



ANNUAL REPORT

Human Rights Situation in Tibet



2024

The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) is the first Tibetan non-governmental human rights organisation established in exile. Founded in January 1996, it is based in Dharamshala, in the northern Indian state of Himachal Pradesh, and registered as an NGO under Section 2 of the Indian Societies Registration Act of 1860.

We are 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. We envision a future where every Tibetan can exercise human rights and democratic freedoms.

TCHRD is currently a member of the Geneva-based World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), Asia Pacific for Refugee Rights Network, and International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) and collaborates with numerous leading human rights NGOs.

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2024, the human rights situation in Tibet further deteriorated as Chinese authorities intensified policies of Sinicization, forced displacement, and suppression of fundamental freedoms. The year was marked by an escalated crackdown on religious institutions and schools, arbitrary detentions, environmental exploitation, and transnational repression targeting Tibetans abroad.

Religious institutions in Tibet faced intensified state control, with monasteries subjected to heightened surveillance, forced closures, and demolitions. Authorities expanded restrictions during key religious festivals such as Losar and Saga Dawa, further constraining Tibetan religious and cultural expression. The Chinese Communist Party continued efforts to align Tibetan Buddhism with state ideology through organisations like the Buddhist Association of China.

Tibetans continued to be arbitrarily detained and forcibly disappeared for peaceful religious and cultural expression, including possessing images of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Many detainees faced unfair trials, harsh sentencing, and widespread reports of torture and ill-treatment in custody. Even after release, Tibetans remained under constant surveillance, severely limiting their ability to reintegrate into society. Digital surveillance, censorship and repressive measures further eroded fundamental freedoms, with Tibetans facing imprisonment for online activities. China's transnational repression extended beyond its borders, subjecting Tibetan communities abroad to intimidation and monitoring.

Chinese authorities escalated efforts to erase Tibetan language and culture from educational institutions by banning Tibetan instruction in schools and private settings. Children were increasingly forced into state-run boarding schools where Mandarin is used as the sole language of instruction, separating them from their families for prolonged periods. These assimilationist policies violate cultural and linguistic rights and contravene the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

Protests against hydropower projects and forced relocations were met with violent crackdowns, mass arrests, and reports of torture. Thousands of Tibetans were forcibly relocated to urban settlements through coercion, leading to the destruction of traditional ways of life. Meanwhile, large-scale mining and hydropower developments caused irreversible environmental degradation. The construction of dams in seismically active regions increased the risk of landslides and earthquakes, raising concerns about sustainability and safety.

As a signatory to international human rights treaties, China is obligated to respect fundamental rights and freedoms. While it has not ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), it is still bound by the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (1969) to refrain from actions that undermine the covenant's objectives. Upholding these commitments is essential for safeguarding cultural and religious freedoms and ensuring accountability for government policies.

Despite international scrutiny, including China's Universal Periodic Review (UPR) at the United Nations, the Chinese government continues to deny or disregard previous human rights recommendations (such as from the 2018 UPR) and tries to justify its actions under the guise of economic development and national security. The international community has responded to this in several ways, but more rigorous efforts are required to stop China's relentless repression across Tibet and abroad and prevent the severe violation of the fundamental rights and freedoms of Tibetans. Immediate and sustained action is required to address the severe human rights violations occurring in Tibet.

II. METHODOLOGY

This report was prepared by the research section of TCHRD, based on compiled and analysed information from a diverse range of sources on the human rights situation in Tibet in 2024. The TCHRD's analysis encompasses, but is not limited to, media reports, international law, domestic legislation, policy papers, United Nations proceedings, academic reports, and documentation from other civil society organisations.

To ensure accuracy and reliability, TCHRD researchers conduct mandatory verification with at least two sources for every account or testimony included in this report. Nonetheless, it must be acknowledged that verifying all information sources is not always feasible due to the considerable dangers faced by Tibetan informants inside Tibet. Consequently, to mitigate these risks, the identities of sources and informants who contribute to this report must remain confidential. The increased risks faced by Tibetans have made the collection of comprehensive information on many documented cases particularly challenging.

TCHRD extends its recognition to those with the immense courage to share their stories and to those who risk their lives transmitting information in the pursuit of human rights in Tibet.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

TCHRD urges individuals, governments, civil society organisations, and all intergovernmental organisations to exert pressure on the **government of the People's Republic of China** to:

- Cease the forced Sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism and respect religious freedoms by ensuring that Tibetans can practice their faith without government interference.
- Allow Tibetans to independently recognise and appoint religious leaders without state interference, including the recognition of reincarnated lamas in accordance with Tibetan Buddhist traditions. Additionally, cease the use of government-controlled religious organisations, such as the Buddhist Association of China, as tools to manipulate Tibetan Buddhist institutions.
- Remove political indoctrination from religious institutions and end the imposition of CCP ideology on Buddhist teachings and monastic life.
- Halt the destruction of Tibetan monasteries and cultural heritage sites and restore those that have been forcibly demolished. The Chinese government must ensure the preservation of Tibet's religious and cultural institutions under international cultural protection standards.
- Allow Tibetans to freely participate in major Tibetan festivals, such as Losar and Saga Dawa, by lifting restrictions on public celebrations, pilgrimage access, and traditional rituals.
- Release all Tibetans arbitrarily detained for exercising internationally recognised human rights and fundamental freedoms, such as for peaceful protests, religious expression, and cultural preservation efforts.
- Ensure access to fair and impartial legal proceedings for all Tibetan detainees, with the right to independent legal representation, family visits, and due process.
- Cease the practice of incommunicado detention and disclose the whereabouts of all Tibetans subjected to enforced disappearance.

- Prohibit the use of torture, forced labour, and political indoctrination in detention centres and prisons, in compliance with the United Nations Convention Against Torture. Additionally, investigate and hold accountable officials responsible for human rights abuses in detention, including those involved in arbitrary arrests, beatings, and unlawful surveillance of Tibetans.
 - Provide justice and reparations for families of Tibetans who have died in custody due to torture, medical neglect, or extrajudicial execution.
 - End digital surveillance and mass censorship that suppress Tibetans' right to freedom of speech and expression, including invasive online monitoring, social media restrictions, and arbitrary arrests for digital activism.
 - Abolish regulations that criminalise Tibetans for engaging in peaceful protests and remove the heavy police presence used to intimidate those expressing dissent.
 - Lift travel restrictions on foreign journalists and UN experts and allow them unrestricted access to Tibet to document human rights conditions.
 - Prevent the misuse of surveillance systems, facial recognition technology, and mass DNA collection to profile, track, and suppress Tibetan citizens.
 - End discriminatory government policies that criminalise the use of the Tibetan language on digital platforms and reinstate the right to communicate in Tibetan without fear of persecution.
 - End the forced enrolment of Tibetan children in state-run boarding schools, allow families to educate their children in Tibetan cultural and linguistic environments, and reinstate independent Tibetan schools, ensuring that Tibetan students can receive an education free from political indoctrination.
 - Lift the ban on Tibetan-language education and protect and promote the teaching of Tibetan history, culture, and literature by removing distorted government narratives and ensuring historical accuracy.
 - Cease the closure of monastic schools and the expulsion of young monks from monasteries, which undermines traditional Tibetan education systems.
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- Abolish discriminatory policies that disadvantage Tibetan students in university admissions and employment, ensuring equal opportunities for higher education and professional development.
- Halt large-scale hydropower and mining projects that lead to the forced displacement of Tibetan communities, destruction of sacred sites, and environmental degradation, and conduct independent environmental impact assessments before initiating new infrastructure projects, ensuring full transparency and consultation with the local Tibetan communities.
- Cease the forced relocation of Tibetan nomads and rural communities under the pretext of poverty alleviation, environmental conservation, or national security, and ensure Tibetans have legal rights to their ancestral lands protecting them from arbitrary land seizures.
- Hold Chinese corporations accountable for illegal mining, water extraction, and industrial pollution in Tibet, particularly in regions affected by climate change.
- Protect Tibet's ecosystem from deforestation, excessive dam-building, and exploitative resource extraction that threatens the region's biodiversity and water sources.

TCHRD urges the **international community** to:

- Support Tibetan exile communities and advocacy groups in their efforts to document and expose human rights violations and protect these communities from China's transnational repression by imposing sanctions, consulting diaspora communities, and establishing international norms against transnational repression.
- Encourage multinational corporations to divest from projects and investments linked to human rights abuses in Tibet and promote corporate social responsibility and ethical business practices to discourage companies from participating in activities that contribute to human rights violations.
- Urge intergovernmental organisations to rigorously monitor and ensure compliance with Universal Periodic Review commitments, holding China accountable to international human rights standards.

IV. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BAC	Buddhist Association of China
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CPL	Criminal Procedure Law
CPPCC	National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference
CTA	Central Tibetan Administration
CTC	Canada Tibet Committee
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
ICESCR	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
NPC	National People's Congress
PRC	People's Republic of China
PSB	Public Security Bureau
PSC	Politburo Standing Committee of the Chinese Communist Party
SARA	State Administration for Religious Affairs
TAP	Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture
TAR	Tibet Autonomous Region
TNR	Transnational Repression
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UFWD	United Front Work Department
UN	United Nations
UNCAT	United Nations Committee Against Torture
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
UPR	Universal Periodic Review

V. FREEDOM OF RELIGION & CULTURAL REPRESSION

Buddhism is key to Tibetan culture and a way of life for most Tibetans. However, decades of oppression from Chinese authorities have caused cultural erosion and suppression of freedom of religion and belief, severely impacting how Tibetans live their everyday lives. Chinese authorities have continued to implement harsh measures through exercising control over religious institutions, with many monasteries having been taken control of by authorities and others shut down. Restrictions have been implemented on religious activities, such as during important holy events or traditions, and policies have been enforced aimed at integrating communism with religious practices, often reinterpreting Buddhist teachings to align with Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) ideology.

This religious and cultural repression infringes on the protection of religious freedom enshrined in Article 18 of both the UDHR and the ICCPR, and the right to culture protected under Article 15 of the ICESCR.

During the “Two Sessions” held from 4 to 11 March, Chinese leaders, including President Xi Jinping, CPPCC Chair Wang Huning, and NPC Chair Zhao Leji, discussed advancing the government's Sinicization plans. The leaders emphasised promoting the integration of various ethnic groups and strengthening education on the awareness of the

Chinese national community in colleges and universities.¹ Ideology took centre stage, with a strong focus on Sinicizing Tibetan Buddhism and other aspects of Tibetan culture.

V.1. Intensification of Sinicization and Tibetan Buddhism

The Sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism is a meticulous endeavour. The CCP has regulated all aspects of religious life, from the recognition of lamas to overseeing religious institutions, groups, and schools.² The government's implementation of a five-year plan (2023–2027)³ to Sinicize Buddhism mandates overriding loyalty to the CCP and the state. This includes replacing images of the Dalai Lama with portraits of CCP leaders and translating Buddhist texts from Tibetan to Mandarin Chinese.⁴

China's United Front Work Department (UFWD), an organ of the CCP Central Committee, is tasked with advancing Beijing's political agenda, suppressing dissent, and enforcing ideological conformity among ethnic and religious communities, including Tibetans.⁵ Since the late 1940s, the UFWD has been instrumental in asserting state control over religious affairs, including the systematic denial of recognition for reincarnated high lamas in Tibetan Buddhism.⁶ In March 2018, the CCP further consolidated its grip over religious affairs by placing the State

Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) under the direct control of the UFWD, intensifying state interference in religious practices.

While the UFWD plays a significant role in repressing Tibetan communities, another key player in China's efforts to Sinicize Tibetan Buddhism is the Buddhist Association of China (BAC). Throughout 2024, Chinese authorities employed various strategies to assimilate and transform Tibetan Buddhism, with the BAC at the centre. Despite being supposedly non-governmental, the BAC has been instrumental in China's policy of Sinification since Xi Jinping's 2012 announcement to control religions within the PRC.⁷ Together, the UFWD and BAC work to suppress dissent and enforce Beijing's political and religious objectives within Tibetan communities.⁸

The BAC's primary objective, the "Sinification of Buddhism in China", adopted in 2020,⁹ emphasises support for CCP leadership. The organisation has strengthened its institutional foundation by implementing five-year plans and shaping monastic training to meet political goals, which includes establishing specialised training institutes for Tibetan Buddhist priesthood outside traditional monasteries.¹⁰

Additionally, the BAC plays a key role in the recognition process of Tibetan Buddhist reincarnations.¹¹ This involves measures, regulations, and initiatives to control the recognition of reincarnations, which is part of the Chinese government's long-term strategy

to control the future reincarnation of the Dalai Lama. The BAC also promotes patriotic education among Tibetan Buddhists, aligning religious practices with CCP ideology. This includes the implementation¹² of the "Patriotic Education Law"¹² which is to encourage religious groups to carry out patriotic education and enhance believers' sense of the Chinese nation, citizenship, and rule of law.

The role of the BAC highlights its significant influence in shaping and controlling Tibetan Buddhism in line with Chinese government objectives. The Chinese-appointed 11th Panchen Lama, Gyaincain Norbu (Gyaltzen Norbu), was re-elected as president of the "Xizang" branch of the BAC in September, continuing to be used as a player in Sinicizing Tibetan Buddhism.¹³ These efforts undermine and erode traditional Tibetan religious leadership.

