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# Civil Society submission on the People's Republic of China's Ninth Periodic Review of China on Implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

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*Submitted to the*
*UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)*
*for consideration at the 85th Session (8 to 26 May 2023)*

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**Brief Introduction:**

This submission is made by the Tibetan Women's Organization (TWA) to shed light on situation of Tibetan women currently under the control of the government of People's Republic of China for the consideration of 85th review session by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

The submission focuses on systematic discrimination and denial of fundamental rights of Tibetan women in Tibet. Despite under hardline policies and discriminatory practices of the government of People's Republic of China, Tibetan women in Tibet continues to stand up for fundamental rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), in particular, in line with the Convention Against Elimination of Discrimination Against Women.

The situation of women in the world continues to be worrisome, and the women under totalitarian regime, for instance Tibetan women, need more protection. Because, the violations of their rights are often underreported, their voices are silenced and suppressed systematically.
This submission is made with the hope that the voices and sufferings of Tibetan women will be heard by the UN Committee to Eliminate the Discrimination Against Women. Names of witnesses account of Tibetan women, included in the report, are indicated initials, as per established practices of the UN.
The submission concludes with list of suggested questions for the Committee to ask China, and assess the ground situation of Tibetan women in Tibet, who continue to suffer under the government of China.

**About the Submitting Organization[1]:**

The Tibetan Women's Association (TWA) was formed on 12 March 1959 in Tibet, when thousands of Tibetan women in Lhasa gathered spontaneously in protest against the military occupation of Tibet by People's Republic of China. The Chinese troops crushed the peaceful women protestors, brutally. They were arrested, imprisoned, tortured and many died.

Following the Tibetan national uprising on 10 March 1959 and Tibetan Women Uprising on 12 March 1959, an estimated of 80,000 Tibetans, including women and girls, fled Tibet to escape from Chinese persecution.

On the 10th of Septemeber 1984, the Tibetan Women's Association was officially reinstated in India. Today, the organization has over 20,000 members with 58 branches spread across the world. The organization advocates for fundamental rights of Tibetan Women in Tibet while working to empower those in exile. Since its inception in exile, the organization has reached out to United Nations and international community to help protect fundamental rights of Tibetans, in particular rights of Tibetan women. The organization monitors, research and publish reports on situation of women inside Tibet.

1 The detailed information about the organization is available at https://tibetanwomen.org/about-us/

**Situation of Tibetan Women, including Systematic Discrimination Against Women, in Tibet**

Since Tibet came under occupation of China in the1950's, every facet of fundamental rights of Tibetans are violated by the government of China. Tibetan women have been at the forefront of the Tibetan people's non-violent struggle for freedom. Under pervasive control in Tibet by the People's Republic of China, Tibetan women are further marginalized and disempowered from taking part in social, economic and cultural life in Tibet. Any form of conventional peaceful expression of thoughts and grievances are suppressed brutally. Due to which, since 2009, over 159 Tibetans, including Tibetan women, have resorted to self-immolation protests calling for freedom in Tibet and return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Tibet.

Details of 24 known cases of self-immolation protests by Tibetan women in Tibet are as follow:

| S.No | Name | Age | Date of Self-immolation | Current Status |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | TW | 20 | 17/10/2011 | Died on 17/10/2011 |
| 2 | PC | 35 | 03/11/2011 | Died on 03/11/2011 |
| 3 | TC | 18 | 11/02/12 | Died on 11/02/12 |
| 4 | TK | 20 | 03/03/12 | Died on 03/03/12 |
| 5 | RK | 32 | 04/03/12 | Died on 04/03/12 |
| 6 | A | 25 | 6/4/2012 | Died on 6/4/2012 |
| 7 | R | 36 | 30/5/2012 | Died on 30/5/2012 |
| 8 | DC | 40s | 27/6/2012 | Injured and whereabouts unknown |
| 9 | DT | 26 | 7/08/ 2012 | Died on 7 August 2012 |
| 10 | PL | 62 | 13/09/2012 | UnKnown |
| 11 | TT | 23 | 7/11/2012 | Died on 7/11/2012 |
| 12 | TD | 23 | 15/11/2012 | Died on 15/11/2012 |
| 13 | CK | | 17/11/2012 | Died on 17/11/2012 |
| 14 | SD | 17 | 25/11/2012 | Died on 25/11/2012 |
| 15 | BK | 17 | 9/12/2012 | Died on 9/12/2012 |
| 16 | KW | 30s | 13/3/2013 | Died 13/3/2013 |
| 17 | K | 30 | 24/3/2013 | Died 24/3/2013 |
| 18 | J | 20 | 16/04/2013 | Died on 16/04/2013 |
| 19 | WD | 31 | 11/06/2013 | Died on 14/06/2013 |
| 20 | D | | 29/03/2014 | Unknown |
| 21 | T | 19 | 22/12/2014 | Died on 22/12/2014 |
| 22 | N | 47 | 05/03/2015 | Died on 05/03/2015 |
| 23 | YK | 47 | 08/04/2015 | Died on 08/04/2015 |

