

Colonial Boarding Schools in Tibet

Nearly a million Tibetan children are in China's colonial boarding schools where students, as young as 4 years old are separated from their families and are forced to be enrolled in governmental colonial schools. The establishment of such colonial schools violate International human rights standards of the rights of the child, cultural rights, and right to freedom of religion and belief of the Tibetan people. It also contravenes China's constitution and national laws which protects diverse languages and cultures.

Of late, there has been an unprecedented increase in the number of residential schools operating in Tibet which coincides with the systematic closure of rural Tibetan schools. This somehow compelled the Tibetan parents to enrol their children as the only option. In other cases, unwilling parents are fined or threatened by the authorities. The students in these colonial boarding schools are kept away from their homes, separated from their roots, and cut off from their own community while also restricted from following traditional Tibetan religious practices connecting them back to their families and communities. These highly politicised and sinicized education systems and curricula conducted in Putonghua (Mandarin) also endangers their Tibetan identity, while first-hand accounts and testimonies have revealed children facing emotional, psychological and sexual abuses.

Since Xi Jinping came into power, the ultimate goal of the Chinese communist regime has been to eradicate non-Chinese identities by suppressing their language, culture, and ethnicity. The endorsement of the 'Second Generation Ethnic Policy', and the adoption of 'National Common Language' aimed to assimilate and homogenize all non-Chinese identities and communities into the dominant Han-Chinese identity is to make Tibetan language and culture a mere subservient to the Han majority.

'Decision on accelerating the development of Ethnic Education,' issued by the State Council of the People's Republic of China in 2015 mandated Chinese officials to strengthen boarding school construction in minority areas and achieve the goal that students of all ethnic minorities study in school, live in school, and grow up in a school. Such large-scale campaigns carried out in Tibet have systematically attacked Tibetans and assaulted their language, culture, and tradition resulting in dissecting culture and identity through Sinicization. As a result of China's colonial education, generations of Tibet have been alienated from their own culture, language, and community. Despite claiming "education is a fundamental human right for every citizen," the experience of school education in Tibet sufficiently proves that "the boarding schools in China play an essentially different role" of assimilative and cultural genocide.

Recommendations:

- a. The UN Human Rights Council has to monitor and take cohesive measures to address China's violation of international standard of Rights of the Child, cultural freedom, rights to freedom of religion and belief.
- b. International government and agencies to demand access to such schools in order to assess the gravity of this situation.
- c. Communicating with the concerned government to preserve the Tibetan language and culture.
- d. To immediately stop the colonial boarding school program that aims at dissecting Tibetan identity by depriving them of the warmth of their own culture.

References:

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