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2021 Country Report on Human Rights Practices: China (Includes Hong Kong, Macau, and Tibet) - Tibet

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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. 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 credible reports of: unlawful or arbitrary killings, including extrajudicial killings by the government; torture and cases of cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment or punishment by the government; arbitrary arrest or detention; political prisoners; politically motivated reprisals 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 and media, including censorship; serious restrictions on internet freedom including 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 government corruption; coerced abortion or forced sterilization; and violence or threats of violence targeting indigenous persons.

Disciplinary procedures for officials were opaque, and aside from vague allegations of corruption or violations of “party discipline,” 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

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

There were public reports or credible allegations the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) reported in January that Buddhist monk Tenzin Nyima died in late December 2020 or early January after suffering severe beatings over the course of many months. Sources told HRW that the beatings and other mistreatment left Tenzin in a coma, severely malnourished, and likely paralyzed when he died. Phayul.com reported in May that Norsang (no last name), held incommunicado after his 2019 detention for refusing to participate in People’s Republic of China (PRC)-led political re-education training, was allegedly tortured to death. According to the report, Norsang died in 2019 while in the custody of local security officials, who did not reveal his death until May.

b. Disappearance

There were no credible reports of disappearances, although the whereabouts of many persons detained by security officials was unknown (see information on incommunicado detention in section 1.c., below).

Gen Sonam, a senior manager of the Potala Palace, was reportedly detained in 2019, and his whereabouts remained unknown.

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 they were disappeared, allegedly by or on behalf of PRC authorities in 1995, when he was six years old.

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

According to 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. In February the Tibet Sun reported Kunchok Jinpa, a political prisoner serving a 21-year sentence, died in a hospital shortly after his release from prison. According to the report, Kunchok died from a severe brain hemorrhage resulting from beatings he endured in prison.

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. Radio Free Asia (RFA) reported in March that Gangbu Rikgye Nyima, serving a 10-year sentence for participation in protests, was released in February, a year early. According to RFA, the release came about because Gangbu’s health had deteriorated badly due to beatings and torture in prison.

RFA reported in September that Tibetan monk Thabgey Gyatso was released after serving 12 years of his 15-year sentence. Sources told RFA that “due to harsh treatment in the prison, his vision and overall health have become very weak.”

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

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: Independent observers with access to members of the Tibetan community believed that in many cases officials denied visitors, including attorneys, 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. Pretrial bail procedures are codified under the PRC law, but Tibetans and others who have been detained for politically sensitive reasons are denied access to pretrial release. According to criminal law, public security officers may 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 the person 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.

Despite the laws and regulatory procedures, incommunicado detention was a common practice. In one case, multiple nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and news agencies reported Tibetan writer Go Sherab Gyatso was arrested in October 2020 in Chengdu, Sichuan; no further information about his whereabouts or the charges was released. Media and NGOs also reported that Rinchen Tsultrim's whereabouts remained unknown. Rinchen had been detained in late summer 2019 at the Ngabao Public Security Bureau in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) and was allegedly charged with “incitement to split the country.”

Arbitrary Arrest: Derung Tsering Dhundrup, a senior Tibetan scholar who was also the deputy secretary of the Sichuan Tibet Studies Society, was reportedly detained in 2019. Local reports suggested he was released in April under strict parole conditions; his whereabouts were unknown at year's end.

On July 6, HRW published an extensive report on a crackdown, beginning in 2019, on monks in the Tengdro Monastery in Tingri County, TAR. The crackdown began after police searched the mobile phone of monk Choegyal Wangpo and found images of the Dalai Lama and records of messages with Tibetans overseas. Police reportedly detained, interrogated, and beat Wangpo and then raided a nearby village, detaining approximately 20 monks and subjecting villagers to political re-education sessions. One monk, Lobsang Zoepa, reportedly took his own life in protest. Most of the monks were released but four, including Wangpo, were held for more than a year before being tried in secret and sentenced to nearly 20 years in prison.

