

# THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN TIBET AND THE INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

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## HEARING BEFORE THE CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS SECOND SESSION SEPTEMBER 30, 2020

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# THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN TIBET AND THE INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2020

CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE  
COMMISSION ON CHINA,  
*Washington, DC.*

The hearing was convened virtually, pursuant to notice, at 10:08 a.m., Representative James P. McGovern, Chair, presiding.

Also present virtually: Senators Rubio, King, Cotton, Daines, and Peters and Representatives Smith, McAdams, Hartzler, Levin, and Suozzi.

## **OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES P. MCGOVERN, A U.S. REPRESENTATIVE FROM MASSACHUSETTS AND CHAIR, CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA**

Chair MCGOVERN. Good morning, and welcome to today's hearing of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, on the Human Rights Situation in Tibet and the International Response.

While the world is rightly focused on the crimes against humanity and perhaps genocide in Xinjiang, and the dismantling of Hong Kong's autonomy and rule of law, the human rights situation in Tibet continues to deteriorate. More than 60 years have passed since the Dalai Lama escaped into exile, and Tibetans in China are still struggling to exercise their basic rights—to speak and teach their language, protect their culture, control their land and water, travel within and outside their country, and practice their religion as they choose.

Religious freedom continues to be severely curtailed, including through mandatory political education for religious leaders and arrests of Tibetans who display or even possess a photo of the Dalai Lama. Several buildings or religious centers of Tibetan Buddhist learning have been demolished. Religious practitioners have been expelled from Larung Gar and Yarchen Gar, which used to be the home of thousands of Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns. It has now been 25 years since the 11th Panchen Lama was abducted and forcibly disappeared, making him one of the world's longest-detained prisoners of conscience. We continue to call for his immediate and unconditional release.

This year, ethnic unity regulations were passed that mandate acceptance and promotion of government ethnic and religious policy. There has also been a Chinese government-led effort—misleadingly referred to as bilingual education—instituted in minority areas throughout China, that mandates that schools and teachers shift to Mandarin as the language of instruction. This vio-

lation of linguistic rights in Tibet is also being implemented in Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia, where new limits on Mongolian language instruction recently sparked a large-scale demonstration. In the name of poverty alleviation and environmental protection, Tibetan herders and nomads are under pressure to give up their traditional land rights and way of life, displaced according to the whims of the government and business.

Make no mistake about it, Chinese authorities are engaged in a systematic effort to eliminate the distinct religious, linguistic, and cultural identity of the Tibetan people. They are in clear violation of China's international obligation to protect human rights and religious freedom and to respect the rights of indigenous peoples and tribal and ethnic minorities. Access to Tibet remains tightly controlled, with journalists reporting that it is difficult to visit Tibet—it is as difficult to visit Tibet as it is North Korea. As a result, human rights abuses and environmental degradation are concealed from the world.

In 2018, Congress passed the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act. And I was heartened to finally see the Trump Administration implement this legislation by restricting visas for Chinese officials involved in blocking access to Tibet areas. However, a special coordinator for Tibetan issues has still not been appointed, as mandated by law. Every other U.S. President over the last two decades has made this appointment. Not doing so sends a signal that the human rights of the Tibetan people are not a priority for the President or the U.S. Government.

I am very concerned about recent reports that systematic and large-scale training and transfer of Tibetan rural surplus laborers to work in factories is taking place. This program seems eerily similar to Uyghur forced labor abuses that have been well documented by this Commission. I am also concerned about the targeting of the Tibetan diaspora, including such tactics as allegedly engaging a New York police officer to gather intelligence for the Chinese government about the New York Tibetan community.

I look forward to hearing more about these issues from our witnesses today. In a white paper last year, the Chinese government restated its claim that it has the sole authority to control the next reincarnation of the Dalai Lama, in clear violation of the religious freedom of the Tibetan Buddhist community. In light of new threats to interfere in the reincarnation process and the increased human rights violations, U.S. policy toward Tibet needs to be updated, and it needs to be strengthened. In January 2020, the House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed the Tibetan Policy and Support Act by a vote of 392 to 22. At a time when Democrats and Republicans can't even agree on what to have for lunch, this bipartisanship shows overwhelming support for human rights in Tibet and for the Tibetan people.

This legislation will establish a U.S. policy that the succession or reincarnation of Tibetan Buddhist leaders—including a future 15th Dalai Lama—is an exclusively religious matter that should be decided solely by the Tibetan Buddhist community; state that Chinese officials who interfere in the succession or reincarnation process will be subject to targeted sanctions, including those contained in the Global Magnitsky Act; strengthen the role of the State De-

partment and the special coordinator for Tibetan issues by including a mandate to work multilaterally; mandate that no new Chinese consulate should be established in the United States until a U.S. consulate is established in Tibet; direct the State Department to begin multinational efforts to protect the environment and water resources of the Tibetan Plateau; and support democratic government in the Tibetan exile community.

It is long past time for the Senate to act on this legislation. Frankly, I'm not sure why it has not moved forward. I hope that my Senate colleagues and all those who support human rights in Tibet will contact the leadership in the Senate and ask them to pass this bipartisan legislation as soon as possible. Our hearing today will examine the current situation facing Tibetans, both inside China and globally, explore restrictions on linguistic and religious rights, and identify diplomatic and multilateral options to address restrictions on access and the process of religious succession.

[The prepared statement of Chair McGovern appears in the Appendix.]

And I can't see him—I'm not sure whether Senator Rubio is on the line or not. I don't see him yet. But we'll go to him. Let me—before we go to Senator Rubio, let me ask whether any of my other colleagues would like to say anything? And I see Senator King. I don't know whether you'd like to make a few opening remarks.

Senator KING. I really don't have any additional comments, Mr. Chairman. You covered the field well and I'm anxious to hear from our witnesses today. Thank you.

Chair MCGOVERN. Thank you very much. Is Representative Chris Smith here?

STAFF. Mr. Smith is in the Africa Subcommittee—in the Africa hearing. But he has remarks that he would like to give when he returns in a few minutes.

Chair MCGOVERN. OK. All right. I see Mr. Suozzi.

Representative SUOZZI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll wait until the witnesses have a chance to speak and then make a statement and ask some questions at that time.

Chair MCGOVERN. Senator Cotton or Senator Daines, Representative Hartzler?

Representative HARTZLER. No, I'll withhold my comments till later. You've covered a lot already, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chair MCGOVERN. OK. Thank you. And Andy Levin?

Representative LEVIN. If you will wait, Mr. Chairman. I'm looking forward to asking questions.

Chair MCGOVERN. And I see Senator Peters.

Senator PETERS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll also defer until after the witnesses have a chance to make their presentation.

Chair MCGOVERN. All right. So everybody's deferring. All right. So I'll now go to the panel. I'm proud to introduce our esteemed panel of expert witnesses this morning. The panel includes Zeekgyab Rinpoche, who was recognized by the Dalai Lama as a reincarnated lama. His lineage has close connections to Tashi Lhunpo Monastery and the Panchen Lama. Rinpoche has completed over three decades of Buddhist studies at key centers of learning in India. He was appointed Abbot of the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in South India by the Dalai Lama.

Matteo Mecacci serves as the president at the International Campaign for Tibet. He previously served in the Italian Parliament as a member of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, during which time he served as chairperson of the Italian parliamentary group for Tibet. He also served as an elected official of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

Tenzin Dorjee is a Tibetan activist, writer, and senior researcher and strategist at Tibet Action Institute, graduated from the Tibetan Refugee School System in India, and immigrated to the United States under the Tibetan Resettlement Project's family reunification program. He's the former director of Students for a Free Tibet.

And last, but certainly not least, Sophie Richardson. She's the China Director at Human Rights Watch. Dr. Richardson is the author of numerous articles on domestic Chinese political reform, democratization, and human rights in Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Hong Kong, the Philippines, and Vietnam. She's testified before the European Parliament and the United States Senate and House of Representatives on many occasions.

I want to thank you for all being here today, and we look forward to hearing your testimony. And we will begin with Zeekgyab Rinpoche. And just make sure you unmute, OK?

**STATEMENT OF ZEEKGYAB RINPOCHE,  
ABBOT OF TASHI LHUNPO MONASTERY**

[Note: Zeekgyab Rinpoche's remarks were made through an interpreter.]

ZEEKGYAB RINPOCHE. Chairman McGovern, Chairman Rubio, respected members of the Commission, thank you for organizing this very important hearing and for the opportunity to speak today. I am the abbot of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery. My monastery was founded by the first Dalai Lama, and for 500 years has served as the seat of the Panchen Lama, one of the most important figures in Tibetan Buddhism, with spiritual authority second only to the Dalai Lama.

The Panchen Lama is of immense significance to my monastery, to the 6 million Tibetans in Tibet, and to the millions of Buddhists worldwide. In 1995, His Holiness the Dalai Lama recognized a 6-year-old boy, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, as the 11th Panchen Lama. Three days later, the Chinese government abducted this boy, making him the world's youngest prisoner at the time. Twenty-five years have passed since the Panchen Lama's abduction. Despite persistent appeals from concerned governments, UN bodies, rights groups, and sympathetic individuals across the world, the Chinese government to this day refuses to provide verifiable information about the Panchen Lama's whereabouts, his well-being, or evidence to prove that he is even alive today.

Instead, China has propped up another boy as the Panchen Lama, a false reincarnation whom we Tibetan Buddhists do not accept. China's glaring lack of accountability over the kidnapping of such an important religious figure, and a child at that, is an outrageous and unprincipled act. This violates the very basic right that Tibetan Buddhists should have to choose our own spiritual leaders. This raises the question, why did the Chinese government



kidnap a 6-year-old boy, the genuine reincarnate, and prop up a false Panchen Lama? In Tibetan history, the unique relationship of the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama is well known. The popular saying is: As the sun and the moon are in the sky, so are the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama on Earth.

Since the 17th century, the Panchen Lamas and the Dalai Lamas have played key roles in recognizing and teaching each other's reincarnations. In the past century, the 9th Panchen Lama helped identify His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, who in turn recognized the 10th and 11th Panchen Lamas. Given this traditional practice, the Chinese government will surely use its false Panchen Lama to interfere in the selection of the next Dalai Lama and other high reincarnates. Therefore, all of us Tibetan Buddhists the world over, and supporters of religious freedom, should be deeply concerned. It is clear that the Chinese policy over Tibet is a deliberate attempt to remove from the face of the Earth our racial and cultural identity.

