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2020 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: China (Tibet)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

ANNOUNCEMENT: The Department of State will release an addendum to this report in mid 2021 that expands the subsection on Women in Section 6 to include a broader range of issues related to reproductive rights.

The majority of ethnic Tibetans in the People’s Republic of China live in the Tibetan Autonomous Region and Tibetan autonomous prefectures and counties in Sichuan, Qinghai, Yunnan, and Gansu provinces. The Chinese Communist Party’s Central Committee exercises paramount authority over Tibetan areas. As in other predominantly minority areas of the People’s Republic of China, ethnic Han Chinese members of the party held the overwhelming majority of top party, government, police, and military positions in the autonomous region and other Tibetan areas. Ultimate authority rests with the 25-member Political Bureau (Politburo) of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee and its seven-member Standing Committee in Beijing, neither of which had any Tibetan members.

The main domestic security agencies include the Ministry of State Security, the Ministry of Public Security, and the People’s Armed Police. The People’s Armed Police continue to be under the dual authority of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Central Military Commission. The People’s Liberation Army is primarily responsible for external security but also has some domestic security responsibilities. Local jurisdictions also frequently use civilian municipal security forces, known as “urban management” officials, to enforce administrative measures. Civilian authorities maintained effective control of the security forces. Members of the security forces committed numerous abuses.

Significant human rights issues included: torture and cases of cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment or punishment by the government; arbitrary arrest or detention; political prisoners; politically motivated reprisal against individuals located outside the country; serious problems with the independence of the judiciary; arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy; serious restrictions on free expression, the press, and the internet, including censorship and site blocking; substantial interference with the freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association; severe restrictions on religious freedom, despite nominal constitutional protections voided by regulations restricting religious freedom and effectively placing Tibetan Buddhism under central government control; severe restrictions on freedom of movement; the inability of citizens to change their government peacefully through free and fair elections; restrictions on political participation; serious acts of corruption; coerced abortion or forced sterilization; and violence or threats of violence targeting indigenous persons.

Disciplinary procedures for officials were opaque, and there was no publicly available information to indicate senior officials punished security personnel or other authorities for behavior defined under laws and regulations of the People’s Republic of China as abuses of power and authority.

Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom from:

a. Arbitrary Deprivation of Life and Other Unlawful or Politically Motivated Killings

There were no public reports or credible allegations the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings. There were no reports that officials investigated or punished those responsible for unlawful killings in previous years.

b. Disappearance

Unlike in previous years, there were no public reports or credible allegations of new disappearances carried out by authorities or their agents.

Derung Tsering Dhundrup, a senior Tibetan scholar who was also the deputy secretary of the Sichuan Tibet Studies Society, was reportedly detained in June 2019, and his whereabouts remained unknown as of December. Gen Sonam, a senior manager of the Potala Palace, was reportedly detained in July 2019, and his whereabouts were unknown as of December.

The whereabouts of the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the second most prominent figure after the Dalai Lama in Tibetan Buddhism's Gelug school, remained unknown. Neither he nor his parents have been seen since People's Republic of China (PRC) authorities disappeared them in 1995, when he was six years old. In May shortly after the 25th anniversary of his abduction, a PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson stated the Panchen Lama was a college graduate with a job and that neither he nor his family wished to be disturbed in their "current normal lives." The spokesperson did not provide any further specifics.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

According to credible sources, police and prison authorities employed torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment in dealing with some detainees and prisoners. There were reports that PRC officials severely beat some Tibetans who were incarcerated or otherwise in custody. Lhamo, a Tibetan herder, was reportedly detained by police in June for sending money to India; in August he died in a hospital after being tortured in custody in Nagchu Prefecture, Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR).

Reports from released prisoners indicated some were permanently disabled or in extremely poor health because of the harsh treatment they endured in prison. Former prisoners also reported being isolated in small cells for months at a time and deprived of sleep, sunlight, and adequate food. In April, Gendun Sherab, a former political prisoner in the TAR's Nakchu Prefecture died, reportedly due to injuries sustained while in custody. Gendun Sherab was arrested in 2017 for sharing a social media message from the Dalai Lama.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Physical Conditions: Prison conditions were harsh and potentially life threatening due to inadequate sanitary conditions and medical care. According to individuals who completed their prison terms in recent years, prisoners rarely received medical care except in cases of serious illness.

Administration: There were many cases in which officials denied visitors access to detained and imprisoned persons.

