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2023 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: China (Includes Hong Kong, Macau, and Tibet) – Tibet

Read a Section: Tibet

CHINA | HONG KONG | MACAU

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There were no significant changes in the human rights situation in Tibet during the year.

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: enforced disappearance; torture or cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment or punishment by the government; harsh and life-threatening prison conditions; arbitrary arrest or detention; serious problems with the independence of the judiciary; political prisoners; transnational repression against individuals located in another country; arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy; punishment of family members for alleged offenses by a relative; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom, including censorship; serious restrictions on internet freedom; substantial interference with the freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, including overly restrictive laws on the organization, funding, or operation of nongovernmental (NGO) and civil society organizations; restrictions of religious freedom; restrictions on freedom of movement and residence; inability of citizens to change their government peacefully through free and fair elections; serious and unreasonable restrictions on political participation; serious government corruption; serious government restrictions on or harassment of domestic and international human rights organizations;

and crimes involving violence or threats of violence targeting members of national/racial/ethnic groups, including Tibetans.

The government did not take credible steps to identify and punish officials who may have committed human rights abuses.

Section 1.

Respect for the Integrity of the Person

A. ARBITRARY DEPRIVATION OF LIFE AND OTHER UNLAWFUL OR POLITICALLY MOTIVATED KILLINGS

Unlike in previous years, there were no known reports or credible allegations the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings, including extrajudicial killings, during the year.

In November the nongovernmental organization (NGO) Tibet Watch reported Shukdar (one name only) died in custody in August 2022 after authorities in Sertar County, Sichuan, arrested him and four other men. According to the report, authorities arrested the men for holding religious activities. Authorities told Shukdar's family he was not killed as a result of mistreatment, but "had died suddenly." His family told Tibet Watch he had no prior health problems. Authorities promised compensation, but the family had not received compensation as of November.

B. DISAPPEARANCE

There were reports of disappearances by or on behalf of government authorities; the whereabouts of many persons detained by security officials were unknown.

The NGO Free Tibet reported in January that Tibetan monk and writer Rongwo Gangkar, who disappeared in 2021, was arrested early that year after he spoke about the Dalai Lama at an informal gathering in Qinghai. Authorities did not release any formal charges or acknowledge Gangkar's arrest.

In June, select UN special rapporteurs and working groups expressed concern over the August 2022 arrest and disappearance of Karma Samdup. According to their letter, police arrested Samdup for "inciting separatism" while possessing photos of the Dalai Lama. His whereabouts remained unknown as of June. 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 had been seen since they were disappeared, allegedly by or on behalf of Chinese authorities, in 1995, when he was six years old.

C. TORTURE AND OTHER CRUEL, INHUMAN, OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OR PUNISHMENT, AND OTHER RELATED

ABUSES

Despite legal prohibitions, there were many credible reports government officials, including police and prison authorities, employed torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment in dealing with some detainees and prisoners. There were reports officials severely beat some Tibetans who were incarcerated or otherwise in custody. In February Radio Free Asia (RFA) reported Buddhist monk Phende Gyaltsen died in prison in January, less than a year after his arrest in March 2022 reportedly for working on the renovation of a Tibetan Buddhist monastery. Authorities blocked public access to Gyaltsen's body and prohibited his family from performing last rites. He was reportedly healthy before his imprisonment.

Reports from released prisoners indicated some had permanent disabilities or were 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 November 2022, RFA reported Tibetan monk Tenzin Palsang died due to torture received during his imprisonment from 2012 to 2018. On his release in 2018, Palsang's health reportedly had declined so much that he could not walk without assistance. RFA reported authorities frequently harassed and surveilled Palsang after his release.

According to Freedom House, there were reports detained suspects and prisoners were often subjected to non-religious re-education.

Impunity for abuses of human rights was pervasive. There were no reports officials investigated or punished those responsible for unlawful killings and other abuses in previous years.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

Abusive 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 prior years, prisoners rarely received medical care except in cases of serious illness. According to Freedom House, there were reports detained suspects and prisoners were subjected to torture and denied food, clothing, and medical care.

Administration: No information indicated authorities investigated credible reports of abusive detention center conditions.

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

D. ARBITRARY ARREST OR DETENTION

The constitution and law prohibited arbitrary arrest and detention and provided for the right of persons to challenge the lawfulness of their arrest or detention in court. The government did not observe these requirements. Legal safeguards for detained or imprisoned Tibetans were inadequate in both design and implementation. The right of persons to challenge the lawfulness of their arrest or detention in court did not exist in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) or other Tibetan areas.

Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees

Public security agencies were required by law to notify the relatives or employer of detained persons within 24 hours of their detention, but generally failed to do so when Tibetans and others were detained for political reasons. Pretrial bail procedures were codified in law, but Tibetans and others detained for politically sensitive reasons were denied access to pretrial release. According to criminal law, public security officers could detain persons for up to 37 days without formally arresting or charging them. Further detention required approval of a formal arrest by the prosecutor's office; however, in cases pertaining to "national security, terrorism, and major bribery," the law permitted up to six months of incommunicado detention without formal arrest.

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

Despite the laws and regulatory procedures, incommunicado detention was a common practice. The Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy and the online news outlet *Phayul* reported in July that, after his arrest in September 2018, Tibetan anticorruption and environmental activist Anya Sengdra was detained incommunicado for 48 days without access to a lawyer, followed by 14 months of pretrial detention before a court in Golog (Guoluo), Qinghai, sentenced him to seven years' imprisonment for "picking quarrels and provoking trouble" and "gathering people to disturb public order" in 2019. Courts twice rejected Sengdra's appeals.

Arbitrary Arrest: In August UN experts called on the government to provide information on nine Tibetan environmental and human rights defenders arrested between 2010 and 2019: Anya Sengdra, Dorjee Daktal, Kelsang Choklang, Dhongye, Rinchen Namdol, Tsultrim Gonpo, Jangchup Ngodup, Sogru Abhu, and Namesy. The experts reported the government had provided little to no information on the detentions, trials, or sentencing of the nine; the sentences of three, from seven to 11 years,

were publicly released. Whether any of the individuals had access to legal counsel or medical care remained unclear.

Pretrial Detention: Security officials frequently violated the legal limits for pretrial detention, and pretrial detention for more than a year was common. Individuals detained for political or religious reasons were often held on national security charges, which allowed longer pretrial detention than under other charges. Authorities held many prisoners in extrajudicial detention centers without charge and never allowed them to appear in public court.

E. DENIAL OF FAIR PUBLIC TRIAL

The constitution and law provided for an independent judiciary, but judicial independence from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) or the government did not exist. When hiring, the TAR Higher People's Court sought judicial candidates who could pass a "political background check." In cases that authorities claimed involved "endangering state security" or "separatism," trials often were cursory and closed.

Trial Procedures

The law provided for the right to a fair and public trial, but the judiciary generally did not enforce this right. Criminal suspects elsewhere in China generally had 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 some cases, defendants were denied access to legal representation entirely. In September Tibet Watch and RFA reported the Intermediate Court of Aba (Ngawa) County in Sichuan Province sentenced Tsultrim to two years in prison for "contacting separatists outside Tibet." Tsultrim's trial was held in secret, without a lawyer or his family present. Local authorities blocked Tsultrim's family from visiting him.

In November Tibet Watch reported authorities in Sertar County, Sichuan, arrested Bamo, Gelo, Khori, and Tsedou in September. According to the online news site *Phayul*, they were accused of "engaging in religious activities such as burning juniper and reciting prayers." Their trial was held in secret, and each received a two-year prison sentence. The four were previously held without trial in Garze County, Sichuan, where they were reportedly tortured, from August 2022 to July.

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 generally were not published in Tibetan.

Although certain other rights existed in law, in practice criminal defendants were presumed guilty and in many cases denied the rights to be informed promptly of the charges against them; to a fair, timely, and public trial; to be present at their trial; to have adequate time and facilities to prepare a defense; to confront witnesses against them or present their own witnesses or evidence; not to be forced to testify or confess guilt; or to appeal.

Political Prisoners and Detainees

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

The Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy maintained a database of more than 2,000 Tibetans known or believed to be detained or imprisoned in violation of international human rights standards. Authorities significantly limited information released on the sentences of Tibetans arrested on political grounds. In July the Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy reported authorities had systematically removed publicly accessible records of court verdicts involving Tibetans convicted of "endangering state security" in both the TAR and in Tibetan areas outside of the TAR.

F. TRANSNATIONAL REPRESSION

Chinese authorities engaged in transnational repression against the approximately 150,000 Tibetans living outside the TAR and the Tibetan autonomous prefectures and counties, many as refugees in India and Nepal.