This is clearly seen in the way the Chinese government interferes and intervenes in the functioning of the monastic education system, by imposing restrictions on our monks and nuns. Even in our schools, we see this malign design to wipe out our unique identity in the form of restructuring the curriculum and banning the learning of the Tibetan language. In short, there is a continuous and systematic destruction of our culture, religion, language, and environment in Tibet. Therefore, to safeguard the rights of Tibetan Buddhists worldwide, to choose our spiritual leaders without interference by the Chinese government, and to secure the release of the Panchen Lama, I respectfully offer three suggestions to this Commission.

First, on the crucial issue of the selection of the next Dalai Lama, the entire matter should be left to the total discretion and vision of the Dalai Lama—without any interference and imposition from the CCP. Please do devise a coordinated strategy in unity with allies and present a strong collective stance to challenge the CCP's authoritarian regime's ominous moves on this matter.

Second, please work toward establishing similar contact networks with the many Tibetan parliamentarians, support groups, and caucuses that exist around the world. These contact groups could facilitate the sharing of model resolutions and legislation, such as the Tibet Policy and Support Act, among its members.

Third, I call upon sympathetic governments, NGOs, and Tibet support groups to investigate the whereabouts of the Panchen Lama, and those abducted with him, so that we have clear and accurate information on their whereabouts, including current photos of the Panchen Lama, his family members, and Jhadrel Rinpoche. We simply cannot keep urging transparency from China, which has shown no intention of transparency on this matter and other human rights issues. Lastly, I request the U.S. Senate to approve the Tibet Policy and Support Act. If passed, this legislation will bring much-needed hope to the Tibetan people as they struggle to survive during this dark period of persecution and illegal occupation by China.

Thank you for the honor of testifying before you. And thank you for your ongoing support of human rights and religious freedom of the Tibetan people.

[The prepared statement of Zeekgyab Rinpoche appears in the Appendix.]

Chair MCGOVERN. Thank you very, very much.  
We'll now turn to Matteo Mecacci.

**STATEMENT OF MATTEO MECACCI, PRESIDENT, INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET AND FORMER MEMBER OF THE ITALIAN PARLIAMENT**

Mr. MECACCI. Chairman McGovern, Chairman Rubio, members of the Commission, thank you for inviting me to testify today. Tomorrow is the 71st anniversary of the establishment of the People's Republic of China. And while every nation is entitled to celebrate its founding, no government should lose sight of the fact that its first and main responsibility is to serve and protect all its citizens by respecting their fundamental rights. Since the People's Republic of China invaded Tibet almost 70 years ago, it has kept very tight control on all aspects of Tibetan life. The deterioration of human rights in Tibet today continues to be very serious. Over the last four years, Freedom House has consistently ranked Tibet as the second-least-free region of the world—behind only Syria.

Tibetans can be persecuted for their beliefs. And to ensure government surveillance on Tibetan monks and nuns, police stations have been opened inside or next to monasteries. Tibetans can be arrested simply for owning photographs of the Dalai Lama or celebrating his birthday, or for watching videos of his teachings. China is also trying to control the Tibetan reincarnation system, as we've just heard from Zeekgyab Rinpoche. After abducting the Panchen Lama and his family when he was just six years old in 1995, the Chinese Communist Party now plans to select the next Dalai Lama—an absurd claim that the international community needs to challenge decisively. And there are encouraging signs from European governments and the United Nations, in addition to the State Department.

At the end of August, Xi Jinping presided over the Seventh Tibet Work Forum held in Beijing. The meeting's proceedings indicate that the Chinese leadership will continue its policy of control and assimilation in Tibet. Worryingly, Xi Jinping called for the patriotic reeducation of the younger generation of Tibetans, and asked officials to—(inaudible)—and I quote, “strengthen ideological and political education in schools, put the spirit of patriotism throughout the entire process of school education at all levels and types, and plant the seeds of loving China in the depths of the hearts of every teenager.”

In a report released on September 22nd, scholar Adrian Zenz documented the large-scale program established in the Tibet Autonomous Region that in the first seven months of 2020 pushed more than half a million rural Tibetans off their land and into military-style training centers. These are staggering numbers. After their first training, at least 50,000 of them were sent to other areas of Tibet and China and pushed into low-wage factory and construction work. The report highlights the Chinese authorities' attempts

to eliminate Tibetans' traditional lifestyle, their unique identity, and their way of thinking. It also highlights disturbing similarities with the system of coercion, vocational training, and labor transfer established in Xinjiang over the last few years.

In the wake of this new report, more than 60 parliamentarians from 16 countries from the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China have issued a statement demanding urgent action to confront such policies. As we discuss how the United States and the international community should shape and adjust its Tibet policy, it must be noted that under the leadership of Chairmen McGovern and Rubio, at the end of 2018 the U.S. Congress passed the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act—the first legislation to apply the principle of reciprocity in U.S.-China relations. As documented by the State Department in its latest report, the Chinese government continues to keep Tibet under lockdown. And as a result of this legislation, last July the State Department, for the first time, banned from the United States the Chinese officials who are responsible for blocking Americans' access to Tibet.

This call for reciprocal access to Tibet has also been endorsed by MPs around the world in an op-ed published last June by over 50 European MPs, following a report by my organization. There is a growing awareness in European capitals and in Asia of the challenge posed by the authoritarian model of development promoted by Beijing. Calling for reciprocity, not only on economic and financial issues, but also for civil liberties and human rights, is an effective way to challenge China's narrative. But it should be done in a strategic, well-coordinated, and international fashion—which is still not the case.

Last January the House of Representatives, as mentioned by Chairman McGovern, passed the Tibetan Policy and Support Act. This is now before the Senate. And we call on Senators to pass it before the end of the year. Tibetan Americans, ICT members, and Tibet supporters sent several thousand petitions to Senate offices urging support for the TPSA. This will be a powerful message of hope to the Tibetan people, who are otherwise faced with the daily oppressive policies of the Chinese authorities. The legislation affirms that it's only up to Tibetan Buddhists to select the next Dalai Lama, without any government interference. It acknowledges, also, the fragility of Tibet's environment and the key role Tibetans play in its preservation.

The TPSA also expands the mandate of the special coordinator for Tibetan issues—a senior position at the State Department which, unfortunately, has never been filled during the last four years. The absence of a special coordinator could be one reason why there hasn't been much movement on the Tibetan dialogue process from the Administration side. With only a few months left in the current term of the Administration to do anything meaningful, the next Administration, whether it's Republican or Democratic, should quickly appoint a special coordinator for Tibetan issues at the undersecretary level, not at the lower-level position, because doing that will send the wrong political message of diminished U.S. support for Tibet both to the Chinese government and to the Tibetan people.

While talking about the post-election Administration, we have launched a Tibet 2020 campaign, so that the Presidential candidates of both parties are apprised of the American people's strong desire for Tibet to be a high priority. We look forward to working with the White House and Congress in our common objective of supporting the people of Tibet to regain their rights and dignity. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Matteo Macacci appears in the Appendix.]

Chair MCGOVERN. Thank you very much. Before we go to our next witness I'm going to yield to our cochair Senator Rubio for anything he would like to say.

**STATEMENT OF HON. MARCO RUBIO, A U.S. SENATOR FROM FLORIDA AND COCHAIR, CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA**

Senator RUBIO. I'll be very brief. I'm sorry I'm late. It's been pretty crazy here. And I haven't even left the house yet. So I appreciate your holding this hearing, Chairman. And obviously this is a very important issue. I hope that we can act legislatively on it. We have to continue to talk about, clearly, the outrages we've seen with the Uyghur population in Xinjiang. It's something we need to continue to focus on. But the ongoing abuse of the Tibetan people, the effort to strip them of their ethnic and religious identity, is an outrage that's been documented for a long time, but one that we cannot lose focus on, and one that we need to continue to update—as I just heard the previous witness say—update our foreign policy to continue to reflect forward.

So thank you for holding this hearing. I'm late, so I don't want to take up any more time. I know everybody's running around with different things going on. So I appreciate it. And thanks for holding this hearing.

Chair MCGOVERN. Thank you very much.  
I now yield to Tenzin Dorjee.

**STATEMENT OF TENZIN DORJEE, ACTIVIST AND WRITER, AND SENIOR RESEARCHER AT THE TIBET ACTION INSTITUTE**

Mr. DORJEE. Thank you, Chairman McGovern, Cochair Mr. Rubio, and members of the Commission for allowing me to testify on behalf of the Tibetan people.

Over the course of seven decades the Chinese government has waged an unrelenting campaign of violence and coercion aimed at eradicating the Tibetan people's faith, identity, and way of life. As China becomes a global power, the threat it poses to freedom and human rights goes far beyond Tibet. Beijing's surveillance and influence operations are undermining the liberty and security of those living in America. China uses a sophisticated set of tools, tactics, and strategies to conduct what I would call repression without borders.

One strategy is the weaponization of access—access to markets, to family, to funding. By carefully controlling access, China buys the silence of American individuals and corporations, even Hollywood and the NBA. Of special relevance to Tibetans is China's visa-as-bait strategy. The Chinese government weaponizes access

to family in order to coerce exiled Tibetans into silence and political impotence. They do this through a visa policy that is blatantly racist against Tibetans.

Let's say you are a Tibetan American applying for a visa at the Chinese consulate. There is a main window where everyone checks in, but you can't use that window because you are Tibetan. You are taken to a separate area where a liaison officer interviews you. You have to write a personal statement in which you narrate your whole life history, name all the groups you've ever joined, and state whether you've ever participated in a protest. Each piece of information is a data point that the consulate might use against you later.

Most importantly, you have to provide the names and IDs of your relatives in Tibet, so the Chinese government knows who you are and knows who your relatives are. Now the fate of your relatives is somehow your responsibility. They are the hostage; you are the target. Then the consulate makes you wait, sometimes for up to a year. Eventually the liaison officer calls you in for a longer interview. He'll ask you again: Have you ever participated in pro-Tibet activities? When you say no, he shows you a photo. It's a photo of you attending a teaching by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. That settles it. Beijing has your data and you have no visa.