On 21 February, a significant meeting occurred in Beijing between China's politburo leader on ethnic minority and religious affairs, Shi Taifeng, and the substitute 11th Panchen Lama.¹⁴ During this meeting, Shi urged Gyaincain Norbu to help assimilate Tibet and its religion into the framework of "Xi Jinping Thought" ideology. Norbu, who is not recognised by mainstream Tibetan Buddhists, pledged to improve his political standards and religious knowledge and to uphold national unity and ethnic solidarity. Norbu's status as Panchen Lama remains disputed, as he was installed by the CCP following the disappearance of the Dalai Lama-recognised candidate, Gedhun Choekyi

Nyima, in 1995.

Later in the year, Gyaincain Norbu conducted a five-month tour of Tibet, visiting various cities, including Lhasa, Nagqu, Nyingchi, and Xigaze.¹⁵ During this tour, he performed Buddhist rituals and participated in social activities, furthering the Chinese government's efforts to control and influence Tibetan religious and cultural practices.

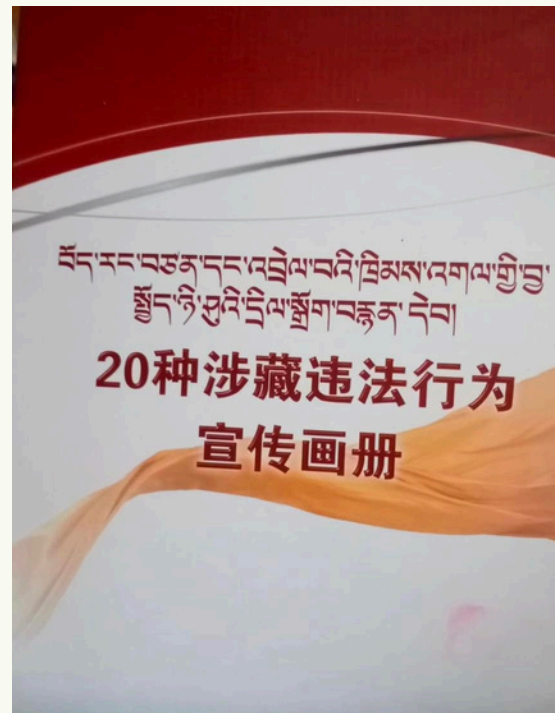
In a similar vein, Chinese President Xi Jinping's inspection tour of Amdo (Ch: Qinghai) province focused on Sinicization of education and religion, as well as the settlement of Chinese immigrants.¹⁶ Xi visited a state-run middle school in Golok (Ch: Guluo) and a Tibetan Buddhist temple in Siling (Ch: Xining), emphasising ethnic unity and ecological conservation. The visit highlighted efforts to promote Mandarin Chinese learning and integrate Tibetan regions into China's national

framework. This inspection tour, along with the substitute Panchen Lama's activities, showcases the Chinese government's continued efforts to repress Tibetan religious and cultural practices, further eroding the autonomy of Tibetan Buddhism.

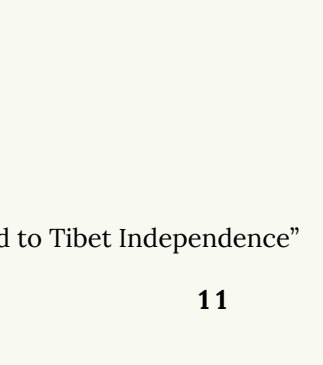
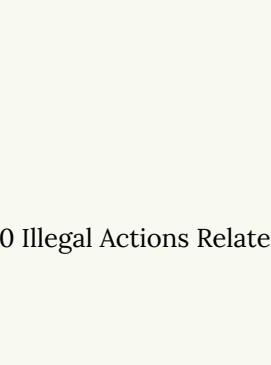
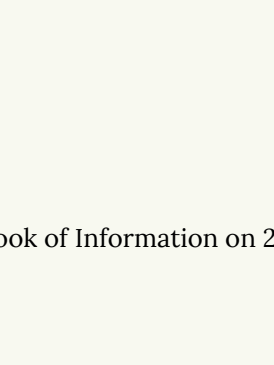
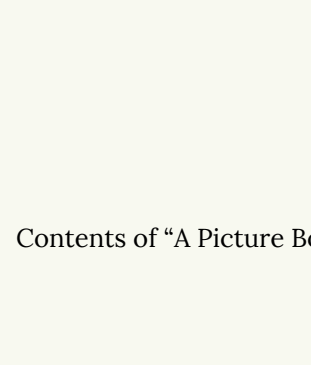
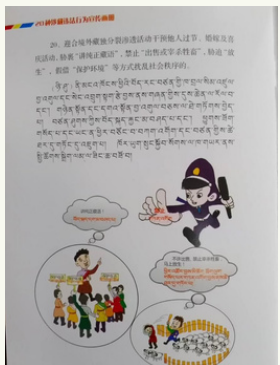
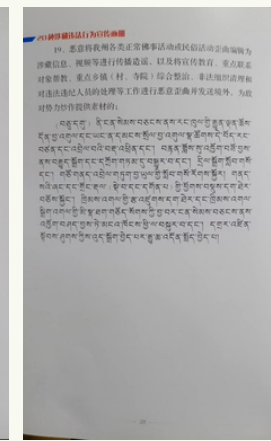
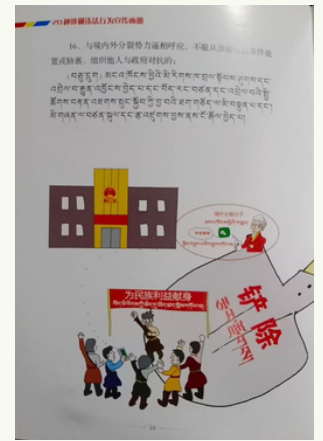
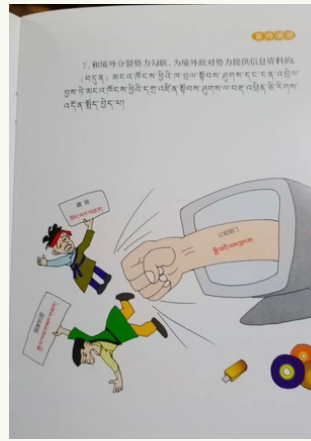
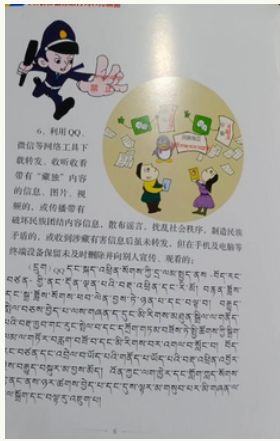
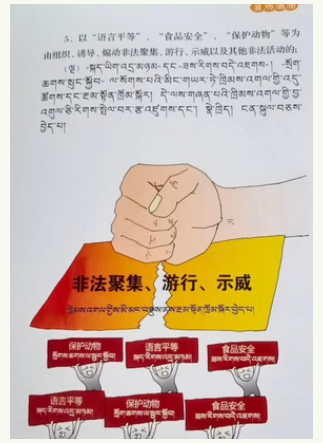
In April, the Chinese authorities issued strict guidelines through a training manual and a picture book. The training manual distributed to Tibetan Buddhist monks in Gansu province outlines 10 rules to follow in the event of the Dalai Lama's death, including bans on displaying the Dalai Lama's photos, engaging in unsanctioned religious activities, disrupting the reincarnation process, and promoting separatist ideology.¹⁷ The manual also interferes with the traditional Tibetan Buddhist process of recognising reincarnations, allowing the Chinese government to control the selection of religious leaders.



Xi Jinping and chairman of the Central Military Commission, visits a middle school in Xining, northwest China's Qinghai Province, 18 June 2024. Photo: Xinhua



A picture book, titled "A Picture Book of Information on 20 Illegal Actions Related to Tibet Independence"



Additionally, the picture book, titled “A Picture Book of Information on 20 Illegal Actions Related to Tibet Independence”, further restricts religious and cultural freedoms.¹⁸ It includes prohibitions on praying to the Dalai Lama, displaying his images, promoting Tibet independence, and participating in unsanctioned religious activities. These rules suppress any expression of Tibetan cultural identity and Buddhist belief, requiring monasteries to display portraits of CCP leaders instead.¹⁹ This broader strategy aims to assimilate Tibetan Buddhism into Chinese cultural norms, curtailing the religious and cultural freedoms of the Tibetan community and ensuring state control over religious succession.

Chinese authorities are intensifying efforts to indoctrinate Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns as part of a broader campaign to impose state control over Tibetan Buddhism. Through mandatory seminars, workshops, and propaganda tours, religious practitioners are being coerced into aligning with the CCP’s ideological agenda.

On 3 September 2024, a seminar in Gansu Province reinforced Beijing’s authority over the recognition of reincarnate lamas (Trulkus), demanding compliance with CCP-approved selection processes.²⁰

Similarly, in October, around 50 Tibetan monks in Golog (Ch:Guoluo) was forced to attend a state-organized conference promoting nationalism and obedience to the CCP organised by the United Front Work Department. They were taken on propaganda tours of historical sites and instructed to express gratitude to the

Party while integrating political doctrine into their monastic lives.²¹

These coercive measures are part of China’s broader campaign to “Sinicize” Tibetan Buddhism, eroding religious identity and enforcing state dominance over spiritual life.

V.2. Crackdowns on Religious Traditions

As the Chinese government intensifies its repressive campaign, surveillance escalates, especially during politically sensitive events and religious anniversaries. The government’s efforts to eliminate ideological threats and maintain strict control over public opinion have resulted in heightened religious repression.²²

In 2024, amidst concerns over China’s economic downturn, the Chinese government decided to ease some travel restrictions in Tibet to boost tourism and the local economy. Harsh measures however continued to control religious activities, particularly during significant cultural events like Losar, the Tibetan New Year, and Saga Dawa, the holiest month in Tibetan Buddhism. Despite the partial relaxation, Tibetans still faced limited access to religious sites, increased surveillance, and technological monitoring.

In preparation for Losar, Chinese authorities limited Tibetans’ participation in religious activities around key monasteries. While travel from outside the Tibetan capital, Lhasa was permitted, with many Tibetans travelling from Kham and Amdo Provinces (Ch: Sichuan and

Qinghai), surveillance remained strict. Tibetans could only visit specific religious sites on designated days and large gatherings were prohibited. Additionally, identification was required for participation in rituals, and access to the Jokhang Temple, the holiest site in Tibetan Buddhism, was particularly tightly controlled. Tibetans traveling abroad for the new year faced significant challenges, with difficult requirements and surveillance, making international travel “almost impossible”.²³

In addition to such restrictions, the Chinese government’s Sinicization drive has also extended control upon religious belief. Ahead of Losar, Chinese authorities have repeatedly urged Tibetans and monks to denounce their exiled spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama.²⁴ In Kham, Chinese officials visited at least 35 Buddhist monasteries, pressuring eminent monks to “deeply expose and denounce” the Dalai Lama and safeguard the “unity of the motherland”.²⁵ This campaign was led by Secretary Liu Yan of the Palyul (Ch: Baiyu) County Communist Party Committee, who visited monasteries in Kardze (Ch: Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.

During Losar, which coincided with Chinese New Year on 10 February, Senior Chinese officials called on religious groups to align their activities with CCP goals.²⁶ Wang Huning, a member of the PSC and chairman of the CPPCC, urged religious groups to “be more purposeful in serving the overall work of the Party and the country”,²⁷ underscoring the broader strategy to exert control over religious practices and limit the influence

of spiritual leaders.

The holy month of Saga Dawa, which marks the birth, enlightenment, and passing of Buddha Shakyamuni, also saw even stricter controls. The Chinese government restricted Tibetan students, government workers, and retirees from engaging in religious activities in Lhasa. Security measures were heightened around key religious sites such as the Potala Palace, Jokhang Temple, and the Barkhor area, with identity checks and facial recognition technology employed. Police presence was particularly notable on the full-moon day, the holiest day of the month, stationed at checkpoints and arbitrarily interrogating Tibetans. Authorities prohibited those without Chinese resident identity cards from visiting temples, deterring participation in religious practices.

During the Ngari Flag Raising Festival, authorities banned the use of drones and instructed people not to share photos or videos of the festival on social media, limiting the freedom of expression and information.²⁸

Throughout the Shoton Festival in Lhasa, Chinese authorities further increased surveillance aiming to ensure “stability” and suppress dissent. The intensified measures included an enhanced police presence, the use of civilians as auxiliary police officers, and a crackdown on social media.²⁹ From early August, the streets of Lhasa experienced a dramatic increase in police officers, including undercover officers, and the establishment of numerous traffic and police inspection points. Over 1,200 police officers were

deployed at 65 inspection checkpoints. Authorities conducted checks of over 2,000 venues and 24,000 vehicles, raising concerns about arbitrary detentions, searches, and infringement on residents' freedom of movement and privacy.

