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DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (DIIR)

DIIR 2022/23 A5 (764)

Urging prompt UN investigations into grave human rights situation in Tibet

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16th December 2022

Your Excellency,

Tashi Delek! (Tibetan greetings)

Many congratulations on your appointment as the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights this year. I write to you on behalf of the Central Tibetan Administration and the Tibetan people, to draw your kind attention to some of the current most serious human rights violations in Tibet under the Chinese government. As you know, Tibet today is considered as one of the least free regions in the world and the critical situation of the Tibetan people under repressive Chinese policies is resulting in the systematic annihilation of the Tibetan language, religion, culture, and national identity and degradation of Tibet's environment.

Although such atrocities have been taking place since the occupation of Tibet in 1959, I would like to draw your kind attention today to some of the most pressing human rights concerns in Tibet under the Chinese Government. I strongly urge you and your Office to urgently investigate into these issues and call on the Chinese Government to end its repressive and discriminatory practices that completely contradict international human rights norms and legal provisions.

1. Colonial boarding schools in Tibet: Recent reports of China's extensive network of colonial-style boarding schools and preschools in Tibet is of serious concern as these boarding schools not only endanger the continuation and preservation of Tibetan language and culture but also violate multiple human rights internationally and nationally including the rights of the child. Nearly one million Tibetan children are in these "colonial" boarding schools and

students are separated from their families and subjected to the highly politicized and sinicized education systems and curricula, primarily being conducted in Mandarin Chinese. The extent and the grave impact of the “colonial” boarding school system have now been corroborated by first-hand accounts from inside Tibet, testimonies from Tibetans in exile who are survivors of the colonial boarding school system in Tibet, and data collected from and revealed in official sources and scholars. **Hence, I urge the High Commissioner’s Office to make a prompt investigation into these boarding schools and ensure that China respects the rights of the Tibetan people.**

2. Mass DNA Collection: Another area of concern in recent times has been the unrelenting reports of the mass DNA being collected without consent by Beijing authorities of Tibetan men and women of all social strata, including children as young as five years old. Despite official justification for the mass DNA collection drive as part of health programs, this is being considered as one of the most repressive tools for surveillance purposes to ensure social stability. According to the Humans Rights Watch report, DNA samples were collected from Tibetans ranging from children as young as five years old to elderly people up to 65 years old under the guise of a mass health program. According to Toronto-based research lab Citizen Lab, a total of 919,282 and 1,206,962 DNA samples have already been collected, accounting for an estimated one-fourth and one-third of the total population of the region between 2016 and 2022 TAR. **I urge the OHCHR to question China on the use or misuse of these DNA samples, the rationality and legality of subjecting Tibetan people, especially such young children and elderly people, to the mass DNA collections, and the subsequent invasion of their privacy and threat to their security.**

3. China’s Zero-COVID Policy: The dire situation and serious conditions created by Beijing’s failed Zero-COVID policy have led to unprecedented protests in some of the major cities in China and in Tibet in recent times. Particularly in Tibet, social media was flooded with criticism of the official mismanagement and mistreatment of Tibetans when Beijing authorities enforced strict COVID lockdowns across Tibet. Despite the fear of reprisals for exposing China’s failed Zero-COVID policy implementation, some Tibetans bravely came out and pleaded to the relevant authorities to provide hygienic food and healthcare, especially to those who were locked in mass quarantine camps. Following the outburst and backlash from the resident and the international community, Lhasa officials made a public apology for mishandling the COVID situation. As of today, Beijing authorities continue to make arrest of those Tibetans who have raised their concerns about the Zero-COVID policy in Lhasa. **I also urge you and your Office to call upon China to put an end to these miserable conditions under the name of the Zero-COVID policy in Tibet and China, and to press upon China to respond with empathy and provision of basic necessities to the residents instead of arresting those who risk their lives by demanding to improve that of fellow residents.**

4. Tibetans’ Self-Immolation Protests: Since 2009, Tibetans in Tibet have resorted to self-immolation to protest against the government of the People’s Republic of China. With no space to express their sufferings, they have been forced into this desperation to sacrifice their precious lives to get the attention of the international community to China’s atrocities in Tibet. To date, at least 157 reported case of Tibetans, from all walks of life ranging from as young as 15 years old to 81 years old, have burned themselves alive while calling for freedom and the return of

lives to get the attention of the international community to China's atrocities in Tibet. To date, at least 157 reported case of Tibetans, from all walks of life ranging from as young as 15 years old to 81 years old, have burned themselves alive while calling for freedom and the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Tibet, including Taphun from Ngaba who self-immolated most recently on 27 March 2022, and a young and popular Tibetan singer Tsewang Norbu in late February 2022. **Hence, I urge you and your Office to continue monitoring the human rights violations in Tibet by the Chinese Government, take cohesive measures where necessary, call out on China for its repressive policies, and to proactively take steps to ensure that the human rights of all, including Tibetans, are respected not just on papers.**

Therefore, I request your Office to treat these issues urgent and prompt investigation into these inconceivable policies of the PRC: Chinese government-run colonial boarding schools, the mass DNA collections, mismanaged Zero-COVID policy and the reasons behind the spate of self-immolations in Tibet. I urge you to also consider these issues under Item of Concern in the next Human Rights Council session and at other similar avenues. I also urge the High Commissioner's Office to extend its full support for the UN Special Procedures in gaining immediate and unrestricted access to the concerned areas to enable independent investigations and for the UN experts to gain insight into the ground situation in Tibet.

Once again, please accept my sincere congratulations on your appointment and as you lead the Office, may you continue to bring changes in the lives of many, be the voice of the most vulnerable – refugees and stateless people – and bring to account those responsible for egregious human rights violations. The Tibetan people around the world look forward to the UN OHCHR's attention and investigation into the ongoing serious rights violations of the Tibetan people by the Chinese Government.

Thank you.



Norzin Dolma
Kalon (Minister)

Department of Information and International Relations
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