In one disturbing case, the liaison officer knew things he had no business knowing. He knew that the Tibetan visa applicant had a dog, he knew what breed the dog was, he even knew the dog's name. His message was clear: We are watching you. This insidious campaign to control exiled Tibetans in order to divide the community and kill the movement is bolstered by the rise of WeChat. While ordinary apps are platforms for expression and communication, WeChat is the ultimate platform of censorship and state surveillance. It facilitates the transnational repression that Beijing employs to silence overseas dissidents and activists.

The same regime that threatens the lives of Tibetans, Uyghurs, and Hong Kong citizens on the other side of the world is threatening the rights of American citizens here. I urge Congress to ensure that Chinese consulates abolish their racist visa policies and stop the surveillance and intimidation of American citizens.

Since 2009, over 166 Tibetans have self-immolated to protest Chinese rule. Today Tibetans in Tibet are using the tiny amount of space they have to wage small but important campaigns to defend their language and to protect the environment. My colleagues have documented 71 such incidents between 2015 and 2019.

Tibetans fight for human rights, the freedom to use their language, and the freedom to worship freely. These rights are tied together by a deeper yearning for political freedom. Beijing wants to de-politicize the Tibet issue. I urge you to re-politicize it. Tibetan freedom is a truly bipartisan cause that brings Democrats and Republicans together. I humbly ask you now to lend your moral and political authority to initiate a multilateral and coordinated effort to support Tibet's right to self-determination.

One concrete action Congress can take is to recognize Tibet's historical status as an independent nation and its current status as a disputed territory. That in itself would change facts on the ground. Language has the power of action. And Congress has the

power to set precedents. After all these years, the Chinese government has lost the battle for the hearts and minds of the Tibetan people. And its insecurity is making it increasingly bellicose. But the Tibetan people continue to resist with courage and patience. They know that freedom struggles take time. They also know that freedom often comes when it's least expected. Tibetans have never given up on their struggle for freedom, and neither should we. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Tenzin Dorjee appears in the Appendix.]

Chair MCGOVERN. Thank you very much. And finally, I want to yield to Sophie Richardson.

**STATEMENT OF SOPHIE RICHARDSON,  
CHINA DIRECTOR, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH**

Ms. RICHARDSON. Good morning, Chairman McGovern and Chairman Rubio, members of the Commission. It's always a privilege to be with you.

Following the 2016 detention of Tibetan language rights activist Tashi Wangchuk, a spate of protests about language across the Tibetan Plateau, and concerns articulated by people inside and outside Tibetan areas, Human Rights Watch documented this year Chinese government policies and practices related to mother-tongue education for Tibetans. What did we find? First, that the Chinese government's use of the term is deeply misleading. It is not the case that students across Tibetan areas are being taught equally in both languages. State policies are, in fact, leading to the gradual replacement of Tibetan by Chinese as the medium of instruction, except for in a single Tibetan language class.

Second, that while this trend has been visible at urban secondary schools, we're now seeing so-called bilingual education increasingly in primary schools and even in kindergartens, and increasingly across rural areas. Third, some of the tactics that we detailed include indirect pressure on primary schools, including the employment of only Chinese-speaking teachers, while at the same time requiring all Tibetan teachers to be fluent in Chinese. Regional policies promote what are referred to as mixed classes or concentrated schooling—mixing together Tibetan- and Chinese-speaking children—which is fine—to justify the use of only Chinese in the classroom—which is not.

The third tactic we looked at was the lack of and/or diminished use of Tibetan language texts or other materials, such that relevant materials are really now very difficult to find, let alone use. In sum, it's an approach to schools and schoolchildren that appears to be eroding the Tibetan language skills of children and forcing them to consume political ideology and ideas contrary to those of their parents and their community. Chinese authorities claim that this approach is improving education and employment opportunities, but the imperatives are clearly highly politicized and assimilationist.

Global evidence shows that children's educational development is adversely affected, particularly in the case of minority and indigenous children, when they are not taught in their mother tongue in the early years of education. The broad policy justifications, includ-

ing ethnic mingling and poverty alleviation, seek to integrate Tibetans with a Han majority, into the mainland economy, and into Communist Party ideology, at the expense of Tibetans' rights to culture, livelihood, and religion.

It's worth pointing out that Human Rights Watch's in-house experts on children's rights and education, who work globally, were truly taken aback at the extent of patriotic education for children as young as three or four. The outcome, I think, is painfully obvious. Cultural and linguistic erasure for Tibetans, further protests, and parents who actually clearly want a genuine bilingual education, deeply alienated. And increasingly, I think we have to be concerned as we watch these issues play out, not just as we have in Hong Kong or in Xinjiang, but now increasingly, as Mr. McGovern mentioned, for communities of Mongolian speakers and now even Korean speakers.

A quick word on what human rights law has to say. China's 2001 law on regional national autonomy actually sets out protections for mother-tongue education, especially at the kindergarten level. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which China is a party, and the ICCPR, to which China is a signatory but has not yet ratified, guarantee children the right to use their own language. And the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples—which China has endorsed, sets out not just rights to indigenous language education, but the right of indigenous communities to make decisions for themselves about education and what language ought to be offered.

UN experts first started critiquing Chinese government policies on these issues in 1996, so they are well established and deeply problematic. Mr. Mecacci mentioned earlier Xi Jinping's comments at the Seventh Tibet Work Forum in late August, doubling down particularly on education issues. Clearly this is a vector of control that the government and the Party care about.

What can be done? A few quick thoughts: I think there's room for the U.S. Government to support any and all mother-tongue language education efforts, including preserving and developing Tibetan language materials, such as textbooks. There are also Tibetans who don't speak Tibetan. Those language rights need to be respected as well. There's room to support robust scrutiny of the Chinese government's forthcoming UN treaty body reviews, and mounting evidence of similar tactics across China urging Chinese officials to allow ethnic communities to use their own languages when and how they see fit, particularly in education.

I also want very much to encourage commissioners to find a way to support the call by 50 UN human rights experts, published in late July, for heightened scrutiny of China at the Human Rights Council. It is time to end Beijing's sense of impunity for a host of gross human rights violations. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Sophie Richardson appears in the Appendix.]

Chair MCGOVERN. Thank you very much. I appreciate everybody's testimony. I'm going to ask questions at the end. And I think Senator Rubio just had to step out. So this is the order that I'm going to yield to people: Smith, King, Suozzi, Cotton, Hartzler, Peters, McAdams, Daines, and Levin. I'm not sure everybody's

here, but I'm told that they may be. So let me at this point yield to Congressman Chris Smith.

**STATEMENT OF HON. CHRIS SMITH,  
A U.S. REPRESENTATIVE FROM NEW JERSEY**

Representative SMITH. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. And thank you for pulling this hearing together. The witnesses were extraordinary. I am ranking on Africa and we have a hearing going on, so I'm going back and forth. I apologize that I missed the opening. I do have a statement I'd like to make part of the record, without objection. An opening statement.

Just a couple of points. I thought, Dr. Richardson, your points about the mother tongue and the language issues, the education issues—you know, this has been a full-court press for seven years—to displace the Tibetan Buddhists from their own country and deprive them of their own culture and faith. I'm wondering if there's—it's 70 years of genocide. We're all talking about, as we should, the genocide that's being committed—Xi Jinping's genocide against the Uyghurs—the Muslim Uyghurs. But just because this has gone on for decades doesn't make it any less egregious. And I'm wondering if there's movement—and I agree with the UN Human Rights Council that there needs to be—you know, some very bad actors help control their agenda. And China has been disproportionately effective in mitigating any kind of scrutiny that is really serious.

As ranking member on this Commission and former chairman, I'm happy to be the Republican cosponsor of the Tibetan Policy and Support Act, and I want to thank, again, the Chairman for introducing it. Hopefully, the Senate will take it up soon. But this is an ongoing genocide. And perhaps some of you could speak to what the Dalai Lama himself has written about, and that is the Han Chinese population transfer, where they systematically bring people in to displace the indigenous Tibetans over time. And how poorly or well has that worked? Unfortunately, probably all too well.

And finally, on the whole sinicization of religion in all states in China, I and other—all of us are concerned about how Xi Jinping has made it a matter of absolute dogma that all faiths have to comport with his principles. We see, unfortunately, a lot of kowtowing going on. You know, some church bodies are doing it. Some are doing it very reluctantly. But with the Tibetans it's been 70 years of this. And I'm wondering if you can speak to how we can push back on that further because, again, these are violations of internationally recognized human rights.

So if you could speak to some of that, the 70-year genocide—it's time we called it that. I mean, you just read the genocide convention and no matter who's a party to it or not, there needs to be, I think, a focus on the horrific things they've done. And do we think the Panchen Lama is still living? I mean, we're all concerned about that as well. And I thank you, Chairman. I yield back.

Chair MCGOVERN. Thank you. Do you want anyone in particular to answer those questions?

Representative SMITH. Dr. Richardson, maybe, might want to speak to that and particularly on the UN and the whole idea of



genocide, and any others who would like to jump in. Sophie, good to see you.

Ms. RICHARDSON. Thanks, Mr. Smith. (Laughs.) It's a huge question. And maybe what I can suggest is that the—we have a very long conversation about whether the high threshold that's set out for genocide claims is met, but that's an enormous conversation in and of itself. Equally important I think, and hopefully most salient to members of this Commission, is how you go about getting to or creating a competent court that could hear this. You know, there are many roadblocks in the path to accountability, particularly for China.

You mentioned the challenges at the UN's Human Rights Council. Those exist. But there are other ways of getting to that point. You know, the secretary-general, the high commissioner can, you know, appoint a standing committee to look at these issues and report back to the council. There are other mechanisms through the formation of ad hoc tribunals. And I think that's as much of a challenge—a political and diplomatic challenge—as the legal discussion about the thresholds of genocide. So I'm happy to try to elaborate on it, if that's helpful. I don't think I can answer the eight other questions I just counted you asking right now. Unless you want me to. I can try. (Laughs.)

Mr. DORJEE. Mr. Chairman, can I add a quick point to Sophie's answer? Thank you very much.

