education, language and religion, such as the "Second Generation Ethnic Policy", have contributed to forced cultural assimilation, which threatens to nullify seven decades of laws granting autonomous powers to minority nationalities in self-governance.

Article 4 of the Chinese Constitution states that "All nationalities have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages and to preserve or reform their own folkways and customs." Article 10 of the Law on Regional National Autonomy provides that the "national autonomous areas shall guarantee the freedom of the nationalities in these areas to use and develop their own spoken and written languages and their freedom to preserve or reform their own folkways and customs."

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Having ratified numerous international human rights treaties such as the Convention on Rights of Child (CRC), Convention on Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), the PRC is obligated to uphold the educational, linguistic, and cultural rights of all minority nationalities in PRC including Tibetans. Article 13(3) of the ICESCR recognises “the liberty of parents and legal guardians to choose for their children, schools other than those established by the government and to ensure that their children receive religious and moral education in accordance with their own convictions.” Article 30 of the CRC states that “no child belonging to ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities shall be denied the right to enjoy his or her own culture, practise his or her own religion, or use his or her own language in community.”

As a direct result of the implementation of the “Second Generation Ethnic Policy”, Tibetan private and semi-private schools like Sengdruk Taktse are being closed at an alarming rate. In July 2021, the Dári (Tibetan: Darlag) County government announced the closure of Sengdruk Taktse Middle School even though the school had broken no laws. The school’s principal and director requested local authorities for continued permission to run the school following any potential government-dictated reforms. Their appeals were rejected.

On 1 August 2021, Rinchen Kyi, one of the longest-serving teachers of the school, was accused of inciting separatism when she refused to eat after the school’s closure. She was detained for two days before being taken to Xining for unspecified medical treatment. In April this year, she was suddenly escorted back to her home, where she and her family members remain under closely surveilled house arrest. Her current medical condition and details of her nine-month detention remain unknown.

On 24 August 2021, Guldrak and Yangrik – two Tibetan students from a neighboring state-run school – were detained for protesting the introduction of Chinese-medium education. After posting to WeChat that they would prefer to “live as herders than to attend school with a highly sinicized education system,” the 19-year-olds were held at the Dari County detention centre. Their current status and condition remain unknown.

Private and semi-private schools like Sengdruk Taktse are essential to preserving and developing the PRC’s rich tradition of multilingualism and linguistic diversity. Their language curricula provide minority nationalities with innumerable benefits to their quality of life, resilience to challenges, and ability to meaningfully participate in broader society: gains that will help PRC achieve and surpass its 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. These schools are especially important in the Tibetan context, where culture and religion are inextricably linked to the Tibetan language.

We urge you to truly live up to your lofty vision of achieving the ‘Chinese Dream in the new era’ by making respect for human rights a precondition for all policy and legal measures implemented in Tibet. In this regard, we would like to make the following recommendations that we believe will help enable Tibetans to exercise their human rights to education, language, culture and religion:



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Recommendations

- Review current laws and policies on education and language rights and promptly revise or abrogate vaguely defined provisions commonly used to perpetuate the dominance of Chinese-medium education and silence critical voices.
- Ensure that all Tibetan children are able to learn and use Tibetan in schools and reaffirm the established rights of minorities to mother-tongue instruction in schools.
- End the forced imposition of “ethnic mingling” measures in Tibetan educational institutions including concentrated schooling and “mixed classes.”
- Unconditionally release all individuals prosecuted for peaceful opposition to state education and linguistic policies and end the suppression of any activities or organizations calling for increased mother-tongue based education.
- Require provision of clear reasons and the factual basis for closing Tibetan schools. Ensure that such regulations do not restrict or prohibit a school’s ability to choose the Tibetan language as a medium of instruction.
- Revise the Bilingual Education Policy to ensure the use and promotion of minority languages in schools, allow mother-tongue instruction in pre-school and primary school and ensure voluntary and consensual implementation of language policy in schools, including by consulting with and ensuring participation of ethnic minorities during the revision process.
- Ensure that educational objectives rather than political objectives dictate education policy in minority areas.
- Ensure that all teaching and learning materials for pre-school and primary levels are available in ethnic minority languages and reflect culturally appropriate content. Ensure that teaching and learning materials are available in ethnic minority languages and reflect culturally appropriate content when feasible for secondary levels.
- Comply with all outstanding recommendations on education and language from UN treaty bodies.

Sincerely,
Tsering Tsomo
Executive Director, TCHRD



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