Threats, Harassment, Surveillance, and Coercion: The Tibetan overseas community was frequently subjected to harassment, monitoring, and cyberattacks believed to be carried out by the Chinese government. In a March statement, Tenzin Dorjee of the Tibet Action Institute stated government authorities continued to pressure, with threats, China-resident families of Tibetans living in other countries to dissuade their relatives from criticizing Chinese policies towards Tibetans. A wide range of diaspora and civil society sources reported Chinese embassies and consulates frequently required ethnic Tibetans, including Tibetan-Americans, seeking consular services to provide detailed information on family members and personal connections in China. As this information was generally not requested of other travelers or citizens living abroad, many viewed it as an implied threat the Chinese government would punish relatives to retaliate for criticism of Chinese policies.

Bilateral Pressure: There were credible reports China continued to put heavy pressure on Nepal to implement a border systems management agreement and a mutual legal assistance treaty, which could result in the refoulement of Tibetan refugees to China and was pressing Nepal not to

register or issue identity documents to Tibetan refugees. Nepal did not take additional steps to implement the agreements; however, it continued not to register Tibetans. According to the Human Rights Organization of Nepal, an NGO, the majority of the estimated 12,000 Tibetans in Nepal lacked refugee registration and identity documentations. Nepal last registered and issued documentation to Tibetan refugees in 1995.

G. PROPERTY SEIZURE AND RESTITUTION

Authorities reportedly seized Tibetans' land without restitution. In June Tibet Watch reported authorities in Tongren (Rebkong), Qinghai Province, announced plans to confiscate eight villages to allow for the building of a reservoir. The announcement threatened to deny compensation to anyone who opposed the order. Later in June, RFA reported many nomadic families affected by the order received no compensation for losing access to grazing and agricultural land.

Authorities continued to coerce herders and pastoralists to resettle in urban or agriculture-focused areas. While authorities claimed such programs were voluntary, participants reported their families were often pressured into agreeing to move away from traditional territories. In the June issue of *China Quarterly*, researchers Yonten Nyima and Emily Yeh reported authorities responsible for the TAR's "extremely high-altitude ecological resettlement" program in Naqu (Nagqu) Prefecture claimed 100 percent of targeted pastoral families "voluntarily" agreed to participate. Nyima and Yeh's investigation found that local officials had threatened some skeptical families with material or political penalties if they refused to "voluntarily" resettle. Despite official prohibitions on forced resettlement, Nyima and Yeh assessed local officials in the area continued to use coercion to demonstrate political loyalty and to meet performance targets.

H. ARBITRARY OR UNLAWFUL INTERFERENCE WITH PRIVACY, FAMILY, HOME, OR CORRESPONDENCE

The government widely disregarded constitutional and legal prohibitions of such actions. 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 via the internet or listened to teachings of the Dalai Lama on their cell phones. Authorities continued to employ pervasive surveillance systems, including the use of facial recognition and smart identity cards.

In June authorities conducted random searches of monasteries in several TAR counties, RFA reported, scrutinizing monks' prayer manuscripts and books, and removing prayer flags from shrines. During the searches,

monks were also forced to sign documents denouncing the Dalai Lama and "separatism."

Surveillance of Tibetans' personal communications remained pervasive, and authorities continued to persecute those found to have had contact with Tibetan exile communities. RFA reported in June police intensified random checks of Tibetans' telephones in March ahead of the anniversaries of the 1959 Tibetan uprising and the 2008 Lhasa riots, summoning for interrogation those found to have had contacts outside of the TAR. This heightened scrutiny reportedly continued after the anniversaries passed. Communications with persons abroad sometimes resulted in arrests: RFA reported in January that a writer in Qinghai was arrested by police for contacting persons in exile to offer prayers to the Dalai Lama; in March authorities arrested a woman restaurant worker for allegedly exchanging photographs and messages with individuals outside the TAR.

In September cybersecurity firm Volexity issued a report that concluded persons acting on behalf of the Chinese government established a series of fake websites, social media profiles, and mobile phone applications to target Tibetan users with malicious software that could collect identifying information and potentially compromise private data on mobile devices. One malware package found in Tibetan-language dictionary and prayer apps was designed to capture a mobile phone's location, contacts, files, and text messages, among other information.

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 grouped households and other establishments and encouraged them to report problems, including financial problems and political transgressions in other group households, to the government.