I would like to say I think the slow-moving genocide of the Tibetan people by the Chinese government is a real phenomenon. And even as recently as 2014 and '15, a judge in the Spanish High Court examined the evidence and concluded that what the Chinese government perpetrated against the Tibetan people was a crime against humanity and genocide. And one thing that we've got to keep in mind that's very important is that one genocide begets another. And what we are seeing right now in Xinjiang, which the Uyghurs call East Turkestan, absolutely looks very much like the beginnings of genocide.

And one huge reason why this is happening right now, why the Chinese government even in a supposedly anti-colonial era, even in the 21st century—in the beginning of the 21st century, is able to recklessly do this operation in Xinjiang, is because they were emboldened by the silence of the world when the genocide was happening in Tibet. If the world had been more actively and proactively opposed to the Chinese genocide in Tibet, they would not be able to do this to the Uyghur people right now. So these incidents—what's happening in Tibet, what's happening in Xinjiang, what's happening in Hong Kong, these are all connected.

When we come up with solutions to each of these problems, we have to absolutely keep the bigger historical picture in mind and come up with solutions to the entire scenario. I think that's really important. Thank you.

Representative SMITH. Thank you so much.

Chair MCGOVERN. Are we all set, Mr. Smith, do you think?

Representative SMITH. I think so.

Chair MCGOVERN. Thank you. Thank you very much. I will now yield to Senator King.

Senator KING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I guess I'd like to start with a question to Mr. Dorjee or Mr. Mecacci. Why? Why is China doing this? China's a massive country. Why are they wasting all this time and energy on a country of six million people on the very edge of their sphere of influence? What's this all about?

Mr. MECACCI. Yes, I can take that. I would say Tibet is of strategic importance to China for many reasons. I mean, Tibet itself, if you look at the map of the Tibetan Plateau, is almost as big as Western Europe. And for centuries that region has served also as a buffer zone with India and with other regions in Asia. So the decision of the Communist Party 70 years ago, immediately after the revolution took over, they decided to invade Tibet, as a plan really to consolidate their rule and protect themselves from external influence. You know, there had been influence in Tibet for the British; India had the special relationship also with the region. So there are geopolitical reasons why Tibet is important.

Also, Tibet is an area of immense natural resources. Eight of the major rivers in Asia originate in Tibet—from the Mekong River, to Brahmaputra, and other places. And as many analysts say, it's possible that the next wars will not be about oil but about water because of global warming and the scarcity of water in the region. And we have seen recent articles in which there have been reports in which the Chinese government has used the dozens of dams that they have built on the rivers in Tibet to slow the flow of water to downstream countries. Last year there was a drought in Cambodia and Vietnam on the Mekong, while apparently in the northern part of the river there was a lot of water.

Then there is the recent—as you have seen—the recent skirmishes and fighting at the border with India. That is mostly about the border that previously was with Tibet. And in military terms, if you control the plateau, you are at an advantage from the military point of view.

Then there is another issue. I think it's a cultural issue. Every authoritarian government has an inclination to try to control spiritual power. We see that. Many conflicts in the world are connected to religion and the need to control religion. The Tibetan identity's strictly connected to Tibetan Buddhism. So for them, for the Chinese Communist Party, first of all, it was an ideological struggle to try to destroy religion, as part of their ideology. Then when they realized that the Tibetan connection with religion is so deep, now they have moved to the idea of trying to have total control of religion and use religion as a way to legitimize their power.

Their problem is that the Dalai Lama is the most respected Buddhist leader for the Tibetan people and for Tibetan Buddhists, not only all over the world but still inside Tibet. So they lack legitimacy. And so the call for dialogue with the Dalai Lama, the call for a political solution, actually would be in Chinese interests if they really want to try to stabilize the situation. But unfortunately, what we have seen even at the last Tibet Work Forum is that the Chinese government continues to try to pursue assimilation and total control, to maintain their political power.

Mr. DORJEE. And if I could add very quickly to Matteo's answer—that's exactly the reason why China is throwing caution to the wind and going all out in Tibet and in East Turkestan. And le-

gitimacy is at the heart of it. The Chinese government knows that it has no legitimacy in Tibet and Xinjiang. And because of that problem, it makes them very insecure. And it's Beijing's fundamental insecurity that makes the Chinese government pursue these genocidal policies, because at the end of the day their goal is to destroy the Tibetan people and the Uyghur people as an ethnic group or as a religious group, because they want Xinjiang without Uyghurs and a Tibet without Tibetans.

Senator KING. It was interesting. You used the word "insecure." That was the exact word I was thinking of. It's an insecure regime that has so much power, and so many people, and so much economic power that it can't tolerate the slightest deviation. That's an indication of insecurity.

Let me ask—and I don't know if any of you know the answer to this—but 20 years ago, a little more than 20 years ago, China was admitted to the WTO. The assumption was that integrating China into the world economic community would lead to a liberalization, a kind of opening up of a market society, which would lead then to some level of democratization. Manifestly that hasn't worked. And the only real—we can't intervene directly in the internal affairs of another country or how they are relating to their neighbors. On the other hand, trade is certainly an important part of this message.

How much of China's economy, if anyone knows, is dependent upon exports to the rest of the world—to America, or the rest of the world? Does anyone have a guess or knowledge of that? What I'm getting at is it strikes me that the one real power the rest of the world has is economic. And if China's substantially dependent upon exports, the rest of the world can say, we're not going to buy any more until you start acting like a mature, responsible, and secure country. And, you know, if you had a store in your town that was discriminating terribly against its employees and was doing all kinds of human rights abuses, people in town wouldn't buy from them anymore. And then if they wanted to stay in business they'd have to clean up their act.

Any thoughts on that? Because that strikes me. And we can do sanctions, and we can do resolutions and such, but the power of the economy, it seems to me, is the most substantial power. And it shouldn't be just America. It should be a worldwide program. If we do it alone, then it's—then it loses its strength, it seems. Any thoughts from our witnesses?

Mr. DORJEE. I would only say that the power of economic sanctions against a regime like China would have worked effectively in the '80s or the '90s. Today I think we have to think larger than economic sanctions alone, if it is to work. And Ai Weiwei in an interview this past week said it is too late to curb or contain the Chinese regime's power. And I think it is actually too soon to give up. And because America and the liberal democratic order in the West was partly responsible for bringing the genocidal regime of China into the global community of nations back in the day, I think we also have a fundamental responsibility right now to make sure that this regime changes its behavior. And in order to do that, I think economic sanctions are a great place to start, if and only if we think beyond that and start thinking about the moral, political,

and cultural isolation of this regime, the way we did with the dictatorial regime in South Africa during Apartheid. I think we have to reach back into history and look for some of these more expansive measures for isolating the regime.

Senator KING. Thank you. Very, very helpful. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chair MCGOVERN. Thank you. Mr. Suozzi.

Representative SUOZZI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The work of this Commission is so important. This is—as everybody's spoken, the Chinese Communist Party has a 70-year head start. And taking all the information as to what's going on and getting it through this Commission and out to the public is so important, considering that this has been going on for such a long time. Sixty-one years ago the Dalai Lama was exiled from his own country. Twenty-five years since the Panchen Lama was abducted. So similar to what Angus talked about, the WTO, ever since Nixon went to China, we've thought the more they were exposed to us, and the more they were exposed to the rest of the world and democracy, and the world economy, the more they'd become like that. That simply has not happened.

And we see it has been testified to so many times. We had our hearing on the Uyghurs and we heard language—crimes against humanity, forced sterilization, forcing people to eat pork when it's against their religion, forcing people to eat when they're supposed to be fasting. I mean, it's—we see it with the Hong Kong students and the protesting that's going on. We see it certainly with the Tibetans. And there was an article dated September 21st from Reuters. The first line is, "China is pushing growing numbers of Tibetan rural workers off the land and into recently built military-style training centers, where they are turned into factory workers, mirroring a program in the western Xinjiang region that rights workers have branded coercive labor."

So I mean, the Chinese Communist Party has an overwhelming, sophisticated plan to dominate the world economically, militarily, in space, and on land. And Senator King referred to Tibet being the edge of their sphere of influence. Well, with the Belt and Road Initiative, we know their sphere of influence is much, much bigger than that. And they want to influence the whole world. And we see how they treat their own people. So I think it's important for us to constantly educate Americans as to what the Chinese are up to.

And I don't even know if my colleagues are aware . . . it was referenced briefly by some of the folks here, but I think it was just last week that a New York City police officer was arrested because he was working for the Chinese Communist Party to spy on the Tibetans. They actually have a recording of him talking to Chinese officials saying, Go—the same center you and I, Chairman McGovern, did our hearing at—they said: Make sure you go to this Tibetan center, and you watch what's going on there, so you can see who's trying to undermine the Chinese efforts.

In Elmhurst, Queens, just outside my district, in Grace Meng's district, we had a rally in February of this year where we talked about the Elmhurst Library. It was showing historical propaganda from the Chinese Communist Party about the history of China that was completely misleading. Didn't talk about the Tibetans. So the

Tibetans rallied against it, and they got them to take that down at the Elmhurst Library. And we hear about the Confucius Centers on a regular basis.

So I want to ask, you know, the Chinese have a sophisticated, well-organized economic propaganda plan, not only in their own country but to export what they're doing in their country to other parts of the world. So I want to just ask the witnesses, can you give any other examples of things we should be conscious of that the Chinese are doing beyond their borders, you know, that we should be—especially in the United States. I talked about the police officer that was arrested for spying, the Confucius Centers, the propaganda at the Elmhurst Library. Give us—what else are they up to that we need to be conscious of? We know about the Uyghurs, we know about the Hong Kong students, we know about the Tibetans. What do we need to be conscious of?

Mr. MECACCI. If I may take that? Congressman, good to see you. Representative SUOZZI. Thank you, Matteo.

Mr. MECACCI. I think one issue that we should pay attention to is the plan of Chinese state media to expand operations worldwide. Over the last four years, both the state news agency and Chinese state TV have been expanded to thousands of languages all over the world. So they basically take advantage of their entrance into the WTO, and they have free access to the markets in the world, and they're promoting—they use these tools for propaganda. At the same time, they do not open the huge Chinese market to anyone for media to be able to broadcast in China, even the New York Times Chinese website is not available in China.