While a pilot program in Lhasa has enlisted food delivery drivers from the company Meituan to perform “voluntary patrol and prevention work”.³⁰ These workers, who were reportedly forced into their roles, assist the police by monitoring residents and serving as night watchmen. This approach mirrors civilian-police integration efforts seen in sensitive border areas such as Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), where civilians, policemen, militiamen, and government officials work with the People's Liberation Army to ensure security.

Although Chinese authorities attempt to project an image of religious freedom thriving in the TAR by awarding some monks the degree of Geshe Lharampa, the highest academic degree in the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism, the reality paints a starkly different picture. In February, only 12 monks in Tibet were awarded this degree,³¹ compared to over 300 candidates in India over the past four years.

The disparity in the number of degrees awarded in Tibet and India underscores the greater religious freedom and academic opportunities available to the Tibetan community in exile, with less than 3% of Tibetans living in exile, half of them in India. In India, the ceremony is often attended by the Dalai Lama and signifies the preservation and flourishing of Tibetan Buddhist traditions outside Chinese control.³²



A Chinese security official stands next to delivery workers in Lhasa, Tibet, on 8 August 2024. Photo: RFA

Several factors contribute to the limited results in Tibet.³³ China enforces strict limits on the enrolment of monks in monastic study centre and requires monks to undertake patriotism tests and studies. Chinese authorities have also arrested monks for activities considered separatist, such as advocating for the respect for Tibetan people's human, religious, linguistic, and cultural rights.

The significant difference reflects the ongoing repression and control exerted by Chinese authorities over religious practices in Tibet.

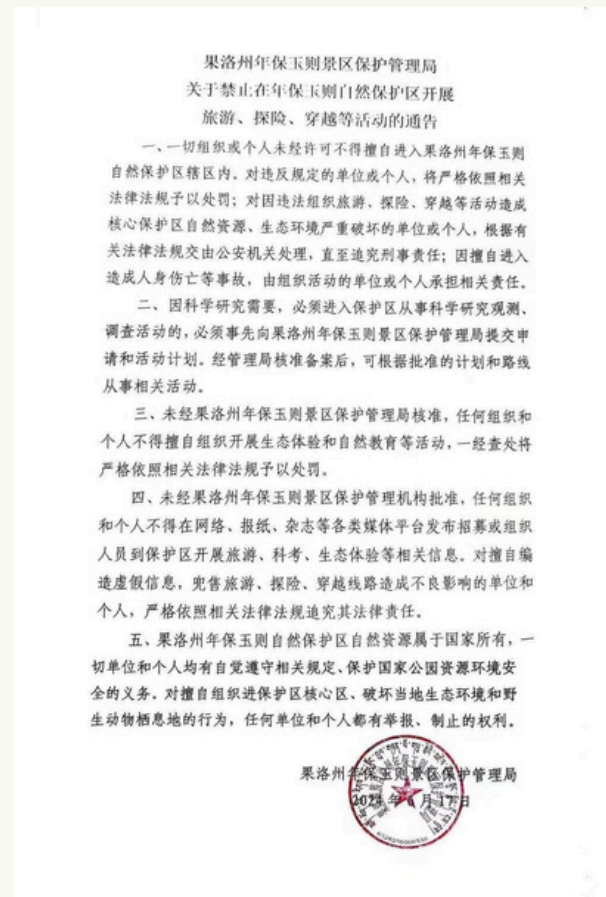
The Chinese government also imposed restrictions on the annual Dhokham Jang Gunchoe, or Great Winter Debate Session, a significant religious event for Tibetan monks held in Kham (Ch: Sichuan) Province. Traditionally a two-week event attracting around 7,000 monks, this year's session was reduced to one week, with attendance capped at 3,200.³⁴ Police personnel were stationed at Za Bum Nyingma Monastery in Kardze, Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (TAP) and the surrounding mountains to enforce security, acting as checkpoints to monitor and restrict participation.

These measures reflect the Chinese government's efforts to curtail religious activities and maintain control during significant cultural and religious events.

V.3. Erasure of Tibetan Culture

On 17 June, Chinese authorities issued a directive imposing restrictions on access to Nyenpo Yurtse, a sacred Tibetan site in Golok Prefecture.³⁵ This directive

prohibits individuals and organisations from entering or conducting activities in the area without prior permission. Nyenpo Yurtse is a revered pilgrimage site for Tibetan Buddhists, and the new restrictions significantly impact their ability to perform traditional rituals.



Notice issued by the Golok Prefecture Nyenbo Yurtse Nature Reserve Protection Management Bureau.

Source: TCHRD

Local Tibetans believe the ban is an attempt to prevent religious gatherings and rituals, citing that the Chinese government's stated reason of environmental protection may conceal broader efforts to suppress Tibetan

cultural and religious traditions. The directive threatens strict punishment for violators, creating an environment of fear and repression. By prohibiting access without prior permission, the Chinese government effectively prevents Tibetan Buddhist practitioners from carrying out essential rituals such as burning juniper branches and unfurling prayer flags, which are integral practices to the culture and heritage.

Actions by the Chinese authorities in Ngaba (Ch: Aba) County, have led to the forced removal of religious symbols and structures from Tibetan homes. This is the first instance of such measures targeting ordinary people's homes, whereas previous actions primarily focused on Buddhist monasteries.³⁶ Starting in early July 2024, Chinese authorities conducted searches of all

homes in villages in Ngaba County, infringing on both religious freedom and the right to privacy. Residents were ordered to remove and destroy religious symbols and structures, including prayer flags and incense burning structures. Authorities have also prohibited Tibetans from organising and participating in online prayer sessions, further limiting their ability to practice their faith.

Beijing's systematic efforts to assimilate Tibetans and align Tibetan Buddhism with CCP ideology significantly impact the religious freedoms and cultural heritage of the Tibetan community. Increased surveillance and control over religious activities further restrict the practice of faith openly and freely, leading to a significant erosion of religious and cultural freedoms.

VI. ARBITRARY AND INCOMMUNICADO DETENTION

The Chinese authorities have systematically detained countless Tibetans for vague reasons, often holding them incommunicado and denying fair trials. Arbitrary detentions often lead to torture, ill-treatment, forced labour, and even death. These actions violate both international human rights standards³⁷ and China's own legal framework, including its own Constitution³⁸ and Criminal Procedure Law³⁹ (CPL), which are designed to protect individuals against arbitrary arrest and detention.

Article 37 of the Constitution of the PRC states that “the freedom of citizens of the People's Republic of China is inviolable” and that “unlawful detention or deprivation or restriction of citizens' freedom of person by other means is prohibited”. Additionally, Article 2 of the CPL mandates that authorities “correctly apply the law... guarantee that innocent people are not criminally prosecuted... respect and guarantee human rights” and to “protect citizens' rights in their person.” The CPL also includes provisions excluding evidence obtained through torture, affirming the right to defence counsel, and mandating that families be notified of detentions.

Despite these legal provisions, Chinese authorities continue to arbitrarily detain Tibetans as a means of silencing critics and punishing human rights defenders. This pattern of repression and human rights violations have intensified under

CCP General Secretary Xi Jinping in both scope and severity. Authorities systematically criminalise peaceful expression critical of government policies, as well as target individuals based on their religious or ethnic identity. Rather than upholding the legal standards meant to protect fundamental rights, the Chinese government and law enforcement officials weaponize these laws to exert greater control over Tibetans.



Taden, a Tibetan man from Aruk township, Dhola County. Photo: Tibet Times

On 4 January 2024, **Taden**, 35, was arrested for allegedly sharing sensitive information outside the borders of Tibet and China and contacting foreign entities. He is being detained incommunicado, with his family being denied visitation rights since his arrest. Taden is a Tibetan from Dhola (Ch: Qilian) County, Tsojang (Ch: Haibei) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture and has an 8-

year-old daughter and a 69-year-old mother.⁴⁰

On 5 March, **Phuntsok**, 47, was arrested by Chinese authorities for allegedly sending secret documents outside China. His family requested information about his whereabouts and the reasons for his arrest, but their requests were denied. Phuntsok, from Lhundrup (Ch: Linzhou) County, Tibet Autonomous Region has been critical of local leaders for neglecting people's well-being.⁴¹

On 26 March, a Tibetan monk, **Pema**, from Kirti Monastery in Ngaba (Ch: Aba) County was arbitrarily detained by the Chinese authorities after protesting with a portrait of the Dalai Lama. Pema, who also shouted slogans against Chinese policies, was detained immediately. Following his arrest, Chinese authorities intensified restrictions around the monastery and the surrounding area. Pema's current whereabouts and well-being are unknown, and his family has



Pema, a Tibetan monk from Ngaba Kirti monastery, undated. Photo: Tibet Times

not been informed of his situation.⁴²

On 29 May, **Rabgang Tenzin**, a 51-year-old father of three, was arrested by Chinese police for flying the banned Tibetan national flag during his house consecration ceremony in Pashoe (Ch: Basu) County in Chamdo (Ch: Changdu) Prefecture, Tibet Autonomous Region. His current whereabouts are unknown. The Chinese authorities have warned local Tibetans against discussing the incident with outsiders, threatening further arrests.⁴³

Tibetan singer **Palden**, 30, was secretly released on 25 September 2024 after being arbitrarily detained in November 2023 for performing a Tibetan song. He was held incommunicado at a detention centre in Pema County, denied a fair trial, and his family barred from visiting him.⁴⁴ Although Palden was released before the end of his three-year prison sentence, he continues to be closely monitored by authorities and has been warned that any



Palden with his mother, undated. Photo: Tibet Watch

future performances considered politically sensitive or with inappropriate political connotations could lead to his re-arrest.⁴⁵

Gendun Lhundrub, 49, a prominent Tibetan writer and poet who was taken away by police in Amdo (Ch: Qinghai) Province on 2 December 2020 was released on 9 November 2024 after serving a four-year sentence.⁴⁶ During his detention, his family were denied appeals and authorities did not provide any information on his conditions or whereabouts.⁴⁷

Formerly a monk, Gendun Lhundrub had been under police surveillance due to suspicions of being a dissident. He was arrested in Amdo Province for “inciting separatism” and has been under strict surveillance since his release. Lhundrub's poem “May It Be Auspicious”, which speaks about finding courage amid government surveillance, has been widely shared by Tibetan netizens. His literary works, including poems like “Black Rosary”, “Melody of Life”, and “White Book” are highly regarded by Tibetans



Tibetan writer and poet Gendun Lhundrub.
Photo: Tibetan Review

worldwide.

Tenzin Khenrab, in his 30s, monk-writer from Nyagchu (Ch: Yajiang) County in the Tibetan prefecture of Kardze, was arrested in July 2023 for possessing a photo of the Dalai Lama on his phone, along with books and documents published outside Tibet. Known by his pen name Dhong Rangchak, Tenzin has written extensively on Tibetans' struggle against Chinese government repression.⁴⁸

During his detainment, Tenzin was held incommunicado, and his whereabouts remained unknown, causing immense distress to his mother, Phudé, 53. The uncertainty surrounding her son's detention led Phudé to develop severe depression, which rapidly deteriorated her health. She passed away on 17 February 2024 without knowing her son's whereabouts.⁴⁹

Tenzin was finally released in November 2024, but the impact of his arrest and the loss of his mother underscores the severe repression faced by Tibetans under Chinese rule.⁵⁰



Tenzin Khenrab. Photo: Tibet Watch



Samten and his younger sister Paldon. Photo: Tibet Times

VI.1. UNJUST SENTENCING AND FAIR TRIAL CONCERNS

The right to a fair trial is recognised as a fundamental human right enshrined in the UDHR (Article 10), as well as in the ICCPR (Article 14), however, China has repeatedly demonstrated a disregard for procedural fairness.

On 2 April 2024, **Samten**, 36, a Tibetan man from Tsochen (Ch: Coqen) County, Ngari Prefecture, Tibet Autonomous Region was secretly sentenced to three years in prison by Chinese authorities. The reasons for his sentence remain unknown. Following his secret sentencing, his younger sister, **Paldon**, was severely beaten by police when she approached the police station to inquire about his arrest and sentence. She was hospitalised as a result of the beating. Samten's current location and health status are also unknown.⁵¹

Jampa Choephel, a Tibetan monk from Penkar Thang Monastery in Amdo (Ch: Qinghai) Province who was held in a detention centre at Gurathang in Lower Rebong from 22 March, was sentenced to 18 months in prison on 22 September for sharing a speech by the Dalai Lama on social media. His trial was conducted in secret, and his family was not informed due to the political sensitivity of the case.⁵²



Monk Jampa Choephel in an undated photo. (Citizen photo) Photo: RFA

A Tibetan monk, **Lobsang Thabkhey**, 55, was arrested in June 2023 by Chinese authorities for republishing books from the Tibetan community and for contacting people outside the region. Thabkhey, who served as librarian of Kirti Monastery in Ngaba (Ch: Aba) county, was sentenced to three years in prison following a secret trial in September 2024.⁵³ Chinese authorities have deemed it illegal for Tibetans in Tibet to contact people outside the region, any engagement with the exiled Tibetan community is seen as “separatist”.⁵⁴



Lobsang Thabkhey, Tibetan Buddhist monk at Kirti Monastery. (Citizen photo) Photo: RFA

Gonpo Kyi, a Tibetan woman, has been advocating for the release of her brother, Dorjee Tashi, who was falsely accused and imprisoned. Despite her relentless efforts, she has faced severe resistance and repeated abuse by authorities. On 24 September,⁵⁵ Gonpo Kyi released a video detailing her ongoing efforts to secure a retrial for Dorjee Tashi. She recounted her protests in front of the Lhasa court, where she was repeatedly detained and beaten by Public Security Bureau officers, causing a significant deterioration in her health. In March, Gonpo filed a lawsuit against the Public Security Bureau,

claiming her ten-day detention for peacefully advocating for her brother's release violated her rights. The Lhasa City Chengguan District Court dismissed her claims, ruling the detention was lawful and denying her compensation and the return of her advocacy materials.



