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Verein Tibeter Jugend in Europa  
Tibetan Youth Association in Europe



21 SEPTEMBER 2023

Honorable Minister of Foreign Affairs,

We, a global coalition of over 143 Tibet-related organisations, are writing to you concerning the upcoming UN Human Rights Council election on 10 October in which China is running for a seat.

As you will be aware, members of the Human Rights Council are expected to maintain the highest standards of human rights and to fully cooperate with the Council, neither of which China has upheld.

To date, there are at least 25 outstanding visit requests to China by UN experts, some outstanding for over 15 years<sup>1</sup> while the last UN High Commissioner for Human Rights who was granted access to Tibet was Mary Robinson in 1998. Tibetans who have cooperated with the United Nations, its representative, and mechanisms have been subject to reprisals and intimidation by the Chinese government,<sup>2</sup> as noted by the UN Secretary General's report.<sup>3</sup>

At the same time, China has failed to respect and protect human rights, both at home and abroad, and repression in Tibet has gone from bad to worse. Tibet is ranked by Freedom House as the least free place in the world alongside Syria for civil and political rights.<sup>4</sup>

Over the past 12 months alone, multiple UN human rights bodies have raised alarm at the escalation of human rights abuses in Tibet, including the residential school system that has seen almost 1 million Tibetan children separated from their families and communities:<sup>5</sup>

- **In November 2022**, four Special Rapporteurs issued a joint 17-page communication<sup>6</sup> to China raising concern about the residential school system in Tibet and broader forced assimilation policies facing the Tibetan people.
- **In February 2023**, UN experts warned that this school system was “aimed at assimilating Tibetan people culturally, religiously and linguistically” through “a series of oppressive actions against Tibetan educational, religious and linguistic institutions”.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://spinternet.ohchr.org/ViewCountryVisits.aspx?visitType=all&country=CHN&Lang=en>

<sup>2</sup> Human Rights Watch, ‘The Costs of International Advocacy: China’s Interference in United Nations Human Rights Mechanisms’ 5 September 2017: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/09/05/costs-international-advocacy/chinas-interference-united-nations-human-rights>

<sup>3</sup> Reporting mandate of the Secretary-General on intimidation and reprisals for cooperation with the UN in the field of human rights, available at: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Reprisals/Pages/Reporting.aspx>

<sup>4</sup> ‘Freedom in the World 2023’, Freedom House, 9 March 2023: <https://freedomhouse.org/country/tibet/freedom-world/2023>

<sup>5</sup> ‘Separated From Their Families, Hidden From the World: China’s Vast System of Colonial Boarding Schools Inside Tibet’, Tibet Action Institute, 2021: [https://tibetaction.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2021\\_TAI\\_ColonialBoardingSchoolReport\\_Digital.pdf](https://tibetaction.net/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/2021_TAI_ColonialBoardingSchoolReport_Digital.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> <https://spcommreports.ohchr.org/TMResultsBase/DownloadPublicCommunicationFile?gl=27444>

<sup>7</sup> OHCHR, China: UN experts alarmed by separation of 1 million Tibetan children from families and forced assimilation at residential schools, 6 February 2023: [https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/02/china-un-experts-alarmed-separation-1-million-tibetan-children-families-and#:~:text=GENEVA%20\(6%20February%202023\)%20-%2C%20UN%20experts\\*%20warned%20today](https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/02/china-un-experts-alarmed-separation-1-million-tibetan-children-families-and#:~:text=GENEVA%20(6%20February%202023)%20-%2C%20UN%20experts*%20warned%20today)