Independent Monitoring: There was no evidence of independent monitoring or observation of prisons or detention centers.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

Arbitrary arrest and detention remained serious problems. Legal safeguards for detained or imprisoned Tibetans were inadequate in both design and implementation.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

Public security agencies are required by law to notify the relatives or employer of a detained person within 24 hours of their detention but often failed to do so when Tibetans and others were detained for political reasons. Public security officers may legally detain persons for up to 37 days without formally arresting or charging them. Further detention requires approval of a formal arrest by the prosecutor's office; however, in cases pertaining to "national security, terrorism, and major bribery," the law permits up to six months of incommunicado detention without formal arrest.

When a suspect is formally arrested, public security authorities may detain him/her for up to an additional seven months while the case is investigated. After the completion of an investigation, the prosecutor may detain a suspect an additional 45 days while determining whether to file criminal charges. If charges are filed, authorities may then detain a suspect for an additional 45 days before beginning judicial proceedings.

Pretrial Detention: Security officials frequently violated these legal requirements, and pretrial detention periods of more than a year were common. Individuals detained for political or religious reasons were often held on national security charges, which have looser restrictions on the length of pretrial detention. Many political detainees were therefore held without trial far longer than other types of detainees. Authorities held many prisoners in extrajudicial detention centers without charge and never allowed them to appear in public court.

Detainee's Ability to Challenge Lawfulness of Detention before a Court: This right does not exist in the TAR or other Tibetan areas.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The judiciary was not independent of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) or government in law or practice. In March for example, officials in Mangkhang County, TAR, announced that the local prosecutor's office would hire five court clerks. Among the job requirements were loyalty to the CCP leadership and a critical attitude toward the 14th Dalai Lama. The November establishment of "Xi Jinping Thought on the Rule of Law" sought to strengthen this party control over the legal system.

Soon after an August meeting of senior CCP officials about Tibet during which President Xi Jinping stated the people must continue the fight against "splittism," the Dui Hua Foundation reported that the Kandze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture Intermediate People's Court in Sichuan Province had convicted nine Tibetans of "inciting splittism" during the year. Little public information was available about their trials.

Trial Procedures

Criminal suspects in the PRC have the right to hire a lawyer or other defense representation, but many Tibetan defendants, particularly those facing politically motivated charges, did not have access to legal representation while in pretrial detention. In rare cases, defendants were denied access to legal representation entirely, but in many cases lawyers are unwilling to take clients due to political risks or because Tibetan families often do not have the resources to cover legal fees. For example, Tibetan language activist Tashi Wangchuk, arrested in 2016 and convicted in 2018, has been denied access to his lawyer since his conviction. Access was limited prior to his trial, and the government rejected petitions and motions appealing the verdict filed by his lawyer and other supporters, although PRC law allows for such appeals.

While some Tibetan lawyers are licensed in Tibetan areas, observers reported they were often unwilling to defend individuals in front of ethnic Han judges and prosecutors due to fear of reprisals or disbarment. In cases that authorities claimed involved "endangering state security" or "separatism," trials often were cursory and closed. Local sources noted trials were predominantly conducted in Mandarin, with government interpreters provided for defendants who did not speak Mandarin. Court decisions, proclamations, and other judicial documents, however, generally were not published in Tibetan.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

An unknown number of Tibetans were detained, arrested, or sentenced because of their political or religious activities.

Credible outside observers examined publicly available information and, as of late 2019, identified records of 273 Tibetans known or believed to be detained or imprisoned by PRC authorities in violation of international human rights standards. Of the 115 cases for which there was available information on sentencing, punishment ranged from 15 months' to life imprisonment. This data was believed to cover only a small fraction of the actual number of political prisoners.

In January official media reported that in 2019 the TAR prosecutor's office approved the arrest and prosecution of 101 individuals allegedly part of "the Dalai Lama clique" for "threatening" China's "political security." Details, including the whereabouts of those arrested, were unknown.

Politically Motivated Reprisal against Individuals Located Outside the Country

Approximately 150,000 Tibetans live outside Tibet, many as refugees in India and Nepal. There were credible reports that the PRC continued to put heavy pressure on Nepal to implement a border systems management agreement and a mutual legal assistance treaty, as well as to conclude an extradition treaty, that could result in the refoulement of Tibetan refugees to the PRC. Nepal does not appear to have implemented either proposed agreement and has postponed action on the extradition treaty.

In January in its annual work report, the TAR Higher People's Court noted that in 2019 the first TAR fugitive abroad was repatriated. The fugitive reportedly was charged with official-duty-related crimes. The report stated the repatriation was part of the TAR's effort to deter corruption and "purify" the political environment; no other details were available.