So this goes back to the question of reciprocity, and also to the question that Senator King asked before. Certainly export is a huge part, you know, of the Chinese economy. But what China has been able to do is take advantage of the economic opportunities outside, usually with its strategic goal of expanding their influence, while at the same time restricting access for foreign companies in China, especially when it comes to media; as you know, social networks, Google—they're not allowed access to the Chinese markets. So I think many businesspeople now realize that this is not sustainable, that you cannot allow Chinese companies to have their own internal sort of monopoly, and then have free access to the markets all over the world. How can you compete with that? So I think that the question of rebalancing and calling for reciprocity and stopping those activities that are not reciprocated by China in the U.S., I think it's a sound approach to try to—

Representative SUOZZI. Thank you, Matteo.

And if everybody could just give me one brief thing that they think we should be aware of. Maybe Tenzin Dorjee, if you could give me one example?

Mr. DORJEE. Hi, Representative Suozzi. Good to see you. Thank you.

I think there are plenty of examples. Just this past week, I think we should also be paying attention to things that are happening inside the U.S., as well as outside the U.S. And a couple years ago, people might remember, there was a Tibetan—actually a Chinese agent who was ethnically Tibetan in Sweden—who was arrested in Sweden. And just this past week, the Swedish court decided to de-

port this Chinese agent working for the CCP. He was spying on the Tibetan community in Sweden. And I think that's—you know, it may be happening in Sweden. It's a small country. But I think we've got to—it's a very good indicator of what the Chinese government is doing because—

Representative SUOZZI. Well, it's happening in New York City.

Mr. DORJEE. Yes, yes, absolutely.

Representative SUOZZI. I mean, it's happening right outside my district.

Mr. DORJEE. Absolutely. There is a very, very small Tibetan community in Sweden. And even in a small community, less than 100 people, even in a small community like that the Chinese government is investing tons of resources spying on that community. And the new case is exactly the same. In many ways, the Tibetan community—among the Tibetan community we have suspected for a long time that the Chinese government was sending agents, informers.

And their main goal—you know, they have a twofold goal of doing this. And the first goal is, of course, to collect information and data from the local Tibetan community. And the other is to influence the community, actually. And this particular Chinese agent who was arrested last year—a couple of weeks ago, it became very clear that what he was trying to do was influence the Tibetan community not to engage in political activities. And he was wearing an NYPD uniform. And in the Tibetan community, there is respect for—high respect for law enforcement. And he knows that.

And I think the Chinese government's main goal in this case is to divide the Tibetan community in order to destroy the Tibetan movement. Because they are really fully aware that the global Tibetan community—especially in the West, especially in America—has been extremely successful in inflicting a huge PR cost to the Chinese government. They've played a huge role, alongside our supporters, in exposing the brutality of the Chinese government. And that's why several years ago the Chinese government decided that they were not only going to crush the Tibetan people inside Tibet, but they were actually going to start paying attention to crushing the Tibetan movement globally. And this is part of their master plan. And what happened in New York is basically the tip of the iceberg.

Representative SUOZZI. OK. Thank you.

I don't know if I have time left, but Dr. Richardson, just briefly.

Ms. RICHARDSON. Yes. Mr. Suozzi, if I can make this even a little bit bleaker, because the problem is that you don't even just have to be Tibetan or Chinese to be experiencing these problems. About three weeks ago Human Rights Watch led on a global civil society sign-on letter, directed at—essentially at accountability for China at the Human Rights Council. And groups from Vietnam, and Venezuela, and Azerbaijan signed on. We had two groups in the United States that do not specifically do work inside China decline to sign, even anonymously, because they were afraid that it would be known they had joined and that it would compromise their ability to get ECOSOC status to be able to carry out advocacy at the United Nations. That's a serious problem.

Representative SUOZZI. Very serious. All right. Thanks, everybody. Well, thank you very much, everybody. Thanks for your good work. And I know a lot of people are really working hard. And we just want you to know that we support you. And this Commission will continue to try to provide a voice for people who are really voiceless on this issue. Thank you so much.

Chair MCGOVERN. Thank you very much.

Senator Cotton? OK. Representative Hartzler. Senator Peters. Representative McAdams. Senator Daines. Representative Levin.

Representative LEVIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm here and I'm happy to go. I know other people are running around with all our continuing activities. But there's none more important than this one. And I'm really honored that you allowed me to participate in today's hearing. And I've got a lot of things I'd like to ask about. So let me jump right into it with this amazing panel of witnesses.

We've heard about numerous reports of the Chinese government tracking and harassing the Uyghur diaspora through WeChat, through its embassies, through malware. And these instances include coercing Uyghurs to refrain from activism and return home, possibly to be jailed—by threatening their family members in Xinjiang. And this has come up this morning. Let me ask you, Mr. Mecacci, it's great to see you, a couple questions about this. Talk about how the Chinese government may be subjecting the Tibetan diaspora to extraterritorial coercion and harassment. You know, what is going on here? It's very troubling.

Mr. MECACCI. Yes. I think Tenzin has already mentioned one clear example of pressure that is put on the Tibetan diaspora everywhere in the world. I mean, we are talking about people who have either escaped from Tibet because of the repression or who are now the second generation of Tibetans abroad. And many of these people have a very strong connection with Tibet. Many of them have families. So the idea of being able to keep in contact and travel there, it's a very important issue for every diaspora community, because the goal in the end is to be able to go back to your land.

And so China basically has weaponized the question of access to Tibet. And as it came up here from the indictment of the FBI that has been published on the Chinese by New York, the Chinese consulate is using pressure—whether providing visa access to Tibet as a way to try to either recruit new spies by offering that opportunity for people to go back, or denying access to those who, you know, participate in Tibet freedom movement activities. And this is very concerning, because this is a way also to create suspicion in a community, because if people start thinking, you know, who got a visa to be able to go to Tibet? . . . and how did they get it? So I think it's very important that law enforcement look into that.

And, for example, for former political prisoners, there are people who have escaped from Tibet. If they testify, if they do activities, their families are in danger. Their families continue to receive calls and they get visits from Tibetan officials and Chinese officials in Tibet. And so this kind of intimidation is really affecting the Tibetan diaspora. And Chinese influence all over the country, all over the world, is increasing. So these actions are only going to continue to increase.

Representative LEVIN. Thank you. And I thought Tenzin's written testimony and what you said this morning was really powerful.

Let's talk a little bit about the New York Police Department officer who was charged with spying. What kind of information is China hoping to glean from agents like this? And is there a reason to believe that there's a larger campaign underway to spy on Tibetans in the U.S.? You've talked about this some, but I'm particularly interested in this kind of, actually using people in a police department or other official positions like that. And what should the U.S. do? What can we do to prevent this kind of horrific thing from happening?

Mr. DORJEE. Thank you, Representative Levin.

I would just like to add very quickly the part about the identity of the agent who was arrested in New York. In many of the media stories, he was identified as an ethnic Tibetan working for the Chinese Communist Party. And one thing about his identity—while there was no doubt that he was a spy working for the CCP, there was actually a great deal of doubt surrounding his identity. Many of the Tibetan people in the community, including the community board leaders and others who actually met him in person, do not think that he's actually Tibetan. And there were a couple of reasons for that.

When he first met them, he could not understand the Tibetan language. He could not communicate in the Tibetan language at all. And he said he was Tibetan, but people who spoke with him said that he could not speak the central Tibetan dialect—the mainstream, standard dialect. He could not speak the Amdo dialect. He could not speak the Kham dialect. And of course, there are Tibetans who have good reason not to be able to speak Tibetan, but not if you are from Tibet.

And the other thing is, he mentioned to some people that he was from this place called Garong, in far eastern Tibet. And the thing about Garong is if you were really from Garong you have a good excuse not to be able to speak the standard Tibetan dialect, because in Garong you speak a different dialect of Tibetan. But in that case, there would have to be somebody from the Garong community who could verify that this guy is somebody from their village and they know him. There is no such person in the entire community who has verified that they knew this guy from back home. So that's very suspect.

Mr. LEVIN. So who do you think he might be? Who do you think he might be?

Mr. DORJEE. The thing that we know about him is that his parents—both of his parents work in the Chinese Communist Party. They work for the CCP, which makes it extremely unlikely that he was actually persecuted in Tibet or in China. While his story to the United States court while applying for political asylum—he's somebody who came here, then applied for political asylum saying that he was persecuted back home by the Chinese government. So he was clearly lying in his entire story. That means we don't know what else he's lying about. So I just want to put that out there.

And it seems that there are two things that these agents from the Chinese government usually try to do. One is, they want to infiltrate the community so that they can get as much information



as possible. And one goal of this information is to link people who are in exile to people who are in Tibet. And once you make that link between exile and inside Tibet, then the Chinese government is able to use that relationship in order to execute their repression.

There are multiple stories of Tibetans who are able to go to Tibet, and at the end of their meeting with the United Front Work Department or the Chinese security people who come to see them, they tell Tibetan Americans, or Tibetan French, or Tibetan Europeans, with Western passports—they are told by the Chinese agents that you—you know, you have a foreign passport, but always remember that your family here do not. And it's a very clear, thinly veiled kind of threat. And that's one purpose that they use this information for.

The other purpose is to de-politicize the Tibetan community. Like Matteo said, they want to create doubt and suspicion within the community. And that's an age-old, time-tested tactic of the Chinese government through the United Front Work Department. Professor Anne-Marie Brady has called these things—these tactics—China's magic weapons. And the Chinese government purposefully uses these kinds of weapons. And they do this for the Tibetan community as well. They try to sow doubt, to make people suspect each other. And once you have created that kind of doubt within the community, then people don't actually need to be real spies or informers. You just divide the community and destroy the movement. And that's what China's trying to do to the Tibetan community.

Representative LEVIN. Mr. Chairman, I have more questions, but I don't—I don't see a clock, so I don't want to abuse my time.

Chair MCGOVERN. Yes. I'm so used to the Rules Committee where there's no clock, that sometimes I let things go on forever.

Representative LEVIN. OK.

Chair MCGOVERN. Thank you. Before I ask my question, I want to make sure everybody's been—Senator Daines and Senator Cotton? I just want to make sure, because I see them up here. But I just want to make sure that we don't overlook them.

