



## INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

### **17<sup>th</sup> Session of the Forum on Minority Issues 28-29 November 2024 – Geneva**

Minority representation and self-representation in public spaces and discourses

#### **Statement by the International Campaign for Tibet**

Mr. Chair,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The International Campaign for Tibet would like to draw the Forum's attention to the systematic erasure of the Tibetan people's identity within China's education system.

In recent years, education has been increasingly weaponized by the Chinese government as a tool for its assimilationist agenda in Tibet. In this context, Tibetan children in state-run schools are primarily taught in Mandarin, with a curriculum that lacks cultural relevance to them. They are presented with a distorted view of their culture and history, in which their way of life is denigrated as backward, their revered spiritual leader the Dalai Lama vilified, and their history manipulated to align with the ideology and interests of the Chinese Communist Party.<sup>1</sup> This is not education, but indoctrination aimed at severing young Tibetans from their very roots.

This is compounded by a coercive boarding school system that separates Tibetan children as young as 4 from their families and communities, alienating them further from their culture and traditions and leading to deep psychological trauma and loss of identity.

At the same time, private-run schools that still allowed parents to educate their children in their native language and culture have been increasingly forced to shut down. Monastic schools, once bastions of education and transmission of Buddhist heritage, have been particularly targeted.<sup>2</sup>

These policies constitute a grave violation of Tibetan children's rights, as highlighted by multiple UN human rights treaty bodies and Special procedures. They also pose an

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<sup>1</sup> As one former Tibetan student noted: *"Our teachers drove us to hate our heritage, our elders, and even our parents... We felt ashamed of our cultural background; we developed an antipathy to our socio-cultural world itself."* Huatse Gyal, 2021, 'Our Indigenous Land is Not a Wasteland', American Ethnologist website, 6 February 2021, <https://americanethnologist.org/features/reflections/our-indigenous-land-is-not-a-wasteland>.

<sup>2</sup> A recent example is the closure of the Taksang Lhamo monastic school, located in Dzoge (Chinese: Ruò'ěrgài) County in Ngaba Prefecture, Sichuan. Monastic schools in Ngaba targeted amid crackdown on Tibetan-language education, International Campaign for Tibet, 8 November 2024, <https://savetibet.org/monastic-schools-in-ngaba-targeted-amid-crackdown-on-tibetan-language-education>.

existential threat to Tibet's ancient and rich culture - a culture of compassion and harmony that is more relevant than ever in these troubled times.

Education should value cultural diversity, not destroy it. Tibetan children deserve to grow up in an environment that allows them to know who they are, and where they come from and to be proud of their heritage.

We therefore urge the Chinese government to respect the rights of Tibetan children guaranteed by international law, such as the UN Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, both of which China has ratified.

Thank you.

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### **About ICT**

Founded in 1988, and with offices in Washington DC, Amsterdam, Berlin and Brussels, the International Campaign for Tibet works to promote human rights and democratic freedoms for the people of Tibet.



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