Tibet.net reported a case in which Konmay (no last name), a Tibetan monk in Ngaba, Sichuan, was arrested in July for unknown reasons.

On July 6, Chinese authorities reportedly arrested 19 monks and approximately 40 Tibetans in Dza Wonpo in Ganz Autonomous Tibetan Prefecture, Sichuan Province. Those held allegedly possessed pictures of the Dalai Lama. Media reported the arrests followed several months of heightened restrictions and surveillance in the area. On August 25, authorities summoned residents ages 18 and older to a town meeting, with penalties for failure to attend. At the meeting, authorities demanded that residents “follow the Communist party” and prohibited residents from keeping pictures of the Dalai Lama or sharing “sensitive information” with Tibetans in exile, according to media reports.

Pretrial Detention: Security officials frequently violated the legal limits for pretrial detention, 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

There is no judicial independence from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) or the PRC government in law or practice. In August for example, the TAR Higher People's Court announced the hiring of six court clerks. Among the job requirements was successful passage of a “political background check” by candidates and all their family members. In cases that authorities claimed involved “endangering state security” or “separatism,” trials often were cursory and closed.

In July HRW issued a report detailing the September 2020 denial of a fair trial to four Tibetan monks from the Tengro Monastery in Tingri County, TAR. The report indicated that the four were arrested for having foreign contacts. Their access to lawyers and to the evidence used against them was restricted and no details of their trial were made public.

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 many cases lawyers were unwilling to take clients due to political risks or because Tibetan families often did not have the resources to cover legal fees. In rare cases, defendants were denied access to legal representation entirely. For example, Tashi Wangdui, a Tibetan HIV and AIDS awareness campaigner sentenced to life imprisonment in 2008 for “endangering state security,” has been denied access to any of his lawyers since his conviction.

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.

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.

FreeTibet.net reported in November that well-known Tibetan writer Lobsang Lhundup (pen name: Dhi Lhaden) had been sentenced to four years in prison. Lobsang had been arbitrarily detained in Chengdu in 2019 before the FreeTibet.net report indicated he was charged with “disrupting social order.” According to the report, Lobsang was sentenced after a “secret trial”; no further details were provided.

Outside observers examined publicly available information and, as of late May, identified between 500 and 2,000 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 information available on sentencing, punishment ranged from 15 months’ to life imprisonment. These data, for both overall detentions and sentencing, were believed to cover only a small fraction of the actual number of political prisoners.

In January official media reported that in 2020 the TAR prosecutor’s office approved the arrest and prosecution of 74 individuals allegedly 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.

Threats, Harassment, Surveillance, and Coercion: The Tibetan overseas community is frequently subjected to harassment, monitoring, and cyberattacks believed to be carried out by the PRC government. In September the Jamestown Foundation reported on tactics PRC officials used to target Tibetan activists overseas and the Tibetan diaspora community. The report described the secret infiltration of communities, reporting on Tibetans, and the use of disinformation. The report also indicated that Chinese consulates abroad often collect data from family members applying for visas to use the information to identify and target Tibetans in the PRC. Media outlets reported PRC government efforts to hack into the mobile phones of officials in the Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and of several leaders of the Central Tibetan Administration, the overseas Tibetan community’s governance organization. The PRC government at times compelled Tibetans in China to pressure family members seeking asylum overseas to return.

Bilateral Pressure: 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 postponed action on the extradition treaty.

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 cell phones. Authorities continued to employ pervasive surveillance systems, including the use of facial recognition and smart identity cards.

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. Tibet.net reported in March that TAR authorities issued new regulations designed to encourage Tibetans to spy on each other. The article noted that the PRC often tests the loyalty of Tibetans by having them report on each other. 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), six times the average per capita GDP in the TAR, according to local media.

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 PRC President Xi Jinping in prominent positions and were subject to inspections and fines for noncompliance. In a May case, media reported local officials sentenced a Tibetan herder from Qinghai Province for having “Tibet-related” material on his mobile phone.