- **In March 2023**, the UN Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights called for the coercive residential school system in Tibet to be immediately abolished and raised concerns over the use of the Tibetan language instruction in Tibetan schools.<sup>8</sup>
- **In April 2023**, six Special Rapporteurs issued a communication to China raising concern about the extensive labour transfer programme in Tibet that poses “serious concerns regarding the voluntary nature of the programme” and the risks it is posing to the Tibetan language, cultural practices and religion.<sup>9</sup>
- **In May 2023**, the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women<sup>10</sup> called on China to abolish the residential school system imposed on Tibetan girls; authorise the establishment of and subsidise private Tibetan schools; ensure that Tibetan women and girls have access to instruction in their mother tongue; and reverse the closure of schools providing instruction in the Tibetan language.
- **In August 2023**, three UN experts called on China to share information concerning nine Tibetan environmental human rights defenders serving prison sentences in relation to “their peaceful work to protect the area’s fragile environment”. The Special Rapporteurs stated they believe the “lack of information provided by Chinese authorities could be seen as a deliberate attempt to make the world forget about these human rights defenders as they spend year after year in isolation.”<sup>11</sup>

This growing catalogue of assault on human rights coupled with abject failures to cooperate with the United Nations, and systematic efforts to undermine freedoms globally, make it utterly untenable for UN Member States to support China’s election bid.

Granting China a seat at the Council will undercut the Council’s credibility and send a dangerous signal that the Human Rights Council is not fit for the purpose it was created.

In the interest of safeguarding the integrity of the Human Rights Council and fulfilling the vision of its creators, we urge your delegation to the UN General Assembly to apply the membership criteria of its own resolution when casting their secret ballots; China clearly falls very short of those standards. We also call on your government to commit itself publicly to support a competitive, genuinely contested and principled electoral process for Human Rights Council elections.

Yours sincerely

**Gloria Montgomery**  
UN Advocacy Director  
Tibet Justice Center

**Mandie McKeown**  
Executive Director  
International Tibet Network

**Pema Doma**  
Executive Director  
Students for a Free Tibet

**Tenzin Zöchbauer**  
Executive Director  
Tibet Initiative Deutschland

**Lhadon Tethong**  
Director  
Tibet Action Institute

**Tsering Gonpa**  
President  
Tibetan Youth Association Europe

**On behalf of the Member Groups of the International Tibet Network listed below:**

<sup>8</sup> Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Concluding Observations, 6 March 2023:

[https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=E%2FC.12%2FCHN%2FCO%2F3&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=E%2FC.12%2FCHN%2FCO%2F3&Lang=en)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/04/china-vocational-training-programmes-threaten-tibetan-identity-carry-risk>

<sup>10</sup> Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, Concluding Observations, 30 May 2023:

[https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW%2FC%2FCHN%2FCO%2F9&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW%2FC%2FCHN%2FCO%2F9&Lang=en)

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/08/china-un-experts-seek-clarification-about-nine-imprisoned-tibetan-human>