All right, Well, let me—let me ask a series of questions here at the end. And this is for Zeekgyab Rinpoche. You know, as Abbot of the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery you preside over the traditional seat of the Panchen Lama. Can you talk about what the Panchen Lama means to you, and the monks in your monastery? After 25 years of his enforced disappearance, what does he mean to Tibetans more generally? Do you think he's still alive?

ZEEKGYAB RINPOCHE. Thank you very much for the question on the Panchen Lama. The Panchen Lama, his importance, and what he means to our monastery at the Tashi Lhunpo and to the Tibetan people, and Buddhists all over—it means so much to us. His release would be a tremendous thing for us. It would mean the world to us. We miss his presence in our midst. And we are truly saddened. So with the release of the Panchen Lama, the monastery and Tibetan Buddhists everywhere, they would be—surely be overjoyed.

And so in a nutshell, the Panchen Lama, his release would mean that, firstly, this fact would reestablish the unique relationship of the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama, in terms of their teacher-student relationship and in recognizing each other's reincarnations,

you know, from lifetime to life. So this is an important and crucial point for us. And then if you look historically, Tashi Lhunpo Monastery has had an international base, even when Tibet was free. So scholars from different countries, neighboring countries, would come to Tashi Lhunpo for study, and scholars from Tashi Lhunpo would go to different parts of the Himalayan region and to India for the same purpose of scholarship, and learning, and dialogue.

So today also currently in our monastery, the composition of the student body is from different parts of India. We have students here right now from different parts of India, from the neighboring countries, and not just Tibetan students. So with the presence of the Panchen Lama, with his serenity, Tashi Lhunpo Monastery would really flourish as an international center for learning. And at the same time, with him in our midst and with his presence, the lineage of the Panchen Lamas will flower. And this will be of tremendous benefit to millions of Buddhists all over the world.

And then finally, with his release, the Panchen Lama will have the opportunity to complete his religious mission and spiritual practices, in line with the vision and coordination of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Thank you.

Chair MCGOVERN. Thank you. Just one other thing. And I just now see Senator Daines. So I'm going to ask this and then I'm going to yield to Senator Daines. Are there any plans or initiatives on the Panchen Lama issue that you want the Commission to know about?

ZEEKGYAB RINPOCHE. Yes. We have a host of plans and initiatives. And CECC's help in these matters will go a long way in the success of our plans and initiatives. So please do support and help us.

First, we have a book about the Panchen Lama which will be released on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Panchen Lama's abduction by the CCP. And then we plan to distribute and share this book with interested people across the world to create awareness and present the tragic situation of the Panchen Lama. In our travels to different places, we want to distribute this book and meet different leaders and people, and to seek support from more quarters.

And at the same time, we have an initiative and plan of visiting different countries in Asia, Europe, Canada, and the USA, especially D.C., in 2021. The basic initiative of this type of plan is to spread awareness of the Panchen Lama's life, his contributions both spiritually and politically, and the struggles that he went through. And so basically we have this initiative of travel to seek his release at the earliest possible date.

And then finally we're also planning for an in-person hearing regarding the Panchen Lama's release in 2021 during our travels. So your support and guidance will be of tremendous help in all our plans and in—(inaudible). Thank you.

Chair MCGOVERN. Thank you very much.

I see Senator Daines. I'll yield to you, if you have any comments or questions.

Senator DAINES. Great. Thank you, Congressman McGovern. Much appreciated. And I want to thank you all for coming before this Commission and providing your perspective and expertise on

this very important topic. Human rights, religious freedom, and travel restrictions to and within Tibet, are of keen interest to me and this Commission.

Mr. Mecacci, following the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act becoming law in December 2018, the State Department has issued two annual reports summarizing the level of access to Tibet and other Tibetan areas. Could you describe the impact that the passage of that Act has had on U.S. policy and advocacy organizations' work on Tibetan issues?

Mr. MECACCI. Thank you, Senator Daines, for the question.

I think the passage of the legislation has had a deep impact on U.S. policy but also has encouraged advocacy organizations to continue to pursue that. You know, the campaign for that deal started in 2014. And at the time, there was not much discussion about reciprocity between the United States and China. Now today we see that reciprocity is a key element to try to rebalance U.S.-China relations—not only on economic and financial issues, on which, you know, the Trump Administration has been quite active, but also on questions related to freedom of movement, freedom of information, and freedom of expression, and access to the Chinese market.

So when Congress passed the legislation, it now has mandated that the State Department issue these reports. And these are very important because they make an objective assessment of the level of access granted to Americans. And the line—the initial line of the report is that the Chinese government systematically prevents access to Tibet for American citizens. This is clear discrimination against American citizens. And the reaction from the State Department to ban Chinese officials who are responsible for it is measured and appropriate.

Senator DAINES. This issue of reciprocity . . . what steps do you believe other countries might take to push the Chinese government on reciprocal access to Tibet and related issues?

Mr. MECACCI. This issue has been at the center, also, of the recent discussion at the EU-China Summit. You know, the EU leaders have started to talk about reciprocity—not specifically when it comes to access to Tibet, but in general with relations with China. And we have seen members of the European Parliament and other European parliaments—national parliaments—endorsing these campaigns and these principles, calling for access to Tibet.

One point I would like to make—for this strategy to be effective, it needs to be an international strategy. It cannot be the U.S. alone, because China has too much weight and too much influence on many other countries, and they would not be able to face that pressure unless there is a sound and solid coalition of like-minded countries working on this, to put pressure on China.

Senator DAINES. Thank you. A question for Mr. Dorjee. Mr. Dorjee, as you know, the United States is not the only country to have recently imposed restrictions on Chinese apps. In fact, in June India banned the use of the mobile communication platform WeChat. Could you discuss how this will affect the two-way flow of information into and out of Tibet?

Mr. DORJEE. I think the flow of information between Tibet and the world outside, there has been a lot of debate about it. And I fully understand that there are some people who have also argued

that WeChat as an app may have a lot of problems, but it does have the bright side of creating more exchange and communication between outside and inside, between Chinese people inside China and the Chinese diaspora, between Tibetan people inside Tibet and the Tibetan diaspora.

But one thing that I would like to highlight here is that WeChat—while other digital apps are built for communication and expression, WeChat as an app is designed for censorship, self-censorship, and state surveillance. As a result, right now we can say that there is more communication between people inside Tibet and outside Tibet than ever before in history—through WeChat, let's say.

But the problem is, as Adrian Zenz pointed out in a breaking story in Jamestown Foundation, what the Chinese government is doing in Tibet right now, especially in the TAR. They are moving half a million—close to half a million Tibetans into forced labor camps. This kind of project that the Chinese government is running in Tibet right now, it took us half a year to find out that this was happening. And I think this is a very strong indication that more communication and more exchange doesn't always translate into more understanding, more awareness of what's happening inside Tibet.

And that's why I think that while banning apps in general belongs in the arsenal of illiberal regimes—it may seem like an illiberal tactic—while that's the case, an app like WeChat, which is meant to surveil people and keep people behind a firewall, there is a very, very strong case not to use those apps. And that's why I think India is doing the right thing by banning those apps. And I think the U.S. also has to consider very strongly the weight, the argument for banning apps that fundamentally create censorship and self-censorship.

Senator DAINES. Thank you very much for that thoughtful answer.

I have a question for Dr. Richardson. You recently wrote about the revival of a Mao-era policing technique which establishes police stations even in very small villages, turning neighbors on neighbors to watch each other. Could you describe how this is being applied and its impact in Tibet?

Ms. RICHARDSON. Thank you, Senator Daines, for the question.

We wrote recently about what are known as Fengqiao-style police posts, which is a reference to an approach to policing that was used in the Cultural Revolution. And it really has very little to do with actual policing or providing security. It is effectively a network for surveilling people and reporting back on their political views. And our concern is about the expansion of the state's capacity to do that, but also the use of that label and the connotations that it brings, to hearken back to a decade of appalling human rights violations, and to resurrect it, as if that were sort of a positive reference point.

Senator DAINES. Thank you, Dr. Richardson, for that. And thanks for your writing.

I have a question for the group. I know I'm running out of time. But I want to open to the broader group here. It's regarding the U.S. Consulate closing in Chengdu in July and what effect that

might have on nongovernmental organizations' work in Tibetan areas. And then what does that mean for Tibetans' access to the outside world?

Mr. MECACCI. If I may take that one. I mean, the Chengdu consulate was a vantage point for all information about the situation in Tibet. But it must be said that the level of access granted to the U.S. diplomats there was very, very limited. You know the Chengdu consulate is outside of the TAR, so they could operate more or less freely in the other Tibetan regions. But access to the TAR was very, very much limited. So I think what is important for the State Department to do now is come up with a strategy to address that issue, probably by establishing a separate Tibet section, centrally in Beijing, that would deal—and Chengdu closing will also affect Xinjiang; you know, Xinjiang was covered from Beijing. But I think a strategy needs to be adopted to try to address that. You know, centralize, and maybe even upgrade the capacity of the embassy in Beijing to operate and—you know, and have access to information. But it's a loss in terms of access to information there, for sure.

Senator DAINES. Thank you. If anybody else has a thought, I'm happy to turn—does somebody else have a thought on that question?

Mr. DORJEE. If I could add very quickly, Senator Daines, to that question of access for Tibetan people inside Tibet. There was a very perverted mirror image of what's happening out here as well as what's happening inside there, which is: The Chinese government does not allow Tibetan people inside to have passports. And it's very—it's often overlooked, and it's not often talked about very much, but Tibetans in Tibet, by and large, do not and cannot get passports. And even those few Tibetans who were privileged enough and able to get passports in the past that they were able to use for travel outside the country, today do not have those passports. Those passports have been forfeited by the government. They've been taken away from them. And they are basically adults who are being infantilized and kept under lockdown, and not able to travel anywhere.

So Tibetans inside Tibet do not have the freedom of movement to travel beyond China. And they also do not often have the freedom of movement to travel within Tibet. Tibetans from eastern Tibet are not often able to go to visit a place like Lhasa. That's like denying Muslims the right to go to Mecca. And I think this is very important to keep in mind, which is related to how the Chinese government controls the movement of Tibetan Americans out here from traveling into Tibet.

Senator DAINES. Thank you. Thanks for your very thoughtful answers. I'll turn it back over to Congressman McGovern. Thank you, Congressman McGovern.