Gonpo Kyi staging a peaceful sit-in protest on 20 February 2024 in front of the Tibet Higher People's Court in Lhasa. Photo: Tibet Watch



Gonpo Kyi. Photo: Tibet Watch

Gonpo's appeals for Dorjee Tashi's retrial have been repeatedly rejected, but despite these setbacks, Gonpo continues to advocate for her brother's fair trial and protest the lack of freedom and rights for Tibetans.⁵⁶ Her unwavering commitment underscores the ongoing struggle against the court system and arbitrary detention of Tibetans inside Tibet.

Tibetan Buddhist monk **Rachung Gendun (Geshe Rachung Gendun)** was released on 16 November after serving three and a half years in prison for allegedly sending donations to the Dalai Lama and the abbot of Kirti Monastery in India. Despite his release, Gendun remains in poor health and is currently undergoing treatment at a hospital in Chengdu.⁵⁷ His mother, Norpo, who endured harassment and restrictions from Chinese authorities, passed away on 10 June before she could see her son again.

The suffering faced by Gendun's family underscores the ongoing challenges faced by Tibetan political prisoners. Following the self-immolation protest of Gendun's uncle, Taphun, in March 2022, Norpo was accused of conspiring with her brother before his protest. For almost a year, Norpo faced severe limitations imposed by Chinese authorities and was denied fundamental freedoms, such as access to medical care and hospital visits, and the ability to engage in religious practices like circumambulation.



Tibetan Buddhist monk Rachung Gendun, undated.
Source: RFA

China's neglect to procedural fairness was once again highlighted on 11 May, when court officials in northwest China interfered in a criminal trial by providing real-time instructions to the presiding judge via WeChat. The incident occurred at the Tianjun county court in Haixi Mongol and Tibetan autonomous prefecture in the northwestern Province of Amdo (Ch: Qinghai).⁵⁸

Lawyers involved in the trial reported the interference to police and provincial prosecutors, calling for a malpractice probe and criminal investigations. They

accused the court officials of sabotaging the legal system. The incident has raised concerns about the independence of Chinese courts and the integrity of the judicial process, which is underpinned in PRC's Constitution and Criminal Procedure Law.⁵⁹ Such blatant interference infringes on the right to a fair trial and due process, and raises issues of arbitrary detention, as well as the independence and impartiality of the court.



A photo taken by a lawyer during a trial in Qinghai province appears to show a judge receiving real-time instructions from his supervisors. Photo: Weibo, Source: SCMP

VI.2. ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE

In early February, Tibetan singer **Gegjom** was detained in Kyungchu (Ch: Hongyuan) County, Ngaba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province after performing a song titled “Tearful Deluge of a Sorrowful Song” at a concert in January.⁶⁰ The song’s lyrics lament the absence of the Dalai Lama and criticise Chinese leadership, referring to them as “false” leaders. The performance, which drew applause from the audience, led to Dorjee’s arrest on charges of incorporating political connotations into his lyrics.

His current whereabouts and conditions remain unknown.



“Tearful Deluge of a Sorrowful Song”, performed by Tibetan singer Gegjom. Screenshot: Official TCHRD YouTube

In a joint public statement issued in November 2024,⁶¹ six UN special rapporteurs and three working groups on human rights violations urged the Chinese government to disclose the fate and whereabouts of nine Tibetans, including five individuals—Chugdar, Gelo, Tsedo, Bhamo, and Kori—who were arrested in August 2022 in Serthar County for burning incense and offering prayers.⁶² Chugdar died in custody just days after his arrest due to torture and ill-treatment. The UN experts also demanded information on four Tibetans from Ngaba: Lobsang Samten, Lobsang Trinley, Wangkyi, and Tsering Tashi who were arbitrarily arrested and subjected to incommunicado detention since early September.⁶³

The experts raised concerns about the lasting trauma caused by enforced disappearances, particularly for the families of the missing and local communities. Many individuals reported irreversible harm, especially women and children who suffered from the breakdown of family structures and social

exclusion. They further emphasised that, under international law, the failure or refusal to acknowledge a deprivation of liberty by state agents or those acting with their authorization, support, or acquiescence constitutes enforced disappearance, regardless of its duration or the methods used to conceal it.

VI.3. TORTURE, ILL-TREATMENT AND FORCED LABOUR

Chinese Public Security Bureau (“PSB”) officers frequently conduct administrative detention practices under vague legal frameworks, granting them extensive discretionary powers. These practices often involve torture and ill-treatment, with little to no supervision of such misconduct. High-ranking officials tend to incentivise the suppression of dissent and criticism, which clearly contradicts Article 37 of the Chinese Constitution that explicitly safeguards the liberty of citizens.

Tibetan human rights defender, **Tsering Tso**, 39, has faced ongoing persecution and arbitrary detention over the past five years for exposing discriminatory practices and advocating for the fair treatment of Tibetans. Despite the Chinese government’s professed policies on ethnic unity, her efforts to highlight racial discrimination and advocate for the legal rights of Tibetans have been met with relentless persecution.

Tsering Tso, who also works as a tour guide, has been detained multiple times for her activism, where she has been subject to interrogation and beatings from police.⁶⁴ On 29 June, she was

arbitrarily arrested and subjected to a 10-day “administrative detention” for criticising the police’s discriminatory treatment of Tibetan monks.⁶⁵ She was charged with “endangering social stability”. Additionally, from 29 November to 13 December, Tsering Tso was detained again for two weeks in Amdo (Ch: Qinghai) Province, accused of “spreading false information” and “causing trouble” on social media after posting a video of a police officer rejecting her application for a passport entry and exit permit.⁶⁶ Despite the continuous threats and ill-treatment, Tsering Tso’s unwavering commitment to advocating for equal rights for Tibetans remains strong as she continues to highlight the struggles of Tibetans and demand justice.



Tsering Tso, September 2023. Photo: RFA

Tibetan activist, **A-Nya Sengdra**, 53, remains imprisoned after serving six of his seven-year sentence for campaigning against illegal mining, hunting, and local corruption. Arrested in 2018, Sengdra was charged with “disturbing public order” and “picking quarrels and provoking trouble”. Despite his lawyer Lin Qilei’s efforts, his appeals have seen no progress.⁶⁷



A-nya Sengdra, undated. Photo: TCHRD

Sengdra reportedly endured beatings and torture by Public Security Bureau officers in Gade County during his detention, and in 2019, he was sentenced by the Golog People's Intermediate Court.⁶⁸ After over six years, he was allowed a brief reunion with his family in September, revealing his poor health.⁶⁹ His case has attracted the attention of human rights groups and UN experts as an example of China's arbitrary detention and unjust sentencing practices.⁷⁰ On 8 November, Lin Qilei shared on social media that his third appeal for a retrial was rejected, with a judge cautioning against further attempts.⁷¹

On 1 February, Tibetan monk **Rinchen Tsultrim** was secretly released from Mianyang Prison after serving a four-and-a-half-year sentence for "inciting separatism" and causing social unrest.⁷² These accusations stemmed from Chinese authorities monitoring his communications, accusing him of

discussing sensitive topics, distributing books, and writing about Tibetan language preservation and political issues. His trial and whereabouts were undisclosed until China responded to a letter from four UN human rights experts in August 2021. While in prison, Tsultrim was refused permission to meet with his family and there were reports that he was subjected to torture, forced labour and political indoctrination.⁷³



Rinchen Tsultrim, seen here in an undated photo prior to his arrest in July 2019. Photo: RFA

In February, a Tibetan named **Ludup**, 54, was released from prison with a severely disabled leg, a result of the forced labour he endured during his three-and-a-half-year sentence.⁷⁴ Ludup, who was arrested in June 2020 for participating in a protest in 2008, the year that saw widespread protests across Tibet, now faces a life of hardship and constant surveillance, and has been deprived of medical assistance.

Forced labour, a form of "re-education" imposed by the authorities, left Ludup with significant injuries. Despite his



Ludup on Wanted Order by Public Security Bureau of Ngaba Prefecture. Photo: Tibet Watch

release, Ludup remains under strict police surveillance, further highlighting the oppressive tactics used by the authorities to suppress dissent and control the population. His case sheds light on the brutal reality of forced labour in detention, where prisoners are subjected to harsh conditions and denied basic human rights.



Tibetan language activist Thupten Lodoe in an undated photo. Photo: RFA

Thupten Lodoe, known by his pen name Sabuchey, is a prominent Tibetan writer and advocate for the preservation of the Tibetan language. Currently serving a four-and-a-half-year prison sentence, Lodoe was arrested in October 2021 and spent six months in detention before being sentenced in June 2022 for writing articles deemed a threat to national security and unity.

Detained in a prison in Dartsedo (Ch: Kangding), Lodoe has faced harsh conditions, including forced labour, inadequate food, and poor living conditions. These harsh circumstances have taken a toll on his health, leading to his hospitalisation in June 2024. The authorities, however, have not disclosed his illness or the hospital's location.⁷⁵



Karma Samdrub, second from the right, supported by two men to facilitate his walking, 18 November 2024. Photo: RFA

Karma Samdrub, a prominent Tibetan art collector and environmental activist, was released on 18 November after nearly 15 years in prison. He was arrested in 2010 on charges of excavating ancient tombs and robbing cultural artifacts, despite

being cleared of these charges in 1998. His arrest is believed to be in retaliation for his efforts to secure the release of his two brothers, who were also detained for their environmental activism. Samdrub now suffers from severe health issues due to mistreatment and prison labour. He remains under strict surveillance and is deprived of political rights for the next five years.⁷⁶

VI.4. Death in Detention

Tsedon, a Tibetan girl from Tibet University in Lhasa, was arrested by the police of Ritso Township, Nyemo County, on 26 December 2023 for reasons that remain unknown. Her family was informed of her passing in the People's Hospital of Nyemo County on 15 January 2024. Concerns of ill-treatment and torture were raised by Tsedon's family and community. They suspect that she was beaten and tortured to death by the Chinese police, as she was known to be a healthy person before her arrest. Despite repeated requests, the authorities refused to return her body to her family, citing postmortem reasons.⁷⁷



Tsedon, A Tibetan girl from Tibet University in Lhasa. Photo: Tibet Times

Losel, a Tibetan monk from Sera Monastery, died in a Chinese prison after enduring prolonged physical beatings and medical neglect. Arrested in May for allegedly communicating with individuals outside Tibet, Losel's health deteriorated due to the harsh treatment he received in custody. Despite his worsening condition, he was deliberately denied medical care. His family was unaware of his whereabouts until the Lhasa Chinese Police delivered his body to them on 21 October. Losel was 38 years old and from Tsotoe Village near Lhasa.⁷⁸

In May, over 20 villagers, including **Khenpo Tenpa Dhargye**, were arrested by Chinese authorities in Ponkor Village, Golog, for their activism in promoting and preserving the Tibetan language.⁷⁹ On 18 December, it was reported that the village leader **Gonpo Namgyal** was killed after suffering severe beatings and electrocution during seven months of detention. Namgyal, who was detained for his commitment to Tibetan language preservation, succumbed to his injuries just three days after his release, displaying clear signs of torture.⁸⁰



Khenpo Tenpa Dhargye. Photo: TCHRD

The arrests and subsequent death of Gonpo Namgyal highlight the brutal tactics employed by authorities to suppress dissent and cultural advocacy. The conditions including the health and safety of the 20 other detainees, including Ngaza Palden, Jigme Tenzin, Söchö, Wangchen Kyab, Lochö, Nordu, Purtsé, Namgyal, Ridar, and Khenpo Tenpa Dhargye, who is a respected figure and close associate of the late Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok of Larung Gar remains unknown.⁸¹



Gonpo Namgyal in an undated photo.
Photo: TCHRD

VII. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND SURVEILLANCE

The Chinese government enforces one of the most repressive censorship and surveillance systems in Tibet, surpassing the already severe restrictions in other regions of China. Authorities exercise near total control over traditional and social media, with individuals facing arbitrary arrest and harsh prison sentences for sharing politically sensitive content online. Deliberate internet blackouts are routinely imposed, particularly during public demonstrations, periods of unrest, or natural disasters, effectively cutting Tibetans off from the outside world and stifling free flow of information. Foreign broadcasts are systematically jammed, while personal communication devices are frequently confiscated and searched for signs of political dissent. Online platforms are subject to extensive censorship, including bans on the use of Tibetan language on many social media platforms.⁸² Authorities deploy sophisticated surveillance technologies, including content monitoring, extensive data collection further encroaching on fundamental rights. These measures blatantly violate China's obligations under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, particularly Article 19, which guarantees freedom of expression, and Article 17, which protects the right to privacy. Although China is a signatory to the ICCPR, it continues to ignore its commitments, subjecting Tibetans to unrelenting repression.