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. Local sources reported that in some areas, households were required to display photographs of Chinese President Xi Jinping in prominent positions and were subjected to inspections and fines for noncompliance. The TAR regional government punished CCP members who possessed photographs of or quotes from the Dalai Lama, secretly harbored religious beliefs, made pilgrimages to India, or sent their children to study with Tibetans in exile.

Observers also reported 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 with the ability of persons to find employment. Job announcements of different types in the 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.

In April RFA reported authorities harassed and denied access to taking university exams, job opportunities, and government assistance for relatives of Tibetans who self-immolated in protest of government policies. The report also alleged Tibetans convicted of political crimes and their families were discriminated against and denied access to proper medical care.

In March the International Campaign for Tibet expressed concern over mass DNA collection in Tibet. U.S.-Canadian online news website *Vice.com*, drawing from reports by the Citizen Lab of the University of Toronto and Human Rights Watch, reported in September 2022 on authorities' collection of vast amounts of DNA information from nearly one-third of Tibet's population. The report suggested the collection of Tibetans' DNA "could offer the government a powerful tool for surveillance of ethnic minorities." The data could be used to identify relatives of persons sought by police or for a range of other purposes. Human Rights Watch reported Tibetans did not appear to have the right to refuse collection of their DNA information, citing a Lhasa municipality report that stated, "blood samples for DNA collection were being systematically collected from children at kindergartens and from other local residents."

Section 2.

Respect for Civil Liberties

A. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, INCLUDING FOR MEMBERS OF THE PRESS AND OTHER MEDIA

Constitutional provisions for freedom of expression were not respected.

Freedom of Expression: Tibetans could not criticize the government or advocate policies differing from those of the government without fear of punishment. This included discussion of many matters related to Tibetan Buddhism, including the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama, where deviation from Chinese government views was explicitly banned by law. Those who openly displayed Buddhist flags and symbols faced arbitrary and sometimes harsh restrictions, in particular where authorities conflated their religious significance with political advocacy. According to multiple observers, security officials often canceled WeChat accounts carrying "sensitive information," such as discussions about Tibetan-language education, and interrogated the account owners.

During the year, the TAR conducted numerous propaganda campaigns to encourage pro-CCP speech, thought, and conduct. Authorities required monasteries across Tibetan-inhabited areas to hold "patriotic activities" under the slogan of "wholeheartedly thanking the Party and happily welcome the 20th Party Congress."

A re-education program called "Unity and Love for the Motherland" provided participants with state subsidies and incentives for demonstrating support for and knowledge of CCP leaders and ideology. The program often required participants to memorize party slogans and quotations from past CCP leaders and to sing the national anthem. These tests were exclusively carried out in Mandarin.

In January a Tibetan university student in Sichuan Province was fined 50,000 yuan ($6,800) and ordered to attend weekly political education sessions after organizing a celebration of the Tibetan New Year, according to the Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy. Reportedly, the punishment was in response to the event's display of Buddhist flags, use of only Tibetan-language decoration, and performances only in Tibetan. Chinese authorities reportedly demanded the event's presenter speak only in Mandarin, although most attendees could not understand the language, and feature songs in praise of the CCP.

In August the Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy and RFA reported masked men beat Tibetan-language advocate Tashi Wangchuk in his hotel room after he filmed a video near a middle school in the TAR about the disappearance of the Tibetan language in schools. The attackers forced him to erase all photographs and videos he had taken that day. After authorities questioned him at a police station, hotels turned Wangchuk away and the local hospital refused to give him medical care. Unidentified individuals again harassed and interrogated him the following day. The attackers were not apprehended.

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 pressured Tibetan academics to participate in government propaganda efforts 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 elsewhere in China who publicly criticized CCP policies on Tibetan affairs faced official reprisal, including the loss of their jobs and the risk of imprisonment.

The government completely 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 not organized or approved by the CCP.

Authorities in Tibetan areas regularly banned the sale and distribution of music they deemed to have sensitive political content. To print in the Tibetan language, private printing businesses needed special government approval, which was often difficult to obtain.

Violence and Harassment: Authorities continued to harass writers, journalists, and media outlets seen as deviating in public or private from official government policy in the TAR and other Tibetan regions. Harassment included surveillance, repeated police interrogations, denial of social services, denial of employment, and travel limitations, among other means. Sometimes harassment escalated to violence.