The Tibetan overseas community is frequently subjected to harassment, monitoring, and cyberattacks believed to be carried out by the PRC government. In September media outlets reported PRC government efforts to hack into the phones of officials in the Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and of several leaders in the Central Tibetan Administration, the governance organization of the overseas Tibetan community. The PRC government at times compelled Tibetans located in China to pressure their family members seeking asylum overseas to return to China.

f. Arbitrary or Unlawful Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

Authorities electronically and manually monitored private correspondence and searched, without warrant, private homes and businesses for photographs of the Dalai Lama and other forbidden items. Police routinely examined the cell phones of TAR residents in random stops or as part of other investigations to search for "reactionary music" from India or photographs of the Dalai Lama. Authorities also questioned and detained some individuals who disseminated writings and photographs over the internet or listened to teachings of the Dalai Lama on their mobile phones.

The "grid system," an informant system also known as the "double-linked household system," facilitated authorities' efforts to identify and control persons considered "extremist" or "splittist." The grid system groups households and other establishments and encourages them to report problems to the government, including financial problems and political transgressions, in other group households. Authorities rewarded individuals with money and other forms of compensation for their reporting. The maximum reward for information leading to the arrests of social media users deemed disloyal to the government increased to 300,000 renminbi ($42,800), according to local media. This amount was six times the average per capita GDP of the TAR.

According to sources in the TAR, Tibetans frequently received telephone calls from security officials ordering them to remove from their cell phones photographs, articles, and information on international contacts the government deemed sensitive. Security officials visited the residences of those who did not comply with such orders. Media reports indicated that in some areas, households were required to have photographs of President Xi Jinping in prominent positions and were subject to inspections and fines for noncompliance. In a July case, international media

reported local officials detained and beat a number of Tibetan villagers from Palyul in Sichuan’s Tibetan autonomous prefecture’s Kardze County for possessing photographs of the Dalai Lama found after raids on their residences.

The TAR regional government punished CCP members who followed the Dalai Lama, secretly harbored religious beliefs, made pilgrimages to India, or sent their children to study with Tibetans in exile.

Individuals in Tibetan areas reported they were subjected to government harassment and investigation because of family members living overseas. Observers also reported that many Tibetans traveling to visit family overseas were required to spend several weeks in political education classes after returning to China.

The government also interfered in the ability of persons to find employment. Media reports in June noted that advertisements for 114 positions of different types in Chamdo City, TAR, required applicants to “align ideologically, politically, and in action with the CCP Central Committee,” “oppose any splittist tendencies,” and “expose and criticize the Dalai Lama.” The advertisements explained that all applicants were subject to a political review prior to employment.

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Expression, Including for the Press

Neither in law nor practice were constitutional provisions providing for freedom of expression respected.

Freedom of Speech: Authorities in the TAR and other Tibetan regions punished persons for the vaguely defined crime of “creating and spreading rumors.” Radio Free Asia reported in February that seven Tibetans were detained for “spreading rumors” about COVID-19. Tibetans who spoke to foreigners or foreign reporters, attempted to provide information to persons outside the country, or communicated information regarding protests or other expressions of discontent, including via mobile phones and internet-based communications, were subject to harassment or detention for “undermining social stability and inciting separatism.”

In July media sources reported that a court in the northeastern TAR sentenced Tibetan lyricist Khadro Tseten to seven years’ imprisonment and singer Tsego to three years’ imprisonment for a song praising the Dalai Lama that circulated on social media. The court found Tseten guilty of “incitement to subvert state power” and “leaking state secrets.” Local authorities had detained the two in April 2019. The song was posted on social media by an unnamed woman who was also detained but was reportedly released after a year of detention, according to Tibetan language media.

In December, *Rights Defender*, a Chinese blog site, reported a Chinese court sentenced Lhundhup Dorje, a Tibetan from Golog Prefecture in the TAR, to one year in prison on charges of “inciting separatism.” In March, Lhundhup Dorje posted a graphic on Weibo that used the phrase “Tibetan independence.” In May he posted a photo of the Dalai Lama on Weibo. Due to these social media posts, he was arrested on July 23.

According to multiple observers, security officials often cancelled WeChat accounts carrying “sensitive information,” such as discussions about Tibetan language education, and interrogated the account owners.

There were no reported cases of self-immolation during the year. The practice was a common form of protest of political and religious oppression in past years. It has declined in recent years, reportedly, according to local observers, because of tightened security by authorities, the collective punishment of self-immolators’ relatives and associates, and the Dalai Lama’s public plea to his followers to find other ways to protest PRC government repression. Chinese officials in some Tibetan areas withheld public benefits from the family members of self-immolators and ordered friends and monastic personnel to refrain from participating in religious burial rites or mourning activities for self-immolators.

