

GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
Human Rights Council  
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**Item 3: Interactive Dialogue –Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights**

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

Madam President,

We wish to thank the Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights for expressing concern about human rights violations perpetrated against cultural rights defenders. This critical work ensures that persons who defend the right to practice their culture are not silenced.

In the People's Republic of China, Tibetan culture is treated as a threat. On 11 January, the Tibet Autonomous Region adopted ethnic unity regulations that seek to reduce ethnic differences between Tibetans and Chinese and enforce a Han-centric society in Tibet. These measures threaten the survival of Tibetan culture in Tibet.

Tibetan cultural rights defenders who advocate for the use of Tibetan language are imprisoned. Blogger and founder of the Tibetan language website Chomei (butterlamp) Kunchog Tsephel was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment for 'disclosing state secrets.' Tibetan language activist Tashi Wangchuk has been in prison since 2015 on charges of inciting separatism. Bonkho Kyi was arrested in 2015 for organising a picnic in Aba to celebrate the 80th birthday of the Dalai Lama. We thank the Rapporteur for bringing this case, together with 8 others, to the attention of China.

We urge the Special Rapporteur to continue to raise the mistreatment of Tibetan cultural rights defenders with the Chinese authorities and to urge China to comply with their own laws and international treaties that they have ratified.

We must hold China accountable for the deliberate destruction of Tibetan culture.

Thank you, Madam President.

END