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| 24 | ST | 36 | 27/05/2015 | Died on 27/05/2015 |
| 25 | TK | 55 | 27/08/2015 | Died on 28/08/2015 |
| 26 | ST | around 50s | 23/03/2016 | Died on 23/03/2016 |

**Gender Based Discrimination in Tibet:**

China claims to have made considerable improvement in the field of education, economic, healthcare, and equal employment rights. Testimonies and research conducted by TWA have revealed different realties, far from China's claim. In particular, Tibetan women continue to face multiple challenges for securing equal opportunity in the field of education, economic activities and gender-specific hiring and recruitment practices. The discrimination against Tibetans in Tibet is widespread. Additionally, Tibetan women are often discriminated against compared to both men and Chinese women[2].

Tibetans have been subject to social and political oppression, forced population displacement, systematic discrimination on the basis of gender and religion, mass arrests and torture. Testimonies and witness accounts indicate that women in Tibet are often subject to more severe punishment in prisons. Witnesses' accounts of Tibetan nuns in the Drapchi Prison uncovered "sense organs, such as tongue and ears, body cavities and sexual areas, especially on females, have been routine points of application for electric shocks"[3].

Interviews conducted by TWA for years to assess the status of Tibetan women in Tibet have revealed a worrisome situation.

For instance, the job advertisements such as:

*'Hiring waiters and waitresses. Tibetan 30 yuan/day, Han [Chinese] 50 yuan/day.' Another announcement: 'Seeking servers. Tibetans do not attend*....'[4] mirrors the extent of discrimination against Tibetans, including women, perpetrated by China in Tibet. Similarly, a 23-year-old Tibetan woman who managed to escape from Tibet said "within the company I worked for, all executives were Chinese, with Tibetans being forced to occupy lower job categories"[5].

A young Tibetan woman, who graduated from a university in Guangzhou, shared during an interview for a report by the TWA that as a public servant, she is not allowed to go to the monastery or show signs of devotion. Up at five o'clock in the morning, she wraps herself in a long coat, puts on dark glasses,

2 Violence and Discrimination Against Tibetan Women, an assessment conducted by Tibet Justice Center, available at

3 Rukhag 3 The Nuns of Drapchi Prison by Steven D.Marshall, published by Tibet Information Network, available on https://www.savetibet.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Rukhag3.pdf

4 Ibid

5 The Status of Tibetan Women in Tibet Mirrors China's Critical Disengagement with its National and International Commitments, A comprehensive Report by Tibetan Women Association published in 2013. Page-33

[and] covers her face with a dust mask. She then leaves in the darkness of the night to make circumambulations of the Potala, in defiance of her bosses".[6]

Similarly, Tibetan women political prisoners are subject to discrimination and unfair treatment by the Chinese prison authorities.

J, one of the most prominent Tibetan woman writers and political prisoners, uncovered horrific sequence of harassment and torture inflicted on her by the Chinese prison authorities. She said:

*" Chinese are allowed to write articles but we Tibetans are not even allowed to create them. Months and years have gone by and it's now been almost 10 years but there is no respite and no end to this [harassment]: disrupting my mental peace, disturbing my livelihood, and harassing my family and children. What is the aim behind this constant attempt to destroy our livelihood? Why? Why? This land is my fatherland and motherland, and yet I live here like a prisoner on the run".*[7]

**Widespread discrimination Against Tibetan Women:**

State-led deep rooted discriminatory practices and policies, such as interethnic marriages, make Tibetan women more vulnerable to forced marriages, sexual violence and harassment.

