

GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
**Human Rights Council**  
Forty-Fourth Regular Session  
July 10, 2020

**Item 3: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression**

*Statement delivered by Christa Meindersma on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights*

Mr. President,

We thank the Special Rapporteur for his report, and in particular for highlighting that the COVID-19 virus can be a “pathogen of repression.”

This has notably been the case in the People’s Republic of China, where the government has used its campaign against the virus as an excuse to keep up its repression of the Tibetan people in the name of “maintaining stability”.

The police cracked down on Tibetan netizens who made statements about the outbreak, including a man named Tse from the city of Chamdo who posted a message on WeChat urging people to recite a prayer in order to ward off infection. He was given seven days in administrative detention.<sup>1</sup>

Beyond the health crisis, we draw the attention of the Council to measures to combat ‘illegal content’ in the Tibet Autonomous Region adopted last year. The measures stipulate as illegal content that advocates for the Dalai Lama’s Middle Way approach. This criminalizes in effect any peaceful criticism of Chinese policies, and is a blatant violation of Tibetans’ right to freedom of expression.<sup>2</sup>

To discuss a peaceful solution for the situation in Tibet should not be a punishable crime.

We call on the Human Rights Council to urge China to revise measures that infringe on freedom of expression of Tibetans and bring them in conformity with international human rights law.

Thank you, Mr. President.

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Coronavirus response in Tibet: arrests, crackdown, religious repression’, International Campaign for Tibet, 13 February 2020, <https://savetibet.org/coronavirus-response-in-tibet-arrests-crackdown-religious-repression/>.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Anti-porn measures criminalize discussion of Tibetan autonomy’, International Campaign for Tibet, 6 April 2020, <https://savetibet.org/anti-porn-measures-criminalize-discussion-of-tibetan-autonomy/>.