Tibet remains one of the most isolated regions globally due to China's strict restrictions on foreign access. TAR is the only province in China that requires a special permit for foreign entry with foreign journalists and human rights organisations systematically barred from visiting. Even outside TAR, Tibetan regions in Sichuan, Gansu, Yunnan and Qinghai provinces, access to foreign media remains heavily restricted. Tibetans communicating with foreign media without permission risk criminal prosecution and long prison sentences and sharing local information online leads to severe punishment.

The Chinese government has turned Tibet into a heavily surveilled police state, employing an extensive network of security measures to monitor and control residents. These include vast arrays of video cameras with facial recognition, compulsory "smart" identity cards that track movement, and artificial intelligence-based surveillance systems that enable authorities to monitor Tibetans and foreign visitors in real time. Across the region, hundreds of heavily fortified "convenience police stations" serve as a rapid response hub for suppressing dissent, with over 130 of these stations in Lhasa alone.⁸³ Tibetans suspected of supporting Tibetan independence or possessing images of the Dalai Lama frequently face arrest, enforced disappearance, and prolonged

imprisonment under vague national security charges.

Despite China's claims of stability, Tibet remains tightly controlled, with heavy surveillance and repression of Tibetan culture and religion. Over 1,000 Tibetans were arrested for peaceful protests in 2024, and those practicing Tibetan Buddhism face increasingly severe security measures.⁸⁴ Ethnic Tibetans and Uyghurs often face risks of imprisonment under vague charges such as “picking quarrels and provoking trouble” or “inciting separatism”.⁸⁵

China ranks 172 out of 180 countries in the 2024 World Press Freedom Index,⁸⁶ along with its status as the top jailer of writers and journalists,⁸⁷ and with Tibet's global freedom score of zero from Freedom House,⁸⁸ indicating the severe limitations on freedom of expression and information within the country.

VII.1. THE RIGHT OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY

Freedom of assembly, enshrined in Article 20 of the UDHR and Article 21 of the ICCPR, protects the right of individuals to peacefully assemble and express their collective views, opinions, and concerns. This right ensures that people can gather and protest without undue interference or repression from the state, provided they do so peacefully and within the bounds of the law.

On 23 February, Chinese authorities arrested over 1,000 Tibetan monks and residents protesting against the construction of the Kamtok (Ch: Gangtuo) hydropower dam on the Drichu River (Ch: Jinsha) in Kham.⁸⁹ Despite peaceful protests and petitions, many Tibetans were detained, beaten, and targeted for sharing videos of the protests.



Tibetan residents, both lay individuals and monks, in Derge County (also known as Dege) are urging Chinese authorities to halt the forced relocation. Photo: TCHRD

The crackdown continued, with increased surveillance and military deployment. Those arrested faced detention under harsh conditions and restrictions. The situation in Dege County now resembles an “open prison”, with strict limitations on movement and communication.⁹⁰

Many Tibetans faced severe ill-treatment, torture, and psychological trauma in detention. One monk from Wonto Monastery was beaten so severely that he could not speak and had to undergo medical treatment.⁹¹ Many were deprived of adequate food and water and faced freezing temperatures in overcrowded detention centres under strict surveillance.⁹² While most were released in March, two individuals, Tenzin Sangpo, the senior administrator of Wonto Monastery in Wangbuding township, and Tenzin, a village official, remain detained on suspicion of leading the protests.⁹³

Additionally, over 10 Tibetans, including Rigzin, Thubpur, Dechen Dolma, Yangkyi, Tsedup, and university students, who were also detained by Chinese police for protesting, remain unaccounted for.⁹⁴

Following the anti-dam protests in February, Chinese authorities intensified control measures in Jomda County, particularly in villages like Chage and Zhouge, which are proposed for relocation due to the Kamtok hydropower dam project.⁹⁵

In March, residents faced heightened surveillance, including house-to-house searches and patrols by village-based

cadres and officials including Huang Jun, Secretary of the Leading Party Group and Chamdo Municipal Bureau of Statistics. These officials collected detailed resident information under the “One household and One file” system, coercing compliance with government orders.⁹⁶

VII.2. MASS SURVEILLANCE: THE RIGHT TO PRIVACY

The Chinese government has placed a strong emphasis on maintaining social stability and national security, particularly in regions like Tibet. To this end, they have increased surveillance and control measures to prevent dissent and promote loyalty to the CCP.

A prime example of these measures is the revised “Law on Guarding State Secrets”,⁹⁷ which took effect on 1 May 2024. This law grants Chinese officials the authority to classify any information as a state secret. The law’s broad scope and vague definitions, especially the inclusion of “work secrets”, create uncertainty and pose compliance challenges. This vagueness enables arbitrary and inconsistent enforcement, allowing authorities to exploit the law to control Tibetans and stifle freedom of expression.

Under this law, citizens’ activities, communications, and even casual conversations can be closely monitored. The fear of inadvertently violating the law may compel Tibetans to self-censor, limiting their ability to speak out about issues affecting their community. The lack of transparency in China’s rule of law further increases the risk of arbitrary

detention and punishment for activities revealing as leaking state secrets. The revised law's provisions consequently make it easier for authorities to detain and control Tibetans under the pretext of maintaining stability.

Recent developments have seen the Chinese government's continued campaign to impose mass surveillance and repression of Tibetan communities, through digital surveillance and DNA collection.

The Chinese government employs a network of surveillance technologies in Tibet to tighten control over the region.⁹⁸ This web of monitoring systems includes the use of data policing analytics, invasive surveillance apps, DNA surveillance, GIS tracking data, and AI-driven platforms facial recognition – all containing tools to track and suppress dissent. Central to this effort is the mandatory installation of the “National Anti-Fraud Center” app (*guójiā fǎnzhà zhōngxīn* 国家反诈中心),⁹⁹ which Tibetans are required to download onto their phones. Though officially promoted as a tool to combat fraud, the app enables far-reaching surveillance, collecting personal data beyond fraud prevention and integrating with broader state control mechanisms.

Namkyi, a former political prison who escaped into exile in 2023, described being forced to install the app. ***“I was also made to download it. It requires you to enter your name and ID card number, which allows the authorities to track where you go and who you contact. It’s not just me – my entire family members***

had to download this app. Since 2023 all Tibetans had to download this application.”¹⁰⁰



National Anti-Fraud Center APP. Photo: The Paper

Cybersecurity measures, such as the “Management Measure on National Network Identity Authentication Public Service” proposed on 26 July 2024, aim to centralise identity verification through the “Network Identity Authentication Public Service Platform”.¹⁰¹ This platform issues “Network ID Numbers” and “Network ID Certificates” for real-name registration on internet platforms. While intended to enhance security, the centralisation raises concerns about reducing anonymity, severe data breaches and censorship.

To further control the digital space, authorities have mandated that Tibetans re-register their social media accounts with personal details linked to their phone or identity cards, enhancing government surveillance capabilities and undermining online privacy. Additionally, checks have intensified for the use of virtual private networks (VPNs), which are considered illegal in China.¹⁰²

Another widely used tool is the “Tibet Underworld Criminal Integrated Intelligence Application Platform”, a big-data analytics platform utilising the US database Oracle.¹⁰³ This platform enables comprehensive monitoring and control of vast amounts of data, through integrating data from various police (PSB) systems into a central Oracle database for real-time surveillance and control. This platform is instrumental in a campaign that criminalises even moderate cultural and religious expressions, language rights advocacy, and social work in Tibet.¹⁰⁴

In response to Tibetan activists’ campaigns, Thermo Fisher Scientific ceased sales of DNA collection kits in the TAR from January.¹⁰⁵ This decision follows alarming reports of mass DNA collection from residents in the region by Chinese, amplifying concerns of human rights abuses and increased surveillance. It was reported in 2022 that Chinese police had collected approximately 920,000 to 1.2 million DNA samples in the TAR over the course of six years. Authorities systematically took DNA, even from children as young as five, without parental consent.¹⁰⁶ Forcing individuals to provide DNA samples without consent violates human rights, undermines dignity, and raises significant ethical concerns about state surveillance and control.

While the official justification for these measures is to ensure public safety and stimulate economic growth, the deeper motive is to suppress dissent and enforce



Police collecting DNA samples from residents in Dritoe county, Yushu municipality, Qinghai province. (“Zhahe police station carries out DNA blood sample collection”, Zhidoi County Public Security, WeChat, 10 September 2021). Photo: Human Rights Watch

national unity. The intensified surveillance measures are a stark reminder of the Chinese government's relentless pursuit of control, often coming at the expense of the fundamental rights and freedoms of Tibetan people.

VII.3. CENSORSHIP AND PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGNS

Chinese authorities have implemented extensive censorship measures targeting Tibetans, severely stifling the expression of religious beliefs and cultural identity. By controlling digital communication, manipulating algorithms, and censoring news, the government suppresses dissent, prevents citizens from accessing accurate information, and erodes freedoms of expression and information. The suppression of information restricts individuals' ability to communicate and share their challenges, preventing the global community from fully understanding the extent of these issues and controlling the narrative and public perception.

TikTok, owned by Chinese-company ByteDance, allegedly manipulates its algorithms to promote pro-China content while suppressing criticism of Beijing. This manipulation reportedly shapes public opinion, especially among younger generations.¹⁰⁷ Minority groups like Tibetans and Uyghurs, already facing significant challenges, are further impacted by this bias. Activists from these communities' express concerns that TikTok's promotion of pro-China content distorts global understanding of their struggles and human rights abuses.

The platform's algorithms are said to "suppress content critical of the [CCP] while simultaneously boosting pro-China propaganda and promoting distracting, irrelevant content."¹⁰⁸ This tactic aligns with CCP interests, posing a threat to democracies by undermining free expression and destabilising nations from within. Tactics employed by CCP-linked content creators, such as travel influencers, silence discussions about ethnic genocide and human rights abuses, influencing young users' perspectives. There needs to be greater awareness and regulatory measures to ensure digital platforms do not suppress free expression or promote biased narratives.

While also allegedly promoting pro-China content, Chinese authorities are actively censoring negative news about the country's economy. China's Ministry of State Security has urged citizens to disregard "false narratives" about the country's economic trajectory and instead trust President Xi Jinping's long-term vision.¹⁰⁹

In addition to economic censorship, Chinese authorities are also suppressing information about other critical events. For example, a wildfire in Nyagchu County, Kham (Ch: Sichuan) Province, in March, has led to the evacuation of over 3,300 Tibetans. The fire spread rapidly burning down homes and injuring animals. Chinese authorities warned Tibetans not to share photos or videos of the fire on social media platforms or with contacts abroad, threatening arrest for those who do.¹¹⁰ This suppression of information prevents the global

community from fully understanding the extent of the disaster and its impact on the affected communities.

The suppression of news about the economic situation and the wildfire in Kham highlights the lengths to which Chinese authorities will go to maintain their image and control public perception.

In addition to these measures, Chinese authorities have intensified social media restrictions on Tibetans, preventing them from celebrating the Dalai Lama's 89th birthday on 6 July. Authorities have rigorously checked cell phones for photos of the Dalai Lama, questioned individuals deemed "suspicious", and prohibited communications with family members outside the TAR. Despite these efforts, Tibetans continue to celebrate by posting poems, childhood photos of their spiritual leader, and making traditional smoke offerings.¹¹¹

Chinese authorities confiscated the cell phones of Tibetan Buddhist monks in Kham, accusing them of sharing news about the closure of schools linked to monasteries.¹¹² Since 1 October, authorities have been systematically checking the monks' phones, and those found sharing information had their devices confiscated. The closures affected nearly 600 students, who were forced to enrol in state-administered residential schools. These closures and the subsequent confiscation of phones are part of broader efforts by Chinese authorities to control information and suppress dissent.

VIII. EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE SUPPRESSION

The right to education is a fundamental human right, enshrined in Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). However, Chinese government policies in Tibet systematically undermine the right of Tibetans to receive education in their own language. Despite protections under China's Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law¹¹³, authorities have prioritized a nation-building agenda that promotes a homogenized *Zhonghua Minzu* identity – one centred on a single national language and allegiance to the Chinese state. These policies erode linguistic and cultural rights, restrict Tibetan children's access to mother-tongue education and violate international human rights standards.¹¹⁴

Chinese authorities employ educational practices to suppress Tibetan culture and enforce assimilation into the dominant Han culture. Through this approach, the Chinese government perpetuates educational repression, undermining the linguistic and cultural heritage of minority communities.

