

April 28, 2022

**Re: Sikyong/President's testimony to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development**

Honourable Chair Sven Spengemann and members of the committee;

As part of the testimony to the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development on May 5th, Penpa Tsering, the President of the Central Tibetan Administration, hopes to highlight the ongoing human rights violations in Tibet and ask for Canada's support to the resumption of the Sino-Tibetan dialogue. In particular, the testimony will include discussions on:

- **Canada's support to the resumption of Sino-Tibetan dialogue:** The PRC's return to totalitarian ideology in the recent years has led to even more control over Tibetans with a sharp increase in the arbitrary arrest, detention, and torture of human rights defenders and activists calling for the right to sustainable development, environmental protection, land rights, language freedom, and cultural rights in Tibet. Earlier this year, Tsewang Norbu, a Tibetan pop star, set himself on fire in front of the Potala Palace. Tsewang was a popular Tibetan singer, and his actions do not comprehend the Tibet promoted by the PRC as a region liberated by its "Poverty Alleviation" program. On March 28th, the Chinese foreign ministry suggested Mr. Norbu might still be alive, but there are no reputable sources for these claims. Acknowledging the deteriorating situation in Tibet, Canada needs to strengthen its support for meaningful dialogue between the two parties toward resolving the issue.

Moreover, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, an Honorary Canadian citizen, is turning 87 this July. His Holiness has spent his entire life committing to promoting broader awareness of the oneness of humanity. Therefore, I urge the Canadian Government to support and help negotiate the resumption of Sino-Tibetan dialogue and His Holiness's safe return to Tibet.

- **Recognizing impact of climate change on the Tibetan people and their rights:** While it has been a challenge to promote discussions on the significance of the Tibetan plateau, it is far more challenging to encourage discussions on how the human rights of the Tibetan people are disrupted by climate change and by the Chinese government policies and practices that exacerbate the situation in Tibet. Tibetans who raise environmental concerns are branded separatists, imprisoned, tortured, or killed. In December 2019, A Nya Sengdra, a Tibetan nomad environmental activist from eastern Tibet, was sentenced to seven years in prison. The government charged A-Nya with "gathering people to disturb public order" when he was merely opposing China's failed Tibet policies and championing environmental protection. Such a crackdown of voices results in no accountability mechanism for PRC's environmental policies in the Tibetan Plateau.

- **Recognizing the religious freedom of Tibetan people:** The PRC's targeted policy in Tibet, known as 'adapting religion to socialism with Chinese characteristics and 'sinicizing Tibetan Buddhism', has led to an increase in compulsory political re-education campaigns and an erosion of flexibility at the local level to control the religious education of minors and limitations on informal places of the workshop.

Tibetan religious institutions are also targeted for their role in promoting Tibetan language education, as evidenced by the issuance of local directives forbidding monastic institutions from holding Tibetan language workshops. The whereabouts of the 11th Panchen Lama, who was kidnapped by the Chinese government in 1995 when he was only six years old, are still unknown. Next week, May 17th, marks the 27th anniversary of his disappearance. Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his family members' enforced disappearance is a continuous crime against him, his family, and the Tibetan people and against every individual who believes in the sanctity of human rights. It is an interference in the sacred Buddhist traditions of recognizing the reincarnation of lamas and sets a dangerous precedent for possible interference in identifying the reincarnations of future Dalai Lamas.

- **Consideration of the rights of Tibetan people to equality and prohibition of discrimination in Canada's trade agreement with China:** The "national treatment" principle applies to all trade agreements, ensuring that foreign goods, services, and nationals receive treatment equal to their domestic counterparts. A challenge to be addressed in any trade agreement between Canada and China, sectoral or otherwise, is that while Canadian nationals may receive treatment equal to that enjoyed by Chinese nationals, Tibetans face systemic discrimination within China.

For example, although travel documents are essential for participation in international trade, almost no passports have been issued to ordinary Tibetans since 2012. Meanwhile, the number of passports issued to Chinese nationals has risen by 20% each year in the same period. For those few Tibetans who have obtained travel documents, strict new regulations limit their activities outside China. They are required to report for questioning by authorities upon return to Tibet. Such limitations, imposed only on Tibetans, have a discriminatory impact on corporate competition and privacy.

Tibetans, like all workers in China, concerning labor rights, are denied the right to form a free trade union or bargain collectively for better health, safety, and remuneration. Tibetan workers also face additional discrimination based on their ethnicity and lower levels of education. Skills development among Tibetans is outpaced by evolving demand, and migrant workers from other parts of China fill the shortfall, entrenching inequalities. When Tibetans are hired, it is not uncommon for them to be paid lower wages than their Chinese counterparts doing the same work.

Thank you,  
*Stherchin*  
Sherap Therchin  
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