<p>Aide aux Refugies Tibetains  Alaskans for Tibet  Amigos de Tibet, Colômbia  Amigos de Tibet, La Unión Chile  Amigos del Tibet, El Salvador  Amigos del Tibet, Santiago de Chile  Anterrashtriya Bharat - Tibbet Sahyog Samiti  Asociación Cultural Peruano Tibetana  Asociación Cultural Tibetano Costarricense  Association Cognizance Tibet, North Carolina  Association Drôme Ardèche-Tibet  Associazione Italia-Tibet  Australia Tibet Council  Baljara Foundation - Maharashtra  Bay Area Friends of Tibet  Bharat Tibbat Sahyog Manch  Bharat Tibbat Samanvay Sangh  Bharat Tibet Sangh - India  Bharat Tibet Sangh - Jammu  Bharrat Tibbat Samvad Manch, India  Boston Tibet Network  Briancon05 Urgence Tibet  CADAL  Canada Tibet Committee  Casa del Tibet – Spain  Casa Tibet México  Centro Cultural Columbo Tibetano  Centro De Cultura Tibetana, Brazil  Centro para la Apertura y el Desarrollo de América Latina  Circle of Friends (Philippines)  Comité de Apoyo al Tibet (CAT)  Committee of 100 for Tibet  Core Group for Tibetan Cause, India  Czechs Support Tibet  Dream for Children, Japan  EcoTibet Ireland  Foundation for Universal Responsibility of H. H. the Dalai Lama  France-Tibet  Free Indo-Pacific Alliance  Free Tibet  Free Tibet Fukuoka  Friends of Tibet Costa Rica  Friends of Tibet in Bulgaria  Friends of Tibet in Finland  Friends of Tibet New Zealand  Ganasamannay Kolkata  Grupo de Apoio ao Tibete, Portugal  Himalayan Committee for Action on Tibet - Kinnaur  Human Rights Network for Tibet &amp; Taiwan  India Tibet Friendship Society  India Tibet Friendship Society - Bihar  India Tibet Friendship Society - Dashthrapuni  India Tibet Friendship Society - Delhi  India Tibet Friendship Society - Muzaffarpur  International Campaign for Tibet  International Society for Human Rights Munich Chapter  International Tibet Independence Movement  Israeli friends of the Tibetan People  Jal Kalyan Seva Samiti, Rajasthan  Japan Association of Monks for Tibet (Super Sangha)  Le Club Français - Paraguay  Les Amis du Tibet Luxembourg  Liberté au Tibet (Colmar, France)  Lions Des Neiges Mont Blanc, France  LUNGTA – Actief voor Tibet  Maison des Himalayas  Maison du Tibet – Tibet Info  National Campaign for Free Tibet Support, India</p>	<p>National Democratic Party of Tibet  Objectif Tibet  Passeport Tibetain  Phagma Drolma-Arya Tara  RangZen: Movimento Tibete Livre, Brasil  RBA Réseau Bouddhisme et Action, France  Roof of the World Foundation, Indonesia  Sakya Trinley Ling  Santa Barbara Friends of Tibet  Save Tibet Foundation  Save Tibet, Austria  SFT Japan  SFT Taiwan  SFT-India  Sierra Friends of Tibet  Students for a Free Tibet – Canada  Students for a Free Tibet – France  Students for a Free Tibet Denmark  Swedish Tibet Committee  Swiss Tibetan Friendship Association (GSTF)  Taiwan Friends of Tibet  Tashi Delek Bordeaux  The Global Alliance for Tibet &amp; Persecuted Minorities  The Norwegian Tibet Committee  The Youth Liberation Front of Tibet, East-Turkestan, Manchuria &amp; Inner-Mongolia  Tibet Action Group of Western Australia  Tibet cesky (Tibet in Czech)  Tibet Committee of Fairbanks  Tibet Friendship and Cooperation Society  Tibet Group, Panama  Tibet Lives  Tibet Patria Libre, Uruguay  Tibet Rescue Initiative in Africa  Tibet Society of South Africa  Tibet Solidarity  Tibet Support Association Hungary  Tibet Support Committee Denmark  Tibet Support Group – Netherlands  Tibet Support Group Adelaide - Australia  Tibet Support Group Ireland  Tibet Support Group Kenya  Tibet Support Group Kiku, Japan  Tibet Support Group, Costa Rica  Tibetan Association of Germany  Tibetan Association of Ithaca  Tibetan Association of Northern California  Tibetan Association of Philadelphia  Tibetan Community Austria  Tibetan Community in Australia (Queensland)  Tibetan Community in Britain  Tibetan Community in Denmark  Tibetan Community in France  Tibetan Community in Ireland  Tibetan Community in Japan  Tibetan Community of Australia (Victoria)  Tibetan Community of Italy  Tibetan Community Sweden  Tibetan Cultural Association – Quebec  Tibetan Programme of The Other Space Foundation  Tibetan Women's Association (Central)  Tibetans of Mixed Heritage  Tibetisches Zentrum Hamburg  TIBETmichigan  TSG – Slovenia  U.S. Tibet Committee  United Nations for a Free Tibet (UNFFT)  Voces de Tibet, México  World League for Freedom and Democracy</p>
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