VIII.1. EDUCATIONAL INDOCTRINATION

The “Patriotic Education Law”¹¹⁵ became effective from 1 January 2024 and aims to strengthen patriotic education in China and promote CCP ideology. The law mandates the integration of patriotic education into schools, religious and public institutions, and social

organisations, seeking to align the thoughts and actions of ethnic minorities with CCP ideology. Schools are required to include patriotic education in their curriculum, religious groups and places of worship are encouraged to teach alignment with the state's vision, and parents are urged to incorporate “love of the motherland” into family education.¹¹⁶

The law can be seen as part of broader assimilation policies aimed at Sinicizing religion, education, and other aspects of life in ethnic minority areas. The implications of the law are concerning, as it represents a tool to crack down on ideas of liberal democracy and human rights, suppressing any dissenting views and ensuring the dominance of CCP ideology. There are concerns that the focus on patriotic education may affect the development of critical thinking skills in students, as probing questions about Chinese history and politics may be discouraged.¹¹⁷

In line with this Patriotic Education Law, a new university textbook was introduced under President Xi Jinping's administration that aims to combat “ethnic minority exceptionalism” and promote the concept of *Zhonghua* (中華 meaning Chinese culture or civilization). The textbook titled “An Introduction to the Community for the Chinese Nation” emphasises ethnic integration and downplays the distinctiveness of ethnic minorities, advocating for a unified

national identity.¹¹⁸ Published in February 2024, the textbook cites political divisions within the West, such as the 2021 attack on the US Capitol Building, to justify China's ethnic integration policies.¹¹⁹



New textbook: "An Introduction to the Community for the Chinese Nation".

Photo: Xu Liulu/GT

The textbook implies a shift from affirmative action for ethnic minorities towards cultural assimilation and integration. Set to become compulsory at many universities, it aligns with courses on Marxism and Xi Jinping Thought, stressing the unity of all ethnic groups under the Chinese nation. This educational material and the new law raise significant concerns about educational indoctrination, identity reconstruction, and cultural homogenisation. By promoting a monolithic national identity risk erasing the unique identities of ethnic minorities in China, potentially leading to their marginalisation and loss of cultural heritage.

VIII.2. ERASURE OF TIBETAN LANGUAGE

Chinese authorities are intensifying efforts to promote Mandarin Chinese as the primary language in Tibet, resulting in the suppression of Tibetan language and culture. The effects of this can be seen by several instances across 2024, including bans on use of the language in schools and online.

In mid-March, Chinese authorities in Ngaba (Ch: Aba) County fired a Tibetan educator named **Donyoe** for teaching Tibetan language and history at Meruma Township's primary school.¹²⁰ Donyoe, who had been teaching for 15 years and was highly respected by students and parents, has now been excluded from further teaching posts.



Donyoe teaching at the Meruma Township's primary school. Photo: Tibet Watch

In April, the Chinese government shut down a popular Tibetan-language blog called **Luktsang Palyon**, or "Tibet Sheep",¹²¹ citing alleged copyright infringement. The blog, established in 2013, has been a vital hub for Tibetan language and culture, publishing around 10,000 pieces of educational content, articles, music lyrics, translations, and audio content.

The blog's administrator has filed an appeal to restore access, but there is little hope for a positive outcome.



Screenshot of 2 April 2024 statement announcing closure of Luksang Palyon by Chinese authorities & its subsequent appeal for restoration of the blog.

Photo: Tibet Times

In recent years, Tibetan users have raised concerns over the ban on Tibetan language on Douyin, Chinese counterpart of TikTok, and other major online platforms in China.¹²² Many Tibetans, including businessmen, social workers, doctors, and influencers, rely on these platforms for their livelihoods and have expressed difficulties due to the language restriction, prompting calls for the authorities to lift the ban.

The effects of this ban have led to the arrest of Tibetans, such as the Tibetan live-streamer **Tashi Nyima**, also known as Gang Lhaja, who was suspended from live-streaming for promoting Tibetan language and culture on social media. His activities were abruptly halted following orders from local police, and later he was arbitrarily detained and beaten in a detention centre from 1 to 3 September. Despite his growing influence within Tibetan communities, he faced increased censorship and persecution.¹²³ On 7 September, Gang Lhaja released a video expressing his frustration and disappointment with the situation.



Gang Lhaja's expresses disappointment over the restrictions imposed on his content. Screenshot: Official TCHRD YouTube

Tashi Wangchuk, 39, who was a former political prisoner and a prominent Tibetan language rights advocate, was detained on 20 October for 15 days on charges of "disrupting social order" and allegedly spreading false information on social media. Although released on 4 November, he remains under strict surveillance. Wangchuk's case highlights the risks faced by those advocating for Tibetan language rights conflicting with the broad Chinese government strategy of forced assimilation.¹²⁴



Undated photo of Tashi Wangchuk, Photo: Tibet Times

The Chinese Ministry of Education announced in 2021 that all preschools in ethnic and rural areas must use Mandarin Chinese as the primary language of instruction, as part of its “Children Homophony” Plan.¹²⁵ The policy, aimed at fostering national unity, also requires teachers to undergo language training between 2021-2025. This move aligns with Article 43 of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025), which seeks to expand Mandarin education in ethnic minority regions. This is part of the broader Sinicization campaign which has led to the closure of private Tibetan-language schools and increased restrictions on Tibetan language education,¹²⁶ further eroding linguistic and cultural rights.

In addition to this directive, authorities have decided to separate families for extended periods by restricting the number of holidays schoolchildren can take, limiting their interactions in their native tongue with their families. Traditional breaks such as spring and summer holidays have been eliminated, forcing children to remain in boarding schools for longer periods.

Following the recent Chinese government’s decision to exclude the Tibetan language from college examinations, Tibetan parents are now being asked to decide whether their children should continue studying Tibetan.¹²⁷ With Tibetan language teaching phased out in many schools, parents must now decide on their children’s language education. The notice in December caused mixed reactions, with some seeing it as an attack on the Tibetan language and others as necessary

educational reform. These changes raise concerns about preserving cultural and linguistic heritage in Tibet.

In addition to this predicament, Tibetan students have been put to a further disadvantage following a controversial government policy that offers preferential university entrance exam conditions to children of investors who chose to move to Tibet and invest at least 3 million yuan (US\$415,000).¹²⁸ This initiative aims to attract investment by leveraging the region’s lower college entry threshold. However, critics argue that it creates an unfair advantage for non-Tibetan students, exacerbating competition and depriving ethnic Tibetans of educational and job opportunities. The policy has sparked debates on social media and raised concerns among Tibetan rights groups about further disadvantaging Tibetan students.

The CCP’s intensified efforts to assimilate cultural and ethnic minority groups have marginalised Tibetan languages, with Mandarin becoming the primary language of instruction in many schools. This policy has made it increasingly difficult for Tibetans to use their native languages in everyday life, leading to a decline in linguistic diversity.¹²⁹

Overall, the dominance of standard Tibetan, the enforcement of Mandarin in the education system, and the isolation of Tibetan children in boarding schools have significantly eroded the use of minority languages. Speakers of these languages face everyday discrimination and dehumanisation, further accelerating

their decline. Despite these challenges, grassroots initiatives to preserve minority languages highlight the resilience and determination of these communities.

VIII.3. FORCED ASSIMILATION OF TIBETAN CHILDREN

In 2024, the closure of several Tibetan schools, including the highly reputed Gangjong Sherig Norbu Lobling, triggered significant human rights concerns. These closures mark a forced assimilation campaign by the Chinese government, targeting Tibetan children and their cultural and educational upbringing, contravening with the UNCRC.¹³⁰



The gate of closed school adorned with khatags tied by teachers and students. Photo: TCHRD

Gangjong Sherig Norbu Lobling in Golok Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, also known as Jigme Gyaltsen Nationalities Vocational School, founded by Ragya Jigme Gyaltsen and recognised for its progressive educational programs and dedication to preserving Tibetan language and culture, made it a prime

target of Beijing's intensified assimilation campaign. The forcible closure displaced nearly 1,400 students and teachers, many attributing the shutdown to Zhang Xiaojuan, former party secretary of Golok Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Following the shutdown, Ragya Jigme Gyaltsen announced that students and teachers would be transferred to government vocational schools.¹³¹



Students in Tears at Jigme Gyaltsen Nationalities Vocational School Closing Ceremony in Golok. Screenshot: Official TCHRD YouTube

The closure of two prominent Buddhist monastic schools, Kirti Monastery in Ngaba County and Taktsang Lhamo Kirti Monastery in Dzoge County, has severely impacted young Tibetan students' education and cultural identity.¹³²

From Kirti Monastery, roughly 1,000 young Tibetan monks, aged 6 to 17, were forcibly transferred to government-run boarding schools with strict, "prison-like conditions".¹³³ These students are taught exclusively in Mandarin and forbidden from leaving the school premises or meeting their parents. Authorities have intensified surveillance and restrictions on local Tibetans, treating students who

attempted to escape like criminals. This move is part of China's efforts to enforce “patriotic education” among Tibetan students and eliminate their cultural identity.

Following the closure of these schools, four Tibetans were detained in early September by Chinese authorities in Ngaba County, Kham (Ch: Sichuan) Province. The detainees are Tsering Tashi, 41, Wangkyi, 43, Lobsang Samten, 53, and Lobsang Trinley, in his 40s, the latter two monks from Kirti Monastery. Since their arrest, no information has been provided about their whereabouts or the charges against them.¹³⁴

In Dzoge County, over 600 young monks from the Taktsang Lhamo Kirti Monastery were forced to disrobe and join government-run schools as lay students. Parents' pleas to keep their children in the monastery were denied and warned that disobedience would be illegal.¹³⁵ The school was closed in July, with originally around 300 students transferred to government-run schools but in October the remaining students were forcibly admitted, depriving students of Tibetan language classes and materials.¹³⁶

Four Tibetan teens, aged 15-18, resisting this transfer were detained on 2 October and subjected to several days of “political re-education” before being released and forced to attend a government-run school.¹³⁷ This relentless drive for “patriotic education” places young Tibetan students under oppressive conditions, stripped of their heritage and subjected to a system that undermines their cultural roots.

Kunzang Longyang, a 17-year-old Tibetan Buddhist monk took his own life after being forced to leave his monastery to attend a government-run school.¹³⁸ Since 2018, Chinese authorities have enforced a rule forcing young monks under the age of 18 to leave monasteries, claiming they are too immature to think for themselves. Three years ago, Longyang was removed from Yulung Monastery in Drakkar County due to this rule. The school environment took a devastating toll on his mental health, leading Longyang to become severely depressed, stop eating for many days, and fall ill. His deteriorated condition led him to return home in April 2024, where he tragically made the decision to take his own life.

For generations, Tibetan children as young as 5 or 6 have attended monasteries for education and religious training, where they use the Tibetan language. The imposition of government-run schools completely disregards this rich tradition and cultural heritage.

In early September, five teenage Tibetan monks attempted to take their own lives after being forcibly enrolled in a government-run boarding school. These young monks, aged 13 and 14, who were compelled to leave their monastery and attend a local school in Zungchu (Ch: Songpan) Province, Ngaba (Ch: Aba) County, found the conditions there “unbearable”.¹³⁹ Describing it as “prison-like”, they complained of poor food and mistreatment, such as receiving beatings. Driven to desperation, they attempted to end their suffering by trying to jump into a river but were stopped by local residents.



Images from video show three of five teenage Tibetan monks who attempted to take their own lives after being forced to attend a local government school in Zungchu county, southwestern China's Sichuan province, August 2024. (Citizen video via RFA Tibetan)



Young Tibetan monks say life in Chinese school 'unbearable'. Screenshot: RFA YouTube

The five boys were just a few among many who were removed from the historic 14th-century Muge Monastery in August, following a directive from Chinese authorities mandating monks under 18 to leave their monasteries and attend government-run schools. The forced assimilation into government-run schools not only deprives these young Tibetan monks of their spiritual foundation but also leaves them vulnerable to severe emotional and psychological distress.