The law criminalizes various activities associated with self-immolation, including “organizing, plotting, inciting, compelling, luring, instigating, or helping others to commit self-immolation,” each of which may be prosecuted as “intentional homicide.”

During the year, the TAR carried out numerous propaganda campaigns to encourage pro-CCP speech, thought, and conduct. These included a “TAR Clear and Bright 2020” program, designed to crack down on persons “misusing” the internet, including by making “wrong” comments on the party’s history and “denigrating” the country’s “heroes and martyrs.” The TAR Communist Party also launched specialized propaganda campaigns to counter support for “Tibetan independence” and undermine popular support for the Dalai Lama. The PRC’s continuing campaign against organized crime also targeted supporters of the Dalai Lama, who were considered by police to be members of a criminal organization. In September the TAR Communist Party secretary Wu Yingjie publicly urged everybody to follow Xi Jinping and criticize the Dalai Lama.

A re-education program called “Unity and Love for the Motherland” continued to expand. Participants in the program received state subsidies and incentives for demonstrating support for and knowledge of CCP leaders and ideology, often requiring them to memorize party slogans and quotations from past CCP leaders and to sing the national anthem. These tests were carried out in Mandarin Chinese.

Freedom of Press and Media, Including Online Media: Authorities tightly controlled journalists who worked for the domestic press and could hire and fire them based on assessments of their political reliability. CCP propaganda authorities were in charge of journalist accreditation in the TAR and required journalists working in the TAR to display “loyalty to the party and motherland.” The deputy head of the TAR Propaganda Department simultaneously holds a prominent position in the TAR Journalist Association, a state-controlled professional association to which local journalists must belong.

In January the TAR People’s Congress passed the “TAR Regulations on Establishing a Model Area for Ethnic Unity and Progress,” which mandated media organizations cooperate with ethnic unity propaganda work and criminalized speech or spreading information “damaging to ethnic unity.”

In April the TAR Department of Propaganda held a special region-wide mobilization conference on political ideological issues, and some journalists and media workers in the region reported they had officially promised to implement the CCP’s line and resolutely fight separatism and “reactionary press and media” overseas.

Foreign journalists may visit the TAR only after obtaining a special travel permit from the government, and authorities rarely granted such permission. When authorities permitted journalists to travel to the TAR, the government severely limited the scope of reporting by monitoring and controlling their movements, and intimidating and preventing Tibetans from interacting with the press.

Violence and Harassment: PRC authorities arrested and sentenced many Tibetan writers, intellectuals, and singers for “inciting separatism.” Numerous prominent Tibetan political writers, including Jangtse Donkho, Kelsang Jinpa, Buddha, Tashi Rabten, Arik Dolma Kyab, Gangkye Drupa Kyab, and Shojkhang (also known as Druklo), reported security officers closely monitored them following their releases from prison between 2013 and 2020 and often ordered them to return to police stations for further interrogation, particularly after they received messages or calls from friends overseas or from foreigners based in other parts of the PRC. Some of these persons deleted their social media contacts or shut down their accounts completely.

Censorship or Content Restrictions: Authorities prohibited domestic journalists from reporting on repression in Tibetan areas. Authorities promptly censored the postings of bloggers and users of WeChat who did so, and the authors sometimes faced punishment. Authorities banned some writers from publishing; prohibited them from receiving services and benefits, such as government jobs, bank loans, and passports; and denied them membership in formal organizations.

Police in Malho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province, arrested Tibetan writer and poet Gendun Lhundrub in December and held him at an undisclosed location, according to Radio Free Asia. In October the former monk released an anthology of poems and wrote on the website Waseng-drak that writers require freedom of expression.

The TAR Internet and Information Office maintained tight control of a full range of social media platforms.

The PRC continued to disrupt radio broadcasts of Radio Free Asia’s Tibetan- and Mandarin-language services in Tibetan areas, as well as those of the Voice of Tibet, an independent radio station based in Norway.

In addition to maintaining strict censorship of print and online content in Tibetan areas, PRC authorities sought to censor the expression of views or distribution of information related to Tibet in countries and regions outside mainland China.

In May the TAR city of Nakchu seized and destroyed “illegal publications” as well as illegal equipment for satellite signal reception.

Internet Freedom

There was no internet freedom. In May, TAR party secretary Wu Yingjie urged authorities to “resolutely control the internet, strengthen online propaganda, maintain the correct cybersecurity view, and make the masses listen to and follow the Party.”

As in past years, authorities curtailed cell phone and internet service in many parts of the TAR and other Tibetan areas, sometimes for weeks or months at a time. Interruptions in internet service were especially pronounced during periods of unrest and political sensitivity, such as the March anniversaries of the 1959 and 2008 protests, “Serf Emancipation Day,” and around the Dalai Lama’s birthday in July. When authorities restored internet service, they closely monitored its usage.