Censorship or Content Restrictions for Members of the Press and Other Media, Including Online Media: Authorities tightly controlled journalists who worked for the domestic press and hired and fired them based on assessments of their political reliability. CCP propaganda authorities oversaw journalist accreditation in the TAR and required journalists working there to display "loyalty to the party and motherland."

The TAR government continued to implement its "Regulations on Establishing a Model Area for Ethnic Unity and Progress," which required media organizations to cooperate with authorities on ethnic unity propaganda work and criminalized speech or spreading information "damaging to ethnic unity."

Foreign journalists could visit the TAR only after obtaining a special travel permit from the government, which was rarely granted. 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 them. According to an International Federation of Journalists investigation, a majority of foreign journalists working in China reported surveillance of telephone usage and recording bugs, with 90 percent of polled respondents saying their reporting had been affected by surveillance.

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.

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

Authorities continued to disrupt RFA 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, authorities sought to censor the expression of views or distribution of information related to Tibet outside mainland China.

Internet Freedom

There was no internet freedom. In February authorities began to enforce the "Network Information Security Management Regulations of the Tibet Autonomous Region," which forbade broad swaths of online speech in the name of national security, including activities that could be construed as "subverting state power," "undermining national unity," and "damaging the honor and interests of the state." The regulations also effectively criminalized criticism of Chinese religious policy, communications deviating from Chinese policies on the reincarnation of Tibetan spiritual leaders, and visiting any website deemed to contain "secessionist" content or that "undermines national unity," placing at risk anyone interacting with Tibetan exile communities online.

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. RFA reported in May that implementation of a March 2022 regulation providing authorities additional powers to restrict online content related to religion had intensified, leading to an effective ban on any Tibetan writers or Buddhist monks from spreading religious content online.

Restrictions governing online religious content were used to silence and punish those sharing religious materials on social media. The measures prohibited unlicensed organizations from organizing religious activities on the internet and broadcasting or recording religious ceremonies "such as worshipping Buddha, burning incense, ordaining, chanting…in the form of words, pictures, audio, and video." In its *Freedom in the World 2022* report, Freedom House noted authorities also monitored and censored Tibet-related keywords on WeChat, as well as prohibited the use of Tibetan language on many social media apps.

In advance of the Dalai Lama's birthday in July, authorities took particular care to suppress any use of social media to organize gatherings or use symbols that would imply a celebration of the event. The TAR Internet and Information Office ran a research project known as "Countermeasures to Internet-based Reactionary Infiltration by the Dalai Lama Clique." Throughout the year, authorities blocked users 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.

B. FREEDOMS OF PEACEFUL ASSEMBLY AND ASSOCIATION

Tibetans did 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 organized public events for any purpose not endorsed by authorities faced harassment, arrest, prosecution, and violence. Unauthorized assemblies were frequently broken up by force. Any assembly authorities deemed a challenge to the government or its policies, for example, advocacy for Tibetan language rights, marking religious holidays, or protecting 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.

Authorities sometimes interfered with registered gatherings. In July two Tibetan Buddhist Kalachakra teaching sessions in Qinghai and Gansu were canceled by the government despite having received prior approval, according to RFA. Before its cancellation, videos of the welcome ceremony in Qinghai circulated widely on social media before being censored. In September authorities attempted to limit participation in a third Kalachakra gathering in Gansu by restricting access to residents living near the event site.

Freedom of Association

In accordance with law, only civil society organizations approved and essentially directed by the CCP were legal. Policies designed to bring monasteries under CCP control were one example of how these policies were implemented. Persons attempting to organize any sort of independent association were subject to harassment, arrest on a wide range of charges, or violent suppression.

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 could attend each monastery.

C. FREEDOM OF RELIGION

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

D. FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

The law provided for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation. The government, however, 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."

Movement in Tibetan Areas: People's Armed Police and local public security bureaus for years 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 restricted and controlled 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.

Authorities sometimes banned Tibetans, particularly monks and nuns, from leaving or traveling to the TAR without first obtaining special permission from multiple government offices. Some Tibetans reported encountering difficulties obtaining the required permissions. They said such restrictions made it difficult for them to practice their religion, visit family, conduct business, or travel for leisure. Authorities also required Tibetans traveling between regions to register with police.