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. Pharul.com reported in August that in April PRC authorities ordered Tibetans in Shigatse Prefecture, Dingri County, TAR to provide a list of their relatives living overseas. The demand followed similar efforts elsewhere in the TAR. Failure to do so would result in these individuals losing PRC-provided benefits.

The government also interfered with the ability of persons to find employment. Media reports in May noted that advertisements for 286 positions 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.

Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties

a. Freedom of Expression, Including for Members of the Press and Other Media

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

Freedom of Expression: Authorities in the TAR and other Tibetan regions punished persons for the vaguely defined crime of “creating and spreading rumors.” Voice of America reported in March that three Tibetans were arrested for “violating regulations” by establishing a WeChat group. 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.”

The Tibet Post reported in March that Rinchen Tsultrim, a Tibetan monk from the TAR, was sentenced to four and a half years for contacting Tibetans overseas. Tibet.net reported in August that PRC authorities arrested three men for posting photographs on their social media accounts and charged them with sharing information with overseas Tibetans.

RFA reported in August that authorities in Sichuan Province arrested 60 Tibetans for allegedly having photos of the Dalai Lama on their mobile phones. Security officials held a community meeting three days later to inform the local populace that they were prohibited from having photographs of the Dalai Lama.

In September RFA reported that two Tibetans in Qinghai were detained for discussing China’s Sinicization policy. The two men had apparently discussed on WeChat PRC policies and how they related to Tibet, resulting in their arrest.

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.

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 2021” 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 August Politburo Standing Committee member Wang Yang and TAR Communist Party secretary Wu Yingjie publicly urged everyone to follow Xi Jinping and avoid the Dalai Lama “clique” and separatist forces.

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. In June Reuters reported observing a broadening of China’s political education campaign among lay individuals and religious figures in the TAR. The report included monks indicating that President Xi was their “spiritual leader.” Reuters also reported that Tibet’s College of Buddhism began focusing on political and cultural education aligned with CCP teaching.

Freedom of Expression for Members of the Press and Other 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 there to display “loyalty to the party and motherland.” The deputy head of the TAR Propaganda Department simultaneously held a prominent position in the TAR Journalist Association, a state-controlled professional association to which local journalists must belong.

Throughout the year, the TAR implemented its “Regulations on Establishing a Model Area for Ethnic Unity and Progress,” which mandated media organizations to cooperate with ethnic unity propaganda work and criminalized speech or spreading information “damaging to ethnic unity.”

In June TAR party secretary Wu Yingjie held a special region-wide mobilization conference on propaganda and political ideological topics; 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 them.

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 (no last name), 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 2021 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 in other parts of the PRC. Some of these persons deleted their social media contacts or shut down their accounts completely.

RFA reported in April that six influential Tibetan writers, monks, and cultural figures were arrested in Sichuan. Four of the individuals, Gangkye Drubpa Kyab, Sey Nam, Gangbu Yudrum, and Gang Tsering Dolma, were named in the RFA report, but two of the individuals remained unknown.

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.

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 RFA’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 March, police in the TAR city of Shigatse seized and destroyed “illegal publications” as well as illegal equipment for satellite signal reception.

Internet Freedom

There was no internet freedom. In July, 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. In its *Freedom in the World 2021* report, Freedom House noted that authorities also monitored and censored Tibet-related keywords on WeChat.

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 June the TAR Cyber Security and Information Office held its second annual 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 pressured 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 CCP had not organized or approved.

Reuters reported in June that the state-run College of Buddhism in Lhasa spent approximately 40 percent of its study program teaching political and cultural education. The vice director of the college, Kelsang Wandui, said, “We are under the leadership of the Communist Party now, of course we must learn about politics.”

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 2020 report by the Jamestown Foundation alleged an ostensible vocational training and job placement program run by the government during the first seven months of that 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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Tibet Watch reported that in July, PRC authorities forcibly shut down a private Tibetan language school in Qinghai and in August arrested Rinchen Kyi, one of its longest-serving teachers. PRC authorities ultimately charged Rinchen with inciting separatism.