Many sources also reported it was almost impossible to register with the government, as required by law, websites promoting Tibetan culture and language in the TAR.

Many individuals in the TAR and other Tibetan areas reported receiving official warnings and being briefly detained and interrogated after using their cell phones to exchange what the government deemed to be sensitive information.

In July in advance of the Dalai Lama’s birthday, many locals reported authorities warned Tibetans not to use social media chat groups to send any messages, organize gatherings, or use symbols that would imply a celebration of the spiritual leader’s birthday. The TAR Internet and Information Office continued a research project known as

Countermeasures to Internet-based Reactionary Infiltration by the Dalai Lama Clique. In May the TAR Cyber Security and Information Office held its first training program for "people working in the internet news and information sector" with the goal of spreading "positive energy" in cyberspace.

Throughout the year authorities blocked users in China from accessing foreign-based, Tibet-related websites critical of official government policy in Tibetan areas. Technically sophisticated hacking attempts originating from China also targeted Tibetan activists and organizations outside mainland China.

Academic Freedom and Cultural Events

As in recent years, authorities in many Tibetan areas required professors and students at institutions of higher education to attend regular political education sessions, particularly during politically sensitive months, to prevent "separatist" political and religious activities on campus. Authorities frequently encouraged Tibetan academics to participate in government propaganda efforts, both domestically and overseas, such as by making public speeches supporting government policies. Academics who refused to cooperate with such efforts faced diminished prospects for promotion and research grants. Academics in the PRC who publicly criticized CCP policies on Tibetan affairs faced official reprisal, including the loss of their jobs and the risk of imprisonment.

The government controlled curricula, texts, and other course materials as well as the publication of historically or politically sensitive academic books. Authorities frequently denied Tibetan academics permission to travel overseas for conferences and academic or cultural exchanges the party had not organized or approved.

The state-run TAR Academy of Social Science continued to encourage scholars to maintain "a correct political and academic direction" in its July conference to "improve scholars' political ideology" and "show loyalty to the party" under the guidance of Xi Jinping.

In areas officially designated as "autonomous," Tibetans generally lacked the right to organize and play a meaningful role in the protection of their cultural heritage. In accordance with government guidance on ethnic assimilation, state policies continued to disrupt traditional Tibetan culture, living patterns, and customs. Forced assimilation was pursued by promoting the influx of non-Tibetans to traditionally Tibetan areas, expanding the domestic tourism industry, forcibly resettling and urbanizing nomads and farmers, weakening Tibetan language education in public schools, and weakening monasteries' role in Tibetan society, especially with respect to religious education.

The government gave many Han Chinese persons, especially retired soldiers, incentives to move to Tibet. Migrants to the TAR and other parts of the Tibetan plateau were overwhelmingly concentrated in urban areas. Government policies to subsidize economic development often benefited Han Chinese migrants more than Tibetans.

The PRC government continued its campaign to resettle Tibetan nomads into urban areas and newly created communities in rural areas across the TAR and other Tibetan areas. Improving housing conditions, health care, and education for Tibet's poorest persons were among the stated goals of resettlement. There was, however, also a pattern of settling herders near townships and roads and away from monasteries, the traditional providers of community and social services. A requirement that herders bear a substantial part of the resettlement costs often forced resettled families into debt. The government's campaign cost many resettled herders their livelihoods and left them living in poverty in urban areas.

A September report by a nongovernmental organization (NGO) alleged a PRC so-called government vocational training and job placement program during the first seven months of the year forced approximately 500,000 Tibetan rural workers away from their pastoral lifestyle and off their land into wage labor jobs, primarily in factories, and included many coercive elements.

Government policy encouraged the spread of Mandarin Chinese at the expense of Tibetan. Both are official languages of the TAR and appeared on some, but not all, public and commercial signs. Official buildings and businesses, including banks, post offices, and hospitals, frequently lacked signage in Tibetan. In many instances forms and documents were available only in Mandarin. Mandarin was used for most official communications and was the predominant language of instruction in public schools in many Tibetan areas. To print in the Tibetan language, private printing businesses in Chengdu needed special government approval, which was often difficult to obtain.