In August the *Tibet Times* reported monks from majority Tibetan areas of Sichuan, Qinghai, Gansu, and Yunnan provinces faced multiple bureaucratic obstacles intended to discourage them from traveling to Lhasa, capital of the TAR. Those seeking to travel required permits from up to seven separate government entities; the focus of these authorities' questioning was on each monk's and his monastery's "legal activities," including "political activities." Obtaining all the necessary permits for travel was reportedly difficult.

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

Foreign Travel: Tibetans faced significant hurdles in acquiring passports. For Buddhist monks and nuns, it was virtually impossible. Sources reported Tibetans and members of certain other ethnic minority groups had to provide far more extensive documentation than other citizens when applying for a passport. For Tibetans the passport application process sometimes required years and frequently ended in rejection.

Authorities' unwillingness to issue or renew passports created an effective ban on foreign travel for the Tibetan population. Many Tibetans with passports were concerned authorities would place them on the government's blacklist and therefore did not travel abroad. In May the

NGO Safeguard Defenders reported relatives of blacklisted individuals were increasingly being blacklisted themselves.

In April the International Campaign for Tibet reported authorities continued to withhold household registrations from some Tibetans who traveled abroad, in particular to India, hindering the ability of travelers and their families to find work or access health care, education, or other social services. Returnees were often subjected to interrogations, political re-education classes, and surveillance. The government also 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 compared with other areas of China. 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 was often restricted around sensitive dates. Security forces used conspicuous monitoring to intimidate foreign officials and followed them at all times, preventing them from meeting or speaking with local contacts, harassing them, and restricting their movement in these areas.

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

E. PROTECTION OF REFUGEES

See section 2.e, Protection of Refugees, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023* for China.

Section 3.

Freedom to Participate in the Political Process

According to law, Tibetans, like other Chinese citizens, had the right to vote in some local elections. The 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 controlled appointments to positions of political power.

The TAR and many other Tibetan areas strictly implemented the Regulation for Village Committee Management, which stipulated the primary condition for participating in any local election was the "willingness to resolutely fight against separatism"; in many cases this condition was interpreted to require candidates to be CCP members and denounce the Dalai Lama.

ELECTIONS AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Abuses or Irregularities in Recent Elections: Not applicable.

Political Parties and Political Participation: TAR authorities banned traditional 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 most TAR counties. Within the TAR, Han Chinese persons also continued to hold a disproportionate number of top security, military, financial, economic, legal, judicial, and educational positions. The law required CCP local leadership of ethnic minority autonomous prefectures and regions to be from that ethnic minority; nonetheless, party secretaries were Han Chinese in nine of the 10 Tibetan 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 Marginalized or Vulnerable 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 in Government

See section 4, Corruption in Government, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023* for China.

Section 5.

Governmental Posture Towards International and Nongovernmental Monitoring and Investigation of Alleged Abuses of Human Rights

Some domestic NGOs were able to operate in Tibetan areas under substantial government restrictions. Their ability to investigate impartially and publish their findings on human rights cases was extremely limited. Laws on the activities of overseas NGOs limited the number of local NGOs able to receive foreign funding and the ability of international NGOs to assist Tibetan communities. Foreign NGOs reported being unable to find local partners willing to work with them. There were no known international NGOs operating in the TAR. Government officials were not cooperative or responsive to the views of Tibetan or foreign human rights groups.

Section 6.

Discrimination and Societal Abuses

WOMEN

See section 6, Women, in the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023 for China.

SYSTEMIC RACIAL OR ETHNIC VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION

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

Observers continued to express concern that major development projects and other central government policies, including incentives for ethnic Han individuals (especially retired soldiers) to move to Tibet, 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, along with unequal treatment by authorities, was a major source of discontent among a varied cross section of Tibetans. In March RFA reported police in Lhasa beat Gonpo Kyi for protesting the life sentence of her brother, Dorjee Tashi, who was convicted of financial fraud. Kyi alleged the life sentence was unduly severe compared with the sentences received by ethnic Han Chinese for similar crimes. Tashi was originally arrested after large-scale protests in 2008 and labeled a "secessionist"; those charges were later dropped.

In areas officially designated as "autonomous," Tibetans generally lacked the right to organize or play a meaningful role in the protection of their cultural heritage, and the government continued to pursue "Sinicization" policies aimed to suppress ethnic Tibetans' cultural, religious, and linguistic identity. State policies disrupted 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, and weakening monasteries' role in Tibetan society, especially with respect to religious education.

