

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Human Rights Council

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Item 4: General Debate - Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Statement delivered by Mélanie Blondelle on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (HFHR)

The Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights would like to draw the attention of the Council to the continued violations of the human rights of the Tibetan people by the People's Republic of China (PRC), and in particular to the restrictions on religious freedom in Tibet.

Since 2008, the Chinese authorities have instilled an oppressive environment in Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and nunneries – an approach in which the state recognizes no limits to its authority, and strives to regulate every aspect of the religious life. This involves:

- The imposition of stringent political education campaigns in monasteries, nunneries, schools and across lay society
- A virulent campaign against the Dalai Lama as the Chinese Communist Party authorities seek to undermine loyalty to him across Tibet
- Police stations in monasteries and nunneries and lay officials in charge of religious affairs
- Systematic measures by the government to control reincarnation, which is at the heart of Tibetan religious tradition
- Restrictions on pilgrimage to sacred sites and new measures preventing Tibetans from attending teachings of the Dalai Lama in exile
- Torture and imprisonment of monks and nuns for even mild and moderate expressions of Tibetan identity or peaceful dissent.

We note that the High Commissioner for Human Rights, in his opening statement, expressed his “deep concern regarding the enforced disappearances and deaths in custody of members of ethnic and religious communities in China”.

In particular, we are concerned about the recent wave of demolitions of monks' and nuns' homes at the Tibetan Buddhist institute of Larung Gar in eastern Tibet (Sichuan), one of the world's largest and most renowned Buddhist institutes.

Larung Gar is a peaceful and vibrant centre of Buddhist teachings where Tibetans and Chinese from across the PRC gather to study and meditate under the guidance of respected Tibetan lamas. We are concerned that the religious authorities appear to have been excluded from decision making on the future of this religious institute. It is essential that adequate compensation and rehousing are made to those who lost their homes due to demolition, and that monks and nuns are allowed to stay and to peacefully practise their religious studies. Their safety and welfare are of paramount importance.

The UN Human Rights Council must also urge China to allow a visit of the HCHR to Tibet, in particular to Larung Gar or to a Buddhist religious centre of his choosing.

Thank you, Mr. President.