IX. ENVIRONMENTAL EXPLOITATION AND FORCED RELOCATION

The Chinese government's policies in Tibet have led to extensive environmental exploitation and forced relocation of almost a million Tibetans.¹⁴⁰ The aggressive development of hydropower projects, mining, and water management initiatives has disrupted local communities and destroyed cultural landmarks, infringing on the right to a healthy environment. The impact on Tibet's environment and the livelihoods of its people underscores the urgent need for China to adhere to international human rights standards protecting the right of adequate standard of living as well as the protection of internationally displaced persons.¹⁴¹



A Chinese Communist Party deputy secretary of Gonjo county visits households to persuade them to agree to the proposed relocation of their village, in Sa-ngen, Tibet Autonomous Region, March 2024. © 2024 Gongjue Pioneers (贡觉先锋) WeChat Account. Photo: Human Rights Watch

IX.1. FORCED RELOCATION AND INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

Since 2016, the Chinese government has accelerated the forced relocation of rural

villagers and herders in Tibet, citing improvements in livelihoods and environmental protection as reasons. However, studies¹⁴² reveal that these relocations, presented as “voluntary”, are often compulsory and involve extreme pressure tactics and misleading information. Over 709,000 Tibetans have been moved from their ancestral homes,¹⁴³ leading to significant challenges such as the loss of means to make a living, economic hardship, and social exclusion. The relocations have disrupted Tibetan culture and traditional livelihoods, with many unable to continue traditional farming or herding practices. Between 2000-2025, the livelihoods of around 3.36 million Tibetan nomads have been endangered by government programs calling for them to “adopt a sedentary way of life” and rebuild homes.¹⁴⁴

Despite authorities' claims of consent, many Tibetans initially resisted expressing concerns about employment and adaptation in new locations. Local officials used persistent assurances of economic benefits, repeated intrusive home visits, and abuse of villagers' intellectual capacity to coerce participation in the “whole-village relocation” programs. Approximately 140,000 Tibetans were forcibly displaced with whole-village relocations,¹⁴⁵ and 567,000 Tibetans more from individual households.¹⁴⁶ Misleading information about economic benefits post-relocation

has left many dissatisfied due to financial difficulties and unmet promises.¹⁴⁷ Furthermore, Chinese authorities often require relocated individuals to demolish their former homes to prevent their return,¹⁴⁸ a practice that contravenes international standards.¹⁴⁹

In 2024 alone, the Chinese government undertook numerous forced relocations to assert control over the region. Key projects included the Mardang hydropower station¹⁵⁰ in Ragya township and a new dam¹⁵¹ on the Drichu River. Additionally, thousands of people from Thangnok village were relocated to facilitate the construction of the Yangkhil hydropower station at the breach of the Machu River in Drakkar County, displacing 9,238 residents once completed.¹⁵²

In Markham County, Tibetans protested against the seizure of their pastureland by Chinese authorities, who offered a meagre compensation of 3,000 yuan (about US\$415) per family.¹⁵³ The pastureland, used by about 25 Tibetan families for grazing and recreation, was sold to Chinese businessmen without the knowledge or consent of the locals. Protesters demanding fair compensation were met with force, and four were arrested, interrogated, and severely beaten during detention, while others at the scene were also subjected to violence.¹⁵⁴ Increased police surveillance and political education sessions followed, accusing protesters of political motives and preventing appeals for fair compensation.¹⁵⁵

Thousands of Tibetan villagers were

forcibly relocated near borders with India, Nepal, and Bhutan, to act as “border guardians”.¹⁵⁶ The settlements serve both civilian and military purposes, with residents acting as “guards” and providing infrastructure for potential military movements. This strategy is perceived as an effort by China to solidify its control over contested areas, exacerbating regional tensions, particularly with India. The policy also aims to assimilate minority groups, such as Tibetans, disrupting their traditional lifestyles and leaving them reliant on government support.

These relocations highlight the erosion of Tibetan cultural practices and ways of life, as well as legal concerns regarding forced evictions.

IX.2. HYDROPOWER DAM CONSTRUCTION

The construction of hydropower dams in Tibet has led to significant disruptions to cultural heritage and local communities. China’s aggressive hydropower development has displaced thousands of Tibetans, destroyed cultural landmarks, and altered the traditional ways of life, sparking widespread protests and international concerns about human rights violations and environmental impact.

The Kamtok (Ch: Gangtuo) Dam construction on the Drichu River (Ch: Jinsha), planned in the sacred mountains of Gèndong in Derge County (Ch: Dege), poses a serious threat to the cultural and spiritual fabric of the area. It is estimated that over 4,000 Tibetan¹⁵⁷

residents across Derge and Jomda counties face displacement as homes and six Tibetan monasteries, which house centuries-old Buddhist murals, are set to be submerged.¹⁵⁸ Protests have been met with increased security, detentions, and violent crackdowns.¹⁵⁹

The Yena Pal Tashi Lhatse Monastery has also faced forced relocation due to the dam construction. This monastery, founded by the ascetic Siser Lama Sonam Gyaltzen, is renowned for its sacred statues, murals, and other religious items. The relocation disrupts the monastery's historical and cultural significance.¹⁶⁰



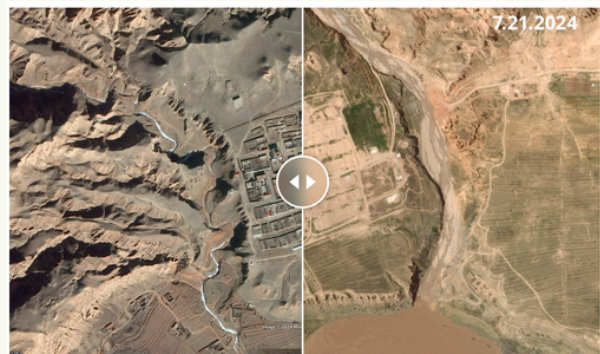
Protestors at Yena monastery pleading with visiting local officials on 20 February 2024. Photo: RFA

The construction of the Yangkhil (Yangqu) Dam on the Machu or Yellow River in Dragkar (Ch: Xinghai) County, Tsolho (Ch: Hainan) Prefecture, has already caused irreparable damage to Tibetan heritage with the demolition of Atsok Monastery, a religious site founded in 1889 of immense historical and spiritual significance. Chinese authorities misused legal provisions to revoke the monastery's protected cultural heritage status, allowing its demolition to proceed,¹⁶¹ displacing 160 monks into makeshift shelters with the promised relocation site still under

construction and insufficient funding allocated for rebuilding the monastery.¹⁶²



Satellite images from 7 September 2024, show rising waters behind a new dam in central China inundating the area where the 135-year-old Tibetan Buddhist Atsok Monastery stood. Source: Planet Labs



The Atsok Monastery in western China's Qinghai province is seen 15 January 2015, left, and on 21 July 2024, after its destruction. Source: Maxar Technologies, left, and Planet Labs with RFA analysis



Atsok Monastery's demolition in progress. (Photo: Vera Hue) Source: International Campaign for Tibet

The Mardang (Maerdang) Dam, built on the Machu (Yellow) River, has led to the forced relocation of over a hundred Tibetan households and submersion of a Kagyu monastery ruin and the sacred mountain, Ama Ajam Lhamo.¹⁶³ While some affected families received compensation, concerns persist about the potential for flooding risks if the dam is damaged.



Mardang hydroelectric power plant on the reach of Machu River. Photo: Tibet Times

The Medog Hydropower Station on the Yarlung Tsangpo River, approved for construction in December 2024, is set to become the world's largest hydropower dam, generating three times the power of the Three Gorges Dam.¹⁶⁴ This project has raised concerns about environmental impact, water security, and the displacement of local communities. Those relying on the river downstream, such as India and Bangladesh are particularly worried about the potential manipulation of water flow and ecological consequences.

The expansion of hydropower in Tibet has led to the forced relocation of entire villages, including monks, laypeople, and elders, into barrack-like housing developments where movement is

restricted, and autonomy is greatly reduced.¹⁶⁵ Protests against these relocations have been violently suppressed, with demonstrators facing arrests and violence. The Chinese government frames these resettlements as urbanisation and poverty alleviation efforts, but in reality, they erase traditional Tibetan lifestyles and further integrate Tibetans into a tightly government-controlled system.

Large-scale dam construction, often on seismically unstable terrain, heightens the risk of landslides and earthquakes. A 2024 study further confirmed the high risk of landslide-induced barrier lakes on the upper reaches of the Jinsha River,¹⁶⁶ and experts warn that dam failures could trigger catastrophic flooding, endangering communities both upstream and downstream.¹⁶⁷

Furthermore, the degradation of permafrost due to dam construction also releases methane, a potent greenhouse gas, exacerbating climate change.¹⁶⁸ A July 2024 communication to China by 13 Special Procedures, responding to the February protests, highlighted the significant and “possibly irreversible, environmental ... impacts” of dams on the Tibetan plateau, including methane emissions.¹⁶⁹ Deforestation, soil erosion, and the loss of biodiversity along with these environmental challenges, will affect freshwater availability, economic stability, and ecosystems downstream.¹⁷⁰

These constructions threaten the survival of one-fifth of the fish species in the Mekong River.¹⁷¹ The impact extends beyond Tibet, affecting millions in South

and Southeast Asia who rely on these waterways.¹⁷² The construction of these dams represents not only a regional crisis but a global environmental concern, requiring urgent international attention and intervention.

IX.3. MINING PROJECTS

In early 2024, the Chinese government approved Zijin Mining Group's massive expansion of the Julong Copper Mine in Tibet, aiming to make it the largest copper mine in the world.¹⁷³ This expansion has resulted in significant environmental pollution and the brutal treatment of protesting Tibetans, who faced violence and arbitrary detentions from authorities.¹⁷⁴ The expansion poses a severe threat to the socio-economic and environmental well-being of the local Tibetan community.



Julong Copper Mine located in Gyama township, Maldrogungkar county, Tibet. Photo: Tibet Times

Illegal sand mining activities by Anhui Xianhe Construction Engineering Company in Tsaruma have led to the detention of those protesting the mining activities. A Tibetan environmental activist, **Tsongon Tsering**, 29, was detained by Chinese authorities in

October after accusing the company of illegal sand and gravel mining in Kham (Ch: Sichuan) Province. Tsering's video on WeChat highlighted the environmental damage caused by the company, including severe soil erosion and reduced water levels. His detention underscores the risks faced by Tibetans who speak out against environmental degradation and corporate irresponsibility. On 27 October, he was sentenced to 8 months in prison and has been removed from Chinese social media.¹⁷⁵



Tsongon Tsering. (Image from citizen video via WeChat) Source: Tibettimes

The Chinese government has also relocated hundreds of Tibetan families under the pretext of landslide dangers. In late October, nearly half the population of Yarka (ཡར་ཀ་ལྗེ་བོ།) and Betsang villages in Karang Town, Yaze (Ch: Xinhua) County, Amdo Province, was ordered to relocate. Families were given the option of either a government subsidy of 150,000 Chinese yuan per household or move into government-built houses in Yaze County town. Both options deprive them of their farmland and sustainable livelihoods, leaving them economically vulnerable. Some believe the landslide hazard is a pretext for mining activities on the

sacred mountain of Amnye Ratoe.¹⁷⁶

These forced relocations and the expansion of mining activities highlight the Chinese government's disregard for the environmental, cultural, and socio-economic well-being of Tibetan communities.

IX.4. ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION

The Tibetan Plateau, often called the “Water Tower of Asia”, is crucial for providing water to major Asian rivers, which are vital for the livelihoods of over 3 billion people.¹⁷⁷ Climate change however is causing significant environmental changes on the plateau, with alarming rates of glacial retreat, expansion of lakes, and shrinking of permafrost.¹⁷⁸ This has led to a disruption in the flow of rivers originating from the plateau, impacting water availability for millions of people downstream.



Major rivers sourced in Tibet. Source: meltdownintibet.com © Michael Buckley

For Tibetans, these environmental shifts pose a threat not only to the natural landscape but also to their cultural heritage, as sacred sites like Amnye Machen and Mount Kailash experience accelerated glacial melt. Furthermore, mining and dam construction are worsening ecological degradation. While the Chinese government claims these projects promote economic growth, generate electricity, and improve local living standards, activities such as gold mining near the Amnye Machen have polluted water sources and harmed the local ecosystem.¹⁷⁹

The Plateau's environment also influences the Asian monsoon system, with climate changes potentially leading to more extreme patterns, affecting regions far beyond Tibet. Preserving the Tibetan Plateau's environment is essential for ecological balance and the well-being of millions of people who depend on its resources.

Additionally, China has developed a national park plan aiming to establish the largest system of protected areas in the world by 2035, with 70% of these designated spaces on the Tibetan Plateau.¹⁸⁰ However, this raises concerns about the forced relocation of Tibetan farmers and nomads from their traditional lands.¹⁸¹

The “rural revitalization strategy” is to transform Tibet into a hub for large-scale meat production promoting the industrial slaughter of yaks and sheep. This policy is displacing Tibetan pastoralists and replacing their traditional practices with

industrial farming methods. While the “national parks policy” aims to protect biodiversity and promote tourism but overlaps with traditional pastoral lands, consequently also leading to the forced relocation of Tibetan nomads. This policy would disrupt the traditional lifestyles of Tibetans and conflicts with deeply held Buddhist values.

These policies are driven by economic and political objectives rather than genuine concern for rural development or environmental protection, sacrificing Tibetan culture and lifestyle to further “China's grand designs”.¹⁸²

In 2024, China transported 3,000 metric tons of glacial water from Tibet to the Maldives as part of its water diplomacy, aiming to alleviate freshwater scarcity.¹⁸³ Despite the seemingly benevolent gesture, Tibetans are facing significant challenges due to stringent water conservation regulations imposed by the Chinese government, resulting in local water shortages. This situation highlights the complex dynamics of China's geopolitical strategies to the detriment of vulnerable communities and the environment.

X. CHINA'S TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION AND PROPAGANDA EFFORTS

The Chinese government has long sought to silence critics beyond its borders, deploying an expanding arsenal of transnational repression tactics to target dissidents, ethnic minorities, and activists abroad. While China has engaged in such repression for decades, its frequency and sophistication have escalated in recent years.¹⁸⁴ Under President Xi Jinping, the CCP has intensified its extraterritorial efforts, treating overseas dissent as a direct challenge to its rule. This expansion coincides with the centralisation of political power under Xi and an increasingly assertive foreign policy.

At the core of China's transnational repression (TNR) strategy is the United Front Work Department, the CCP body responsible for co-opting and controlling overseas Chinese communities. Through surveillance, harassment, and intimidation, Chinese authorities seek to stifle dissent among diaspora communities, particularly Tibetans, Uyghurs, and Hong Kong activists. Investigations in 2024¹⁸⁵ revealed systematic targeting of exiled Tibetans, including disinformation campaigns, blackmail, and coercion aimed at severing ties between exiled Tibetans and their families in Tibet. Authorities have pressured exiled Tibetans to abandon advocacy roles, restricted financial support from relatives, and sought to marginalise Tibetan cultural and political activities.