Tibetan Buddhism has been a core element of Tibetan cultural identity. Tibetan cultural way of life is heavily influenced and shaped by Tibetan Buddhism. In the civilization of Tibetan cultural identity and religious life, Tibetan nuns have played a significant role in However, the government of China has instituted consistent repressive policies against the practice of Tibetan Buddhism with intense regulation and control over religious institutions. Furthermore, Tibetan nuns have been at forefront to protect and preserve the fundamental religious and cultural rights of Tibetans. Due to which, Tibetan nunneries have suffered systematic oppression by China, including demolitions and forcible closure. Hundreds of Tibetan nuns were expelled from one of the largest Buddhist learning centers for Tibetan Buddhist nuns Yachen Gar situated in Serthar (Ch:Seda) county in Kardze (Ch: Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, commonly known as "city of nun" since 2017[8].

The nuns evicted from Yachen Gar Buddhist learning institute were required to undergo patriotic education sessions involving singing songs in praise of the party and "motherland" dressed in military uniform[9]. This is not only a violation of their monastic vows but also the highest level of humiliation a nun can face.

Saddened by the demolition of the institution, three Tibetan nuns– Rigzin Dolma, Tsering Dolma and Semgha, committed suicide and left notes referring to the demolitions and Government "harassment."

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6 Ibid

7 A sequence of Tortures: A Diary of Interrogations, published by the Tibetan Women Association in 2017.

8 Large-Scale Demolition Begins at Yachen Gar Tibetan Buddhist Center. RFA reports available at https://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/demolition-07272019091153.html

9 Party Above Buddhism: China's Surveillance and Control of Tibetan Monasteries and Nunneries. https://savetibet.org/party-above-buddhism/

**Restrictions and Discrimination Against Tibetans in Tibet:**

Under the pretext of "bilingual education", Tibetan language as a medium of instruction has been completely removed and replaced into Mandarin. Tibetan children are forcibly separated from their families and placed into Chinese colonial style boarding schools. Tibetan parents who refuse to send their children to state-run boarding schools face severe consequences, including being denied government social support such as health care, the right to register in any school and others.

More disturbingly, rampant cases of rape, sexual harassment, beatings and bullying in are reported in the colonial style boarding schools in Tibet[10].

Tibetans, especially ordinary Tibetans, are virtually made impossible to obtain passports to travel outside of Tibet. Human Rights Watch's well documented report on challenges faced by Tibetans for getting a passport mirrors prevalence of discrimination faced by Tibetans and other so called "minority" groups. The report revealed two track systems of issuing passports by China: one that is quick and straightforward, and another system that is extremely slow[11].

All areas of Tibetans inhabitant are not permitted for availing fast-track passport processing; subjected to extremely long delays, often lasting several years, before passports are issued, or are routinely denied passports for no valid reason. The two-track passport system thus allows Chinese to travel abroad easily, but denies Tibetans, and other ethnic groups under the control of China, access to foreign travel.

**Tibetan Women Organization suggests the Committee to ask China:**

1. How will the government of China ensure respect to the fundamental rights of Tibetan people, including freedom to practice culture, religion and language?
2. How will the government of China ensure equal opportunity and participation of Tibetan women in all government positions, especially in the leadership and decision-making positions?
3. What steps will the Chinese government take to abolish restriction and discrimination against Tibetans?
4. How will the Chinese government ensure that Tibetans can enjoy and exercise their fundamental rights, free from reprisal, in the field of employment opportunity, political participation, religious activities and travel within and outside of Tibet and China?
5. How will the Chinese government end colonial style boarding schools in Tibet?

10 Separated from their families, Hidden from the World: China's vast system of colonial boarding schools inside Tibet. Report by Tibet Action Institute. Available at https://s7712.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/ColonialBoardingSchoolReport2021.pdf

11 One Passport, Two Systems: China's Restriction on Foreign Travel by Tibetans and Others" available at https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/report_pdf/tibet0715_4up_0.pdf

6. How does the Chinese government ensure Tibetans are allowed and able to study in the Tibetan language?
7. Will the Chinese government repeal discriminatory practices of issuing passports for Tibetans and uphold the rights of Tibetans to enjoy and exercise equal freedom of movement as that of Han-Chinese?
8. Will the Chinese government stop persecution of Tibetan women for their religious studies, expression of thoughts and asserting their cultural identity?
9. What steps will the Chinese government take to ensure that Tibetan women are not subjected to sexual harassment, sexual violence and forced marriages resulting from state-led interethnic marriages propagation?
10. How does the Chinese government ensure to stop destruction and demolition of Tibetan religious centers, monasteries and nunneries?

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