Chair MCGOVERN. Thank you very much, Senator.

Let me—I have one question and then we'll close up here. Chen Quanguo, now the party secretary of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, was until 2016 party secretary of the Tibet Autonomous Region. What does his former tenure in Tibet and his current position in Xinjiang suggest for the future trajectory of repressive policies in Tibet? Are policies currently in use in Xinjiang—includ-

ing mass internment centers and the extensive use of coerced labor and mass labor transfers—are they being reproduced in Tibet? And what lessons can the international community draw from how the ongoing rights abuses in Xinjiang have been handled? And I will open that up to whoever wants to take it. Sophie.

Ms. RICHARDSON. Yes. Mr. McGovern, if I could jump in and try to also answer one of Mr. Smith's earlier questions. While I think the kinds of human rights violations that we're seeing in the two regions are somewhat different, they are both grave and serious. And to fail to hold Chen Quanguo and other senior Chinese government officials accountable, in the legal sense, for these violations is to continue to encourage them.

And I do want to go back to the point about Mr. Smith's question about sinicization, because we talked about that with respect to ethnic minority and religious communities forcing a kind of political loyalty. But let's not forget that the Chinese Communist Party is carrying out similar campaigns and surveillance of ordinary people all across the mainland to create a model citizen. And let's be clear that if we saw violations of this scope and scale taking place in other parts of the world, I think we would be well underway to a kind of independent international investigation that would lead to some kind of accountability proceedings. And it is high time to move in that direction. Thanks.

Chair MCGOVERN. You know, as I mentioned in my opening statement, I'm really concerned about the reports of mass labor transfers and training programs in Tibet. What do you think about the accuracy of these reports? Anybody?

Ms. RICHARDSON. I think the preliminary information that we have is a bit different about the number of people who have actually been registered versus trained, what that training is like, what it means. But I think the underlying pathologies are no less serious. I think the agenda in Tibet is to move enormous numbers of people out of farming, off the plateau, into physical communities and kinds of work that make them easily legible to the state, that make their political and religious views and activities known, and to essentially leach away a distinct identity and way of life and to offer only one that involves being subordinate to the party's political demands.

Chair MCGOVERN. Anybody else have any final words before we close the hearing?

Mr. DORJEE. I just would like to thank Chairman McGovern, and Cochair Rubio, and the entire Commission for your consistent support of the Tibetan people. The Tibetan people, both inside Tibet and outside, are very much aware of your commitment and dedication. And we truly appreciate the fact that you champion this cause.

Chair MCGOVERN. Thank you. Let me just close by saying I appreciate all the testimony. And I appreciate the participation of my colleagues. I joked at the beginning of the hearing that in the current political climate here, it's hard to get Democrats and Republicans to agree on what to have for lunch, right? But this is an issue that has brought us all together. Speaker Pelosi reminds us all the time that if we don't speak out against human rights abuses in China, then we have no moral authority to speak about human

rights abuses anywhere else in the world. It is so glaring, the abuses that are going on, so clear.

And what is really tragic is that it just seems like it's getting worse. And working with Congressman Smith and others we have probably legislated more on human rights issues in China, and on Tibet, than at any other time in our history. And we're going to continue to do that. We're going to continue to call attention to what's happening, because I think the Chinese government is under this illusion that they can wear us all down. That the attention span of many of us is about 48 hours, and then we're on to another topic, that somehow this will just go away. Or when the Dalai Lama is no longer with us, then we will no longer care about Tibet.

That is a huge miscalculation. None of us are going anywhere. We are going to continue to focus on this issue. And, for the record, Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives, have high regard for the Dalai Lama. We revere him. He's a man of peace and justice and nonviolence. Why, as Senator King asked in the beginning, why a country as big and as powerful as China is paranoid and frightened of this peaceful monk is beyond comprehension. But they are. And they continue to be determined to try to wipe out the Tibetan culture, the language, the traditions. And the Tibetan people have suffered greatly. And I hope the people who are still there, who are under great oppression, know that we're going to continue to be their voice.

So this was a very powerful hearing. And I don't know—I just saw Zeekgyab Rinpoche come on the screen. I don't know if you have anything that you want to say . . . or have you said everything?

ZEEKGYAB RINPOCHE. Thank you so much.

Chair MCGOVERN. Well, thank you. So everybody, thank you. This brings this hearing to a close. We appreciate your responsiveness to the questions. And please everybody, be safe. The hearing comes to a close. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 11:52 a.m., the hearing was concluded.]





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## **A P P E N D I X**

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## PREPARED STATEMENTS

## PREPARED STATEMENT OF ZEEKGYAB RINPOCHE

Chairman McGovern, Chairman Rubio, respected members of the Commission. Thank you for organizing this very important hearing and the opportunity to speak today.

I am the abbot of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery. My monastery was founded by the First Dalai Lama, and for 500 years, has served as the seat of the Panchen Lama, one of the most important figures in Tibetan Buddhism, with spiritual authority second only to the Dalai Lama. The Panchen Lama is of immense significance to my monastery, to the six million Tibetans in Tibet, and to the millions of Buddhists worldwide, including here in the United States.

In 1995, His Holiness the Dalai Lama recognized a six-year-old boy, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima as the 11th Panchen Lama. Three days later, the Chinese government abducted this boy, making him the world's youngest prisoner at the time. Also abducted along with him were members of his family and the leader of his search party, Jhadrel Rinpoche.

Twenty-five years have passed since the Panchen Lama's abduction. Despite persistent appeals from concerned governments, UN bodies, rights groups, and sympathetic individuals across the world, the Chinese government, to this day, refuses to provide verifiable information about the Panchen Lama's whereabouts, his well-being, or evidence to prove that he is even alive.

Instead, China has propped up another boy as the Panchen Lama, a false reincarnation whom we Tibetan Buddhists do not accept. This has done incalculable damage to our precious 500-year old religious lineage. China's glaring lack of accountability over the kidnapping of such an important religious figure—and a child at that—is an outrageous and unprincipled act. This violates the very basic rights that Tibetan Buddhists should get to choose our own spiritual leaders.

It raises the question: Why did the Chinese government kidnap a six-year-old boy—the genuine reincarnate—and prop up a false Panchen Lama? A glance at the deep historical and spiritual relationship between the lineages of the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama reveals the answer. In Tibetan history, the unique relationship of the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama is well known. The popular saying is: As the Sun and the Moon are in the sky, so are the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama on earth. Since the early 17th century, the Panchen Lamas and the Dalai Lamas have played key roles in recognizing and teaching each other's reincarnations. In the past century, the 9th Panchen Lama helped identify His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, who in turn recognized the 10th and 11th Panchen Lamas.

Given this traditional practice, the Chinese government will surely use its false Panchen Lama to interfere in the selection of the next Dalai Lama and other high reincarnates. Therefore, all of us—Tibetan Buddhists the world over and supporters of religious freedom—should be deeply concerned.

It is clear that the Chinese policy over Tibet is a deliberate attempt to remove from the face of the earth our racial and cultural identity. This is clearly seen in the way the Chinese government interferes and intervenes in the functioning of the monastic education system by imposing restrictions on our monks and nuns. Even in schools we see this malign design to wipe out our unique identity in the form of restructuring the curriculum and banning the learning of the Tibetan language. At the environmental level, there is utter disregard and irreverence for the life and ecology of Tibet. In short, there is continuous and systematic destruction of culture, religion, language, and environment in Tibet.

Therefore, to safeguard the right of Tibetan Buddhists worldwide to choose our spiritual leaders without interference by the Chinese government, and to secure the release of the Panchen Lama, I respectfully offer three suggestions to this commission:

First, on the crucial issue of the selection of the next Dalai Lama, the entire matter should be left to the total discretion and vision of the Dalai Lama without any interference and imposition from the CCP. Please do devise a coordinated strategy in unity with allies and present a strong and collective stance to challenge the CCP's authoritarian regime's malevolent motivations on this matter.

Second, please work toward establishing a similar contact group with the many Tibet parliamentary support groups and caucuses that exist around the world. These contact groups could facilitate the sharing of model resolutions and legislation, such as the Tibet Policy and Support Act, among its members.

Third, I call upon sympathetic governments, NGOs, and Tibet support groups to investigate the whereabouts of the Panchen Lama and those abducted with him so that we have clear and accurate information on their whereabouts, including current photos of the Panchen Lama, his family members and Jhadrel Rinpoche. We cannot simply keep urging transparency from China, which has shown no intention of being transparent on this, and other human rights issues.

Lastly, I request the U.S. Senate to approve the Tibet Policy and Support Act. If passed this legislation will bring much needed hope to the Tibetan people as they struggle to survive during this dark period of persecution and illegal occupation by China.

Thank you for the honor of testifying before you. And thank you for your ongoing support of human rights and religious freedom for the Tibetan people.

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#### PREPARED STATEMENT OF MATTEO MECACCI

Congressman McGovern, Senator Rubio, and members of the Commission, thank you for inviting me to testify today.

Tomorrow is the 70th anniversary of the establishment of the People's Republic of China, and while every nation is entitled to celebrate its founding, no government should lose sight of the fact that its first and main responsibility is to serve and protect all its citizens by respecting their fundamental rights. The condition of the Tibetan people in China is a reminder of how much work still needs to be done to achieve that goal.

#### REPRESSION OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND FREEDOMS IN TIBET

Since the People's Republic of China invaded Tibet almost seventy years ago, it has kept a very tight control on all aspects of Tibetan life. The deterioration of human rights in Tibet today continues to be very serious. Over the last four years, Freedom House has consistently ranked Tibet as the second least free region of the world, only behind Syria.

Tibetans can be persecuted for their beliefs. China has adopted an official plan to "Sinicize" Tibetan Buddhism—to bring it under the control of the Chinese Communist Party.

To ensure government surveillance of Tibetan monks and nuns, police stations have even been opened inside or next to monasteries. Tibetans can be arrested simply for owning photographs of the Dalai Lama or celebrating his birthday, or for watching videos of his teachings.

China is also trying to control the Tibetan reincarnation system. After abducting the Panchen Lama and his family when he was just six years old in 1995, the Chinese Communist Party now plans to select the next Dalai Lama—an absurd claim that the international community needs to challenge decisively. UN bodies have persistently called for access to the "disappeared" Panchen Lama, including with a formal communication issued last August, but the Chinese government continues to refuse it.