In February the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights expressed concern regarding the involuntary resettlement of nomadic Tibetan herders. The committee recommended China "immediately halt" involuntary resettlement; undertake "meaningful consultations with

affected communities"; and "offer full, adequate, and timely compensation" to those affected.

In April a committee of UN experts also expressed concern over "labor transfer" and "vocational training" programs in the TAR. These programs reportedly coerced rural Tibetan workers into "vocational training centers," which promoted low-skilled work in manufacturing and construction. UN experts raised concerns about a lack of oversight to determine whether conditions constituted forced labor and reported cultural and political indoctrination. According to the report, Tibetans in the program were prevented from speaking Tibetan or expressing their religious identity.

Authorities limited the use of the Tibetan language in education and public life and punished those who promoted preservation of the language. In April RFA reported authorities continued to harass the founder and staff of a Tibetan language school in Dharlag (Dali) in Qinghai Province after forcing its closure in 2021. Former teachers and administrators faced frequent police summonses and interrogations, along with surveillance of their social interactions. Families were generally forbidden from paying for outside instruction in the Tibetan language.

In March Tibet Watch and RFA reported Zangkar Jamyang, a Tibetan writer arrested in 2020, was sentenced to four years' imprisonment for "inciting splittist acts and spreading rumors" after advocating for Tibetan cultural preservation, including preservation of the Tibetan language, in online discussions.

According to a report released by NGO Free Tibet in January, from 2021 to 2022 authorities in Luhuo (Drago) County, Sichuan Province, ordered the demolition of a series of Tibetan Buddhist religious sites and cultural institutions. Officials reportedly claimed that the sites, which included a 99-foot-tall bronze Buddha statue, a monastic school, prayer wheels, and a temple at the Drago Monastery, violated various building and fire codes or lacked proper authorization prior to construction. The report alleged local officials coerced influential Tibetan Buddhist monks into convincing locals to accept the demolitions, and later forced monks and residents to assist with the demolitions. Authorities detained 10 individuals for opposing the demolitions or for sending information about the demolitions outside China.

CHILDREN

Birth Registration: See section 6, Children, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023* for China.

Education: Despite laws protecting cultural and linguistic rights, including provisions 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," there was an active campaign to undermine the teaching and use of the Tibetan language in schools. Students at all levels had limited access to Tibetan language instruction and textbooks, particularly in the areas of "modern-day education," which referred to nontraditional, nonreligious subjects, particularly computer science, physical education, the arts, and other "modern" subjects.

The nationwide "centralized education" policy was in place in most rural areas. To ensure its success, authorities forced the closure of many village schools, even at the elementary level, and of monastic schools or other Tibetan-run schools. Students from closed schools were transferred to boarding schools in towns and cities, where instruction was generally in Mandarin only. There were multiple reports of parents reluctant to send their children away from home being intimidated and threatened.

In February UN experts warned that government policies affecting approximately one million children aimed to forcibly assimilate Tibetans culturally, religiously, and linguistically through the residential school system. The experts reported educational materials used in residential schools were built around the majority Han culture, required completion of a "compulsory education" curriculum in Mandarin Chinese, and denied Tibetan children access to traditional or culturally relevant learning. In keeping with government policy, authorities continued to close rural schools in Tibetan-majority areas, the experts said, forcing more Tibetan children to board at township- or county-level schools where instruction was almost exclusively in Mandarin. As a result, the experts assessed Tibetan children were losing their ability to communicate with parents and grandparents in the Tibetan language, contributing to the erosion of their identity. In March the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights raised similar concerns in its concluding observations to China's third periodic report.

Authorities enforced regulations limiting traditional monastic education to monks older than 18.

Child Abuse: See section 6, Children, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023* for China.

Child, Early, and Forced Marriage: See section 6, Children, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023* for China.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: See section 6, Children, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023* for China.

ANTISEMITISM

See section 6, Antisemitism, in the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023 for China.

TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS

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

ACTS OF VIOLENCE, CRIMINALIZATION, AND OTHER ABUSES BASED ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION, GENDER IDENTITY OR EXPRESSION, OR SEX CHARACTERISTICS

See section 6, Acts of Violence, Criminalization, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity or Expression, or Sex Characteristics, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023* for China.

PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

See section 6, Persons with Disabilities, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023* for China.

Section 7.

Worker Rights

See section 7, Worker Rights, in the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2023 for China.

Associated documents

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