PRC law states that "schools and other institutions of education where most of the students come from minority nationalities shall, whenever possible, use textbooks in their own languages and use their languages as the media of instruction." Despite guarantees of cultural and linguistic rights, many students at all levels had limited access to officially approved Tibetan language instruction and textbooks, particularly in the areas of "modern-day education," which refers to nontraditional, nonreligious subjects, particularly computer science, physical education, the arts, and other "modern" subjects. "Nationalities" universities, established to serve ethnic minority students and ethnic Han Chinese students interested in ethnic minority subjects, only used Tibetan as the language of instruction in Tibetan language or culture courses. Mandarin was used in courses that taught technical skills and qualifications.

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In February many Tibetans posted articles and photos on social media to celebrate International Mother Language Day. That month Lhasa police detained five Tibetans and sent them to a week-long re-education program for discussing the importance of the Tibetan language in a bar. Security officials reportedly told them that discussing Tibetan language instruction was a political crime.

According to multiple sources, monasteries throughout Tibetan areas of China were required to integrate CCP members into their governance structures, where they exercised control over monastic admission, education, security, and finances. Requirements introduced by the party included geographic residency limitations on who may attend each monastery. This restriction, especially rigorous in the TAR, undermined the traditional Tibetan Buddhist practice of seeking advanced religious instruction from a select number of senior teachers based at monasteries across the Tibetan plateau.

In August the TAR Religious Affairs Bureau held a training course for Tibetan Buddhist nuns and CCP cadres working in convents. Nuns were told to "lead the religion in the direction of better compatibility with Socialism," and the CCP cadres promised to manage the monasteries and convents with firm determination.

Authorities in Tibetan areas regularly banned the sale and distribution of music they deemed to have sensitive political content.

b. Freedoms of Peaceful Assembly and Association

Tibetans do not enjoy the rights to assemble peacefully or to associate freely.

Freedom of Peaceful Assembly

Even in areas officially designated as "autonomous," Tibetans generally lacked the right to organize. Persons who organize public events for any purpose not endorsed by authorities face harassment, arrest, prosecution, and violence. Unauthorized assemblies were frequently broken up by force. Any assembly deemed by authorities as a challenge to the PRC or its policies, for example, to advocate for Tibetan language rights, to mark religious holidays, or to protect the area's unique natural environment, provoked a particularly strong response both directly against the assembled persons and in authorities' public condemnation of the assembly. Authorities acted preemptively to forestall unauthorized assemblies. In July for example, local observers noted that many monasteries and rural villages in the TAR and Tibetan areas of Sichuan, Qinghai, and Gansu provinces received official warnings not to organize gatherings to mark the Dalai Lama's birthday.

Freedom of Association

In accordance with PRC law, only organizations approved by the CCP and essentially directed by it are legal. Policies noted above designed to bring monasteries under CCP control are one example of this policy. Persons attempting to organize any sort of independent association were subject to harassment, arrest on a wide range of charges, or violent suppression.

c. Freedom of Religion

See the Department of State's *International Religious Freedom Report* at https://www.state.gov/religiousfreedomreport/.

d. Freedom of Movement

PRC law provides for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation; however, the government severely restricted travel and freedom of movement for Tibetans, particularly Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns as well as lay persons whom the government considered to have "poor political records."

In-country Movement: The outbreak of COVID-19 led to countrywide restrictions on travel, which affected movement in the TAR and other Tibetan areas. From January to April, the TAR and other Tibetan areas implemented a "closed-management" system, meaning all major sites, including monasteries and cultural sites, were closed.

In addition to COVID-19 restrictions, People's Armed Police and local public security bureaus set up roadblocks and checkpoints in Tibetan areas on major roads, in cities, and on the outskirts of cities and monasteries, particularly around sensitive dates. These roadblocks were designed to restrict and control access for Tibetans and foreigners to sensitive areas. Tibetans traveling in monastic attire were subjected to extra scrutiny by police at roadside checkpoints and at airports. Tibetans without local residency were turned away from many Tibetan areas deemed sensitive by the government.

Authorities sometimes banned Tibetans, particularly monks and nuns, from leaving the TAR or traveling to it without first obtaining special permission from multiple government offices. Some Tibetans reported encountering difficulties in obtaining the required permissions. Such restrictions made it difficult for Tibetans to practice their religion, visit family, conduct business, or travel for leisure. Tibetans from outside the TAR who traveled to Lhasa also reported that authorities there required them to surrender their national identification cards and notify authorities of their plans in detail on a daily basis. These requirements were not applied to Han Chinese visitors to the TAR.

Outside the TAR, many Tibetan monks and nuns reported travel remained difficult beyond their home monasteries for religious and educational purposes; officials frequently denied them permission to stay at a monastery for religious education.

Foreign Travel: Tibetans faced significant hurdles in acquiring passports, and for Buddhist monks and nuns it was virtually impossible. Authorities' unwillingness to issue new or renew old passports created, in effect, a ban on foreign travel for the Tibetan population. Han Chinese residents of Tibetan areas did not experience the same difficulties.