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 April the TAR Religious Affairs Bureau in Ngari Prefecture held a second training course (the first was in August 2020) 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 “in accordance with the law and continue to promote Sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism 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 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 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.

Freedom of Association

In accordance with PRC law, only civil society 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 and the Right to Leave the Country

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. During the year, the TAR and other Tibetan areas were often in "closed-management," which restricted Tibetans' in-country movement. This also meant all major sites, including monasteries and cultural sites, were closed.

People's Armed Police and local public security bureaus have 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. 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 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 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: Even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic which prompted authorities to limit the issuance of passports, Tibetans faced significant hurdles in acquiring passports. For Buddhist monks and nuns it was virtually impossible. Sources reported that Tibetans and members of certain other ethnic minority groups 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. Authorities' unwillingness to issue new or renew old passports in effect created a ban on foreign travel for the Tibetan population.

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 abroad.

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. 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 was often restricted around sensitive dates. PRC 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: 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 many cases this condition was interpreted to require candidates to be CCP members and denounce the Dalai Lama.

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; nonetheless, 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.

Corruption: Local sources said investigations into corruption in the TAR and autonomous prefectures were rare.

Section 5. Governmental Posture Towards 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. PRC law on the activities of overseas NGOs limits 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. PRC government officials were not cooperative or responsive to the views of Tibetan or foreign human rights groups.

Section 6. Discrimination and Societal Abuses

Women

Rape and Domestic Violence: See section 6, Women, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2021* for China.

Sexual Harassment: See section 6, Women, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2021* for China.

Reproductive Rights: See section 6, Women, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2021* for China.

Discrimination: See section 6, Women, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2021* for China.

Systemic Racial or Ethnic Violence and Discrimination

Although observers believe that 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, 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.

Government propaganda against alleged Tibetan “proindependence 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.

There were reports in prior years that some employers specifically barred Tibetans and other minority-group members from applying for job openings. There were, however, no media reports of this type of discrimination.

Children

Birth Registration: See section 6, Children, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2021* for China.

Education: The PRC’s nationwide “centralized education” policy was in place in most rural areas. To ensure its success, the policy 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. There were multiple reports of parents reluctant to send their children away from home being intimidated and threatened.

The Tibet Action Institute issued a report in December that detailed the significant changes in PRC Sinicization policies in the TAR and other Tibetan-inhabited areas made to the education of Tibetan children. The report cited PRC statistics that showed approximately 800,000 Tibetan children (nearly 78 percent of Tibetan students ages 6 to 18) attending state-run boarding schools. An unknown but increasing number of 4- and 5-year-old children were also enrolled in boarding schools. Ethnic Chinese children, even in rural areas, attend boarding schools at far lower rates.

The report contends that these boarding schools and other PRC Sinicization efforts are “part of a deliberate effort by the state to eliminate the core of Tibetan identity and replace it with a hollowed-out version compatible with the Party’s aims.” Among the features that promote this outcome: instruction is almost entirely in Mandarin Chinese; there is no provision for religious or cultural activities; and the highly politicized curriculum emphasizes Chinese identity. These and other aspects of education policy 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” beginning at the preschool level.

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.

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. FreeTibet.net reported in November that Qinghai authorities expelled 80 monks from their monasteries. The report indicated that PRC authorities claimed the monks were younger than 18.

Child, Early, and Forced Marriage: See section 6, Children, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2021* for China.

Sexual Exploitation of Children: See section 6, Children, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2021* for China.

International Child Abductions: See section 6, Children, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2021* for China.

Anti-Semitism

See section 6, Anti-Semitism, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2021* for China.

Trafficking in Persons

See the Department of State's *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 2021* for China.

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 2021* for China.

Section 7. Worker Rights

See section 7, Worker Rights, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2021* for China.

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