China has also leveraged diplomatic pressure and foreign government cooperation to advance its repression. Some governments have facilitated arrests, deportations, or restrictions on Tibetan activities, further shrinking the space for dissent. Last year, several ethnic Tibetans with EU passports were detained and interrogated for hours upon entering China under its visa-free policy, which allows visa-free entry for up to 30 days for several European countries. In one instance, Belgian citizen Thubten Gyatso and his six-year-old son were detained for 18 hours at Shanghai's Pudong International Airport, given only one meal, and heavily questioned about their belongings, which included pictures of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan flag. Gyatso and his son were deported to London without being allowed to travel to Amdo (Ch: Qinghai) Province to meet their family. Other travellers faced similar scrutiny and were redirected to different cities.¹⁸⁶

While the visa-free policy aims to increase tourism and foreign investment, ethnic Tibetans face heightened harassment and deportation. Some Tibetan travellers from Europe were able to reach their hometowns but faced intense scrutiny from local authorities.

In December 2024, Chinese authorities sanctioned the Canada Tibet Committee and the Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project in retaliation for Canada's sanctions on

Chinese officials over human rights abuses in Tibet and Xinjiang.¹⁸⁷

Parallel to its repression efforts, China has intensified a global propaganda campaign aimed at countering international criticism and promoting a state-approved narrative.¹⁸⁸ The CCP has mobilised state media, foreign media tours, and diplomatic efforts to shape global perceptions of Tibet and other contested regions. On 2 September 2024, China launched the “Tibet International Communication Center” in Lhasa to bolster its global messaging, deploying state-controlled media and diplomatic pressure to influence discourse on Tibet.¹⁸⁹



Official launch of the “Tibet International Communication Center” to boost China’s propaganda on Tibet. Photo: International Campaign for Tibet

A key focus of the latest propaganda campaign has been the renaming of Tibet as “Xizang” in English-language discourse, a move widely seen as an attempt to subsume Tibetan identity within a broader Chinese framework. This linguistic shift has sparked controversy in international cultural institutions. In France, the Musée du Quai Branly reversed its decision to use “Xizang” following protests from Tibetan groups, while the Guimet Museum refused to comply due to

Chinese pressure.¹⁹⁰

China has also taken direct steps to counter Tibetan outreach in Europe. In response to Tibetan parliamentary visits to European countries in 2024, Beijing dispatched a state-backed delegation of “Tibetologists” to promote its version of events.¹⁹¹ This initiative underscores China’s strategic efforts to control the global narrative on Tibet, suppress independent voices, and delegitimise exiled Tibetan leaders.



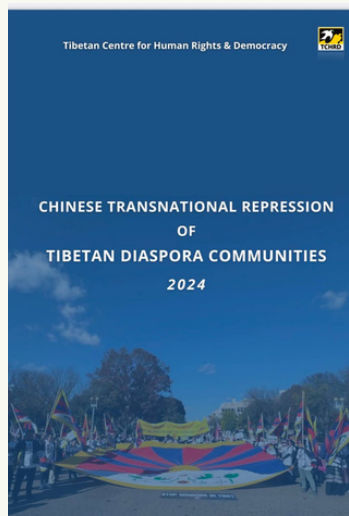
Tibetan protestors outside the Musée Guimet on December 1, 2024 (Photo: Phayul)

XI. TCHRD YEAR IN REVIEW

1. RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

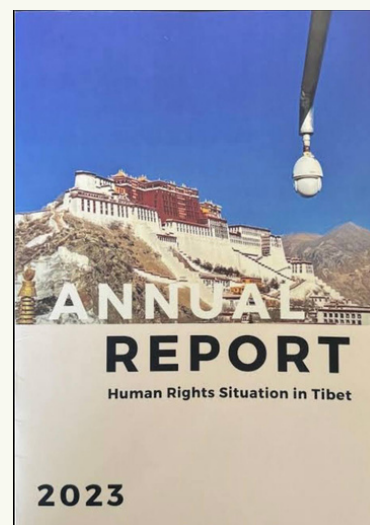
Thematic Report on Transnational Repression of Tibetan Diaspora:

On 6 February, TCHRD released its report on Chinese Transnational Repression of Tibetan Diaspora Communities at the Press Club of India in New Delhi. The report is the first of its kind to focus on the global transnational repression of Tibetans in a substantial manner. The 46 paged report offers comprehensive information and insights on this issue and documented 84 first hand testimonies from exiled Tibetans having experienced transnational repression. The testimonies were collected by TCHRD's field officers in Tibet and abroad. To supplement the primary data, TCHRD compiled 120 online news articles and reports relaying testimonies and/or providing analysis on the CCP's transnational repression apparatus. Since the launch of the report, TCHRD disseminated the physical copies of the report to foreign missions, international human rights organisations, & think tanks.



Annual Report on Human Rights Situation in Tibet – 2023:

On 20 March 2024, TCHRD released its 2023 annual report on the human rights situation in Tibet during a press conference held at its office in Dharamshala, India. The report documents how Tibetans inside Tibet continue to face escalating crackdowns on freedom of expression, religion and belief. Despite numerous calls from the international community to immediately halt its forced cultural assimilation policy, Chinese authorities imposed Chinese medium education in Tibetan schools and amended local regulations in Tibetan areas to promote Mandarin Chinese. Tibetans face restrictions not only on their right to freedom of assembly but also on expressing opinions or criticisms against repressive and unjust government policies, both online and offline. Under the guise of maintaining social stability, Chinese

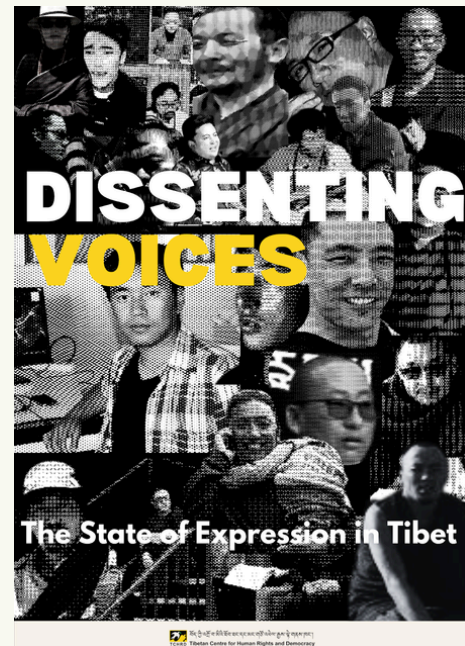


authorities exercise direct supervision and censorship over all online platforms. The right to freedom of religion and belief faced further restrictions as Chinese authorities introduced more repressive regulations to exercise total control over the establishment, management and activities of the religious activity sites. Despite the relaxation of Zero-Covid restrictions, it made no difference to Tibetan Buddhists, who continued to face restrictions in undertaking religious pilgrimages.

Special Report on Freedom of Expression:

In December 2024, TCHRD has released a new report in its Dissenting Voices series, shedding light on the escalating repression of freedom of expression and information in Tibet under Chinese rule, particularly since President Xi Jinping's second term in office. The report examines the intersection of China's authoritarian governance and its extensive surveillance state, focusing on how these measures disproportionately affect Tibetans. Laws such as the Cybersecurity Law and the National Intelligence Law empower the government to monitor internet use, criminalize dissent, and enforce the state's narrative. Real-name registration requirements and the systematic collection of personal data have eradicated anonymity, leaving Tibetans vulnerable to punishment for expressing dissenting views. For Tibetans, these policies are compounded by broader campaigns aimed at cultural assimilation

and erasure. Advocacy for the preservation of the Tibetan language, cultural practices, or peaceful critique of state policies often results in harsh penalties under vaguely defined charges such as “inciting separatism” or “threatening national security”.



2. EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

Child Rights Education Campaign:

In October 2024, TCHRD concluded its Child Rights awareness campaign, engaging almost a thousand Tibetan refugee children across India and Nepal. These workshops were conducted in various Tibetan schools, including Namgyal Middle Boarding High School, Songtsen Bhrikuti Boarding High School, and Namgyal Secondary School under the Snow Lion Foundation, SOS Hermann Gmeiner School in Pokhara, Nepal TCV School in Ladakh, and T.H.F Schools in Mussoorie and Rajpur, India. The sessions began with a brief overview of Human Rights and key International Conventions, establishing a foundation for understanding children's rights.

TCHRD carefully designed the sessions to help students understand their basic rights and responsibilities as children. The workshops aimed to enable students not only recognise their own rights but also to respect the rights of others as part of their responsibilities. Various forms of child abuse, the importance of non-discrimination, and child participation were key topics covered during the two-day workshops. Participants were also introduced to the child protection measures, legal frameworks under the Indian Law, and reporting mechanisms, equipping them with the tools and knowledge to safeguard their rights and advocate for others.



The TCHRD team, along with the Principal and students of Namgyal Middle Boarding School, during the Child Rights Awareness campaign.

Commemorating 37th anniversary of the United Nations Convention against Torture:

On the 37th anniversary of the entry into force of the United Nations Convention Against Torture, TCHRD in collaboration with three other Tibetan CSO's including Tibetan Women's Association, Tibetan Youth Congress and Students for a Free Tibet commemorated the day to pay tribute to Tibetan human rights defenders, dissidents, and activists who have endured and continue to endure torture- the severest form of human rights abuse. TCHRD organised a panel discussion that featured five former political prisoners who were subjected to torture in Chinese detention: Geshe Tsering Dorje, a student of the late Trulku Tenzin Delek; Lobsang Younten, who was imprisoned in 1959 for more than a decade; Geshe Ngawang Delek, who was imprisoned for the 1987 protest; and Gendun Rinchen, a tourist guide in

Lhasa, who was arrested from his home in 1993, for preparing to hand over letters about human rights to a group of visiting European Community diplomats. Sherab Gyatso was also arrested around the early 2000s. At the event, Ms Nyima Lhamo, niece of Trulku Tenzin Delek send a video message urging the international community to uncover the truth, emphasising that Trulku Tenzin Delek's hope will continue to live on among the people and stressed the need to prevent others from suffering the same fate in the future. To honour and remember the victims of torture, TCHRD highlighted 20 cases of custodial deaths of Tibetan political prisoners on TCHRD's social media for twenty days to draw attention to their plight and demand accountability from the Chinese government.



Panel discussion with five former Political prisoners in Dharamshala, India

Run 4 Rights Campaign:

In observance of International Human Rights Day, the TCHRD, in conjunction with the Central Tibetan Women's Association and the Regional Tibetan Youth Congress, organised a Run for Rights marathon campaign in Dharamshala, India. The event saw participation from more than 65 individuals from all walks of life and diverse backgrounds, who joined the initiative to advocate for the release of Tibetan political prisoners detained for their peaceful pursuit of freedom and justice.



The TCHRD team, along with participants during the Run 4 Rights Campaign.

Human Rights Speaking Tour 2024:

TCHRD, represented by researcher Ngawang Lungtok, visited Symbiosis Law School and Christ University in Pune, where he introduced the Centre and provided a comprehensive overview of the human rights situation in Tibet. The session commenced with opening remarks from Prof Dr Shashikala Gurpur, Director and Dean of Symbiosis Law School, Symbiosis International, also a fullbright scholar and Jean Monnet Chair Professor (EUC-LAMP). The session concluded with remarks from Prof. Kshitij Naikade, Assistant Professor at Symbiosis Law School, Pune.



TCHRD Researcher, Ngawang Lungtok, and the human rights speaking tour attendees at Symbiosis Law School, Pune.

The session was highly interactive, with numerous questions posed by the attendees. On 10 May, represented by researcher Ngawang Lungtok, visited Christ University, Pune Lavasa Campus. During the visit, he introduced the Centre and presented a comprehensive briefing on the human rights situation inside Tibet. The presentation began with introductory remarks from law student committee members, followed by insights shared by Dr. Anto Sebastian, the Head of the Department of Law. Following the informative session, an engaging Q&A segment ensued, in which students actively participated by posing numerous questions. The event concluded on a successful note.

Advocacy and Capacity Building to Counter China's Transnational Repression in Europe:

TCHRD conducted a seven-week long advocacy and capacity building activities aimed at countering China's transnational repression in Europe. Part of TCHRD's strategic actions to hold Chinese government accountable for spreading fear and disempowering exiled Tibetan activists and organisations, TCHRD's executive director Ms Tenzin Dawa and manager Ms Phurbu Dolma held briefings and interactions with various stakeholders including parliamentarians, policy makers, public officials, human rights experts and other civil society members on findings of TCHRD's report on transnational repression and discussed possible solutions.

The workshops were organised to build the capacity of Tibetan civil society members in six European countries including Switzerland, France, Netherlands, Germany, Belgium and the United Kingdom.



TCHRD's Executive Director, Ms Tenzin Dawa and Manager, Ms Phurbu Dolma, with stakeholders during the seven-week long Europe advocacy and capacity building initiative.

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