Sources reported that Tibetans and certain other ethnic minorities had to provide far more extensive documentation than other citizens when applying for a PRC passport. For Tibetans the passport application process sometimes required years and frequently ended in rejection. Some Tibetans reported they were able to obtain passports only after paying substantial bribes and offering written promises to undertake only apolitical or nonsensitive international travel. Many Tibetans with passports were concerned authorities would place them on the government's blacklist and therefore did not travel.

Tibetans encountered particular obstacles in traveling to India for religious, educational, and other purposes. Tibetans who had traveled to Nepal and planned to continue to India reported that PRC officials visited their family homes and threatened their relatives in Tibet if they did not return immediately. Sources reported that extrajudicial punishments included blacklisting family members, which could lead to loss of a government job or difficulty in finding employment; expulsion of children from the public education system; and revocation of national identification cards, thereby preventing access to social services such as health care and government aid. The government restricted the movement of Tibetans through increased border controls before and during sensitive anniversaries and events.

Government regulations on the travel of international visitors to the TAR were uniquely strict in the PRC. The government required all international visitors to apply for a Tibet travel permit to visit the TAR and regularly denied requests by international journalists, diplomats, and other officials for official travel. Approval for tourist travel to the TAR was easier to secure but often restricted around sensitive dates. PRC security forces used conspicuous monitoring to intimidate foreign officials, followed them at all times, prevented them from meeting or speaking with local contacts, harassed them, and restricted their movement in these areas.

Exile: Among Tibetans living outside of China are the 14th Dalai Lama and several other senior religious leaders. The PRC denied these leaders the right to return to Tibet or imposed unacceptable conditions on their return.

Section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process

According to law, Tibetans, like other Chinese citizens, have the right to vote in some local elections. The PRC government, however, severely restricted its citizens' ability to participate in any meaningful elections. Citizens could not freely choose the officials who governed them, and the CCP continued to control appointments to positions of political power.

The TAR and many Tibetan areas strictly implemented the Regulation for Village Committee Management, which stipulates that the primary condition for participating in any local election is the "willingness to resolutely fight against separatism;" in some cases this condition was interpreted to require candidates to denounce the Dalai Lama. Many sources reported that appointed Communist Party cadres replaced all traditional village leaders in the TAR and other Tibetan areas, despite the lack of village elections.

Recent Elections: Not applicable.

Political Parties and Political Participation: TAR authorities have banned traditional tribal leaders from running their villages and often warned those leaders not to interfere in village affairs. The top CCP position of TAR party secretary continued to be held by a Han Chinese, as were the corresponding positions in the vast majority of all TAR counties. Within the TAR, Han Chinese persons also continued to hold a disproportionate number of the top security, military, financial, economic, legal, judicial, and educational positions. The law requires CCP secretaries and governors of ethnic minority autonomous prefectures and regions to be from that ethnic minority; however, party secretaries were Han Chinese in eight of the nine autonomous prefectures in Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan, and Yunnan provinces. One autonomous prefecture in Qinghai had an ethnic Tibetan party secretary.

Participation of Women and Members of Minority Groups: There were no formal restrictions on women's participation in the political system, and women held many lower-level government positions. Nevertheless, women were underrepresented at the provincial and prefectural levels of party and government.

Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government

PRC law provides criminal penalties for corrupt acts by officials, but the government did not implement the law effectively in Tibetan areas, and high-ranking officials often engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. There were numerous reports of government corruption in Tibetan areas; some low-ranked officials were punished.

In April an appeal hearing for Tibetan anticorruption activist A-Nya Sengdra was postponed indefinitely. A-Nya was arrested in 2018 by Qinghai police after exposing corruption among local officials who failed to compensate Tibetans for land appropriations. Held incommunicado for 48 days, he was sentenced in December 2019 to seven years in prison for “picking quarrels and provoking trouble.”

Corruption: Local sources said investigations into corruption in the TAR and autonomous prefectures were rare; however, during the year news media reported two relatively high-profile corruption cases. In May the *Tibetan Review*, a monthly journal published in India, reported deputy secretary general of the TAR government Tashi Gyatso was being investigated for violations of discipline and law. Often the specifics of official investigations related to disciplinary violations are not made public but are commonly understood to be connected to bribery or abuse of power.

In July the *Tibetan Review* cited China’s official Xinhua news agency reporting that Wang Yunting, a Han Chinese CCP member and deputy director of Tibet’s health commission, was being investigated by the regional anti-graft authorities for “disciplinary” violations.

