



UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights – 52<sup>nd</sup> session

**Item 3 – Substantive issues arising in the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**

**People’s Republic of China**

**Oral statement**

Mr. Chairman,

The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) is deeply concerned about the deterioration of economic, social and cultural rights in Tibet since China’s last review under the International Covenant for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) in 2005. Conditions for the Tibetan people have worsened in all spheres of life due to the intensification of repressive policies and laws implemented by the Chinese government, *de facto* curtailing their right to self-determination, as outlined in Article 1 of the ICESCR, and violating many others.

Let me go through some of the main ones.

Article 11 – The right to an adequate standard of living, as defined in the ICESCR, includes adequate food, clothing and housing. Forced evictions, defined as permanent or temporary removal against their will of individuals from the homes and land which they occupy, without the provision of, and access to, appropriate forms of legal or other protection, are a violation of the right to housing.<sup>1</sup>

In Tibet, the implementation of Chinese policies to relocate Tibetan nomads in remote settlements and urban areas is a threat to the survival of an ancient way of life that is integral to Tibetan identity as well as the livelihoods of Tibetan nomads, resulting into the violation of further rights, such as the right to work. Resettlement policies in Tibet are usually carried out without consultation or consent, and local people have no right to challenge them or refuse to participate.

Article 13 – The right to education

The Chinese government claims that it promotes education in ethnic minority regions and that 94.7% of all ethnic counties achieved nine-year compulsory education.<sup>2</sup>

On paper, the number of educational institutions in Tibet has increased. However, the quality of education appears to offer little benefit to Tibetan children. Most schools in Tibet are Chinese-centric environments. The official language in most classrooms is Mandarin, which

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<sup>1</sup> CESCR, General Comment No. 7: The right to adequate housing: forced evictions, 1997

<sup>2</sup> E/C.12/CHN/2, China’s report Implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, July 2012

is not only difficult for Tibetan children to understand, as about 80% of Tibetans<sup>3</sup> do not speak Mandarin, but also leads to the assimilation of Tibetans into Chinese culture, whether intentionally or unintentionally.

In November 2012 thousands of Tibetan tertiary students protested against issues including the government language policy. In April 2013, eight of these students were sentenced to up to four years in prison.<sup>4</sup>

Article 15 – The right to cultural life requires non-interference with the exercise of cultural practices as well as positive action from the State party.<sup>5</sup>

Tibetan culture is closely linked to Tibetan Buddhism. China stated that it pursues a policy of freedom of religious belief and that its laws provide legal safeguards in this regard, giving equal treatment to every religion and denomination.<sup>6</sup>

However, over the past years in addition to the worsening of repression of religious freedom in Tibet, the Communist Chinese Government has also been controlling the deeply spiritual Tibetan religious practices. Chinese authorities have strengthened monastic management teams in Tibetan monasteries and tightened surveillance mechanisms. Monks and nuns are regularly subjected to patriotic education programs where they are forced to read propaganda literature denouncing the Dalai Lama.

In addition, since the protests of Spring 2008 across the Tibetan plateau, Tibetan writers, singers and artists have been the target of a drive against Tibetan culture in which almost any expression of Tibetan identity not validated by the state can be branded as ‘splittist’. Many of them have been imprisoned for engaging in ‘separatist activities’.<sup>7</sup>

We would like to reiterate the importance of the indivisibility of all human rights and call upon the Committee on ESCR to urge the People’s Republic of China to swiftly take all appropriate steps to ensure all economic, social and cultural rights of the Tibetan people.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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<sup>3</sup> ICT briefing paper “Education in Tibet”:

<http://www.savetibet.org/files/documents/Education%20in%20Tibet%20paper.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, Chabcha Student Protesters Sentenced Up To Four Years, April 2013 (<http://www.tchrd.org/2013/04/chabcha-student-protesters-sentenced-up-to-four-years/>)

<sup>5</sup> CESCR, General Comment No. 21: The right of everyone to take part in cultural life, 2009

<sup>6</sup> E/C.12/CHN/2, China’s report Implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, July 2012

<sup>7</sup> ICT, “A Raging Storm. Crackdown on Tibetan Writers and Artists After Tibet’s Spring 2008 Protests”, May 2010 ([http://www.savetibet.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Raging\\_Storm\\_complete.pdf](http://www.savetibet.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Raging_Storm_complete.pdf))