Financial Disclosure: The CCP has internal regulations requiring disclosure of financial assets, but these disclosures are not made public.

Section 5. Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Abuses of Human Rights

Some domestic human rights groups and NGOs were able to operate in Tibetan areas, although under substantial government restrictions. Their ability to investigate impartially and publish their findings on human rights cases was limited. A foreign NGO management law limits the number of local NGOs able to receive foreign funding and international NGOs’ ability to assist Tibetan communities. Foreign NGOs reported being unable to find local partners. Several Tibetan-run NGOs were also reportedly pressured to close. There were no known international NGOs operating in the TAR. PRC government officials were not cooperative or responsive to the views of Tibetan or foreign human rights groups.

Section 6. Discrimination, Societal Abuses, and Trafficking in Persons

Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: See section 6, Women, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020* for China.

Sexual Harassment: See section 6, Women, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020* for China.

Coercion in Population Control: As in the rest of China, there were reports of coerced abortions and sterilizations, although the government kept no statistics on these procedures. The CCP restricts the right of parents to choose the number of children they have and utilizes family planning units from the provincial to the village level to enforce population limits and distributions.

Discrimination: See section 6, Women, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020* for China.

Children

Birth Registration: See section 6, Children, in the *Country Reports on Human R9ights Practices for 2020* for China.

Education: The PRC’s nationwide “centralized education” policy was in place in many rural areas. The policy forced the closure of many village and monastic schools and the transfer of students to boarding schools in towns and cities. Media reports indicated the program was expanding. This, and aspects of education policy generally, led many Tibetan parents to express deep concern about growing “ideological and political education” that was critical of the “old Tibet,” and taught Tibetan children to improve their “Chinese identity” in elementary schools. In August, PRC President Xi Jinping personally urged local officials in the TAR and other Tibetan areas to further ideological education and sow “loving-China seeds” into the hearts of children in the region.

Authorities enforced regulations limiting traditional monastic education to monks older than 18. Instruction in Tibetan, while provided for by PRC law, was often inadequate or unavailable at schools in Tibetan areas.

The number of Tibetans attending government-sponsored boarding school outside Tibetan areas increased, driven by PRC government policy that justified the programs as providing greater educational opportunities than students would have in their home cities. Tibetans and reporters, however, noted the program prevented students from participating in Tibetan cultural activities, practicing their religion, or using the Tibetan language. Media reports also highlighted discrimination within government boarding school programs. Tibetans attending government-run boarding schools in eastern China reported studying and living in ethnically segregated classrooms and dormitories justified as necessary security measures, although the government claimed cultural integration was one purpose of these programs.

Child, Early, and Forced Marriage: See section 6, Children, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020* for China.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: See section 6, Children, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020* for China.

International Child Abductions: See section 6, Children, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020* for China.

Anti-Semitism

See section 6, Anti-Semitism, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020* for China.

Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State's annual *Trafficking in Persons Report* at https://www.state.gov/trafficking-in-persons-report.

Persons with Disabilities

See section 6, Persons with Disabilities, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020* for China.

Members of National/Racial/Ethnic Minority Groups

Although observers believe that ethnic Tibetans made up the great majority of the TAR's permanent, registered population–especially in rural areas–there was no accurate data reflecting the large number of long-, medium-, and short-term Han Chinese migrants, such as officials, skilled and unskilled laborers, military and paramilitary troops, and their dependents, in the region.

Observers continued to express concern that major development projects and other central government policies disproportionately benefited non-Tibetans and contributed to the considerable influx of Han Chinese into the TAR and other Tibetan areas. Large state-owned enterprises based outside the TAR engineered or built many major infrastructure projects across the Tibetan plateau; Han Chinese professionals and low-wage temporary migrant workers from other provinces, rather than local residents, generally managed and staffed the projects.

Economic and social exclusion was a major source of discontent among a varied cross section of Tibetans.

There were reports in prior years that some employers specifically barred Tibetans and other minorities from applying for job openings. There were, however, no media reports of this type of discrimination during the year.

Acts of Violence, Criminalization, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity

See section 6, Acts of Violence, Criminalization, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020* for China.

Promotion of Acts of Discrimination

Government propaganda against alleged Tibetan "pro-independence forces" contributed to Chinese social discrimination against ordinary Tibetans. Many Tibetan monks and nuns chose to wear nonreligious clothing to avoid harassment when traveling outside their monasteries. Some Tibetans reported that taxi drivers outside Tibetan areas refused to stop for them, hotels refused to provide lodging, and Han Chinese landlords refused to rent to them.

Section 7. Worker Rights

See section 7, Worker Rights, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2020* for China.

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