#### TIBET WORK FORUM AND CHINA'S POLICY

At the end of August, Xi Jinping presided over the seventh Tibet Work Forum held in Beijing. The meeting's proceedings indicate that the Chinese leadership will continue its policy of control and assimilation in Tibet. Xi presented a "strategy of governing Tibet in the new era" that includes "Sinicization" of Tibetan Buddhism and improving the ability of the CCP's organizations and members at all levels "to deal with major struggles and prevent major risks." Worryingly, Xi called for the patriotic re-education of the younger generation of Tibetans and asked the officials to look into "strengthening ideological and political education in schools, put the spirit of patriotism throughout the entire process of school education at all levels and types, and plant the seeds of loving China in the depths of the hearts of every teenager."

Subsequently, this month several senior Chinese leaders have been visiting Tibetan areas to ask Tibetans to study and implement the spirit of Xi Jinping's "important speech at the Seventh Central Tibet Work Forum."

#### NEW EVIDENCE OF COERCIVE LABOR IN TIBET AND PARALLEL WITH CHEN QUANGUO IN TIBET AND XINJIANG

In a report released on Sept. 22, 2020, scholar Adrian Zenz documented a large-scale program established in the Tibet Autonomous Region that in the first seven months of 2020 pushed more than half a million rural Tibetans off their land and

into military-style training centers. These are staggering numbers. After their coerced training, at least 50,000 of them were sent to other areas of Tibet and China and pushed into low-wage factory and construction work. The report highlights the Chinese authorities' attempts to eliminate Tibetans' traditional lifestyle, their unique identity, and their way of thinking. It also highlights disturbing similarities with the system of coercive vocational training and labor transfer established in Xinjiang over the last few years.

In the wake of this new report, more than 60 parliamentarians from 16 countries have issued a statement demanding urgent action to confront such actions; "We call upon our governments to take immediate action to condemn these atrocities and to prevent further human rights abuses," say the MPs, who are members of the Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China, which works to reform how democratic countries deal with China.

#### U.S. POLICY AND LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

As we discuss how the United States and the international community should shape and adjust its Tibet policy, it is worth looking at some of the recent initiatives that have been undertaken by this body.

Under the leadership of Chairmen McGovern and Rubio, at the end of 2018 the U.S. Congress passed the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act, the first legislation to apply the principle of reciprocity in U.S.-China relations, namely, to challenge Beijing's policies on access to Tibet. As documented by the State Department in its latest report under the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act, the Chinese government continues to keep Tibet under lockdown, both limiting the freedom of movement of

Tibetans and blocking the free access of foreigners. As a result of this legislation, last July, the State Department, for the first time, banned from the United States the Chinese officials responsible for blocking Americans' access to Tibet.

This call for reciprocal access to Tibet has also been endorsed by MPs throughout the world in an op-ed published last June and signed by over 50 European MPs, following a report by my organization on the lack of access to Tibet for EU citizens, and the recent appeal of the International Parliamentary Alliance on China.

There is growing awareness in European capitals and in Asia of the challenge posed by the authoritarian model of development promoted by Beijing. Calling for reciprocity not only on economic and financial issues, but also for civil liberties and human rights, is an effective way to challenge China's narrative, but it should be done in a strategic, well-coordinated, and international fashion, which is still not the case.

Last January, the House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed the Tibetan Policy and Support Act. This bipartisan legislation—again introduced by Chairmen McGovern and Rubio—is now before the Senate, and we call on Senators to pass it before the end of the year. Tibetan Americans, ICT members, and Tibet supporters have sent several thousand petitions to Senate offices urging support for the TPSA. In the past several months, we have been encouraged by our interactions with Senate offices and believe that efforts are on to have the TPSA passed at the earliest. This will be a powerful message of hope to the Tibetan people who are otherwise faced with daily oppressive policies by the Chinese authorities. The TPSA will strengthen U.S. policy on Tibet in several areas, recognizing the strategic importance of the Tibetan plateau for U.S. interests in the region.

The legislation affirms that it is only up to Tibetan Buddhists to select the next Dalai Lama, without any government interference. It acknowledges the fragility of Tibet's environment, the key role Tibetans play in its preservation, and that the rivers and water resources originating from its glaciers that serve over a billion people, including in India and Southeast Asia, are of international concern and should therefore be protected by the international community, demanding full transparency from Beijing.

TPSA also expands the mandate of the Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, a senior position at the State Department, which unfortunately has never been appointed during the last four years. The absence of the Special Coordinator could be one reason why there has not been much movement on the Tibetan dialogue process from the Administration's side. With only a few months left in the current term of this Administration to do anything meaningful, the next

Administration, whether it is Republican or Democratic, should quickly appoint the Special Coordinator for Tibetan issues at the undersecretary level, not at a lower level position, because doing that will send the wrong political message—of diminished U.S. support for Tibet—both to the Chinese government and to the Tibetan people. While talking about a post-election Administration, we have launched a Tibet 2020 campaign so that the presidential candidates of both parties are ap-

prised of the American people's strong desire for Tibet to be a high priority. We look forward to working with the White House and Congress in our common objective of supporting the people of Tibet to regain their rights and dignity.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF TENZIN DORJEE

It is my great honor to testify today on behalf of the Tibetan people. Over the course of seven decades, the Chinese government has executed a range of colonial policies aimed at eradicating Tibetan language, culture, and religion. The Jamestown Foundation report last week about the extensive labor camps in Tibet is the most recent example.

But the threat that the Chinese government poses to freedom and human rights goes beyond Tibet, Xinjiang, and Hong Kong. China's surveillance and influence operations have become transnational in nature and global in implications. Beijing's actions seek to undermine the fundamental rights of those living in the United States, as demonstrated by the arrest of the Chinese agent who infiltrated the NYPD to spy on the Tibetan community.

China's repression without borders uses a broad set of tools and tactics guided by sophisticated strategies. Chief among these strategies is the weaponization of access—access to markets, access to family, access to funding, access to research sites. By controlling access, China has managed to constrain the free speech rights of American academics, corporations and industries, from Hollywood to the NBA to the ivory tower.

One strategy with particular relevance to Tibetans is the “visa as bait” strategy. Under this strategy, China weaponizes access to family in order to coerce exiled Tibetans into silence and political impotence. Most Tibetans in exile have families back home. Many have aging parents. So it is understandable that many naturalized Americans of Tibetan origin want to visit their family.

But here's the problem. The Chinese government has a visa policy that is based on blatant racial discrimination against Tibetan Americans. Let me share what a typical visa application process looks like if you're a Tibetan American. You are at the Chinese consulate in New York or DC. There is a visa application window where everyone checks in, but you can't go to that window because you're Tibetan. You're taken to a separate area where a liaison officer makes you write down a detailed personal statement. You have to share your life history, name all the organizations you've been affiliated with, and state whether you've ever participated in a Tibet protest. You also have to provide the names and IDs of your relatives in Tibet.

Now the Chinese government knows who you are, who your relatives are, and where they live. The situation is ripe for long-distance relational repression. Your relatives are the hostage, you're the target. Each piece of information you provide is a data point for the Consulate; each data point is an invisible shackle that restrains your freedom of expression.

The Consulate starts processing your application. It takes several months, sometimes a full year. In the meantime, they hold on to your passport. This puts you in limbo—you cannot travel to any other country during this entire period. This practice violates the fundamental rights of American citizens, because it obstructs freedom of movement.

One day, the liaison officer calls you in for a more serious interview—it's more like an interrogation. You hear the same questions again. “Have you ever participated in pro-Tibet activities?” When you say no, he shows you a photo from the past—it's a photo of you at a rally outside the Chinese consulate, or it could be a photo of you attending a teaching by the Dalai Lama. End of story. You have no visa; Beijing has your data.

In one disturbing case, the liaison officer knew things he shouldn't have known about the applicant's private life. He knew that the visa applicant had a dog, he knew what breed the dog was, he even knew the dog's name. His intention was clear: he wanted the applicant to know that they were under watch.

This insidious campaign to surveil and control Tibetans in exile has been bolstered by the growing dominance of WeChat among diaspora populations. Now all social media apps have their problems, sure, but WeChat is no ordinary app. While other apps are largely platforms for self-expression, WeChat is a platform of self-censorship and state surveillance.

Some have celebrated the app as “China's bridge to the world” and a “lifeline” for diaspora populations. But in reality, WeChat is no bridge; it's a panopticon. Every hour you spend in the app is an hour spent in a “no free speech zone.”

Nor is WeChat a “lifeline” for diaspora populations. The app is a rope that binds the diaspora to a command center in Beijing. This platform powers the apparatus

of transnational repression that Beijing employs to silence its exile-based dissidents, intimidate overseas activists, and surveil protesters.

And yet, against all odds, Tibetans around the world continue to resist China's colonial rule. In Tibet, the dedication of the people endures despite the repression. Between 2009 and 2019, more than 156 Tibetans self-immolated in Tibet to protest Chinese rule, and 10 more have done the same in exile. Tibetans are also using other tactics of resistance. Language rights advocate Tashi Wangchuk and nomad leader Aya Sengdra are just two examples of people who have engaged in local or regional campaigns to defend language rights, protect the environment, or to carve out cultural space.

In the period 2015–2019, my colleagues have documented 71 different kinds of strategic interventions or campaigns in Tibet which involve an individual or group engaging in sustained campaign activity or strategic nonviolent action. The goals of many of these campaigns and actions have been political freedom along with language rights, religious freedom, and issues related to the land and environment.

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#### PREPARED STATEMENT OF SOPHIE RICHARDSON

China's education policy in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) is significantly reducing the access of ethnic Tibetans to education in their mother tongue. The government policy, though called "bilingual education," is in practice leading to the gradual replacement of Tibetan by Chinese as the medium of instruction in primary schools throughout the region, except for classes studying Tibetan as a language. Since the 1960s, Chinese has been the language of instruction in nearly all middle and high schools in the TAR, where just under half of Tibetans in China live, but new educational practices introduced by the government in the TAR are now leading more primary schools and even kindergartens to use Chinese as the teaching language for Tibetan students.

The trend toward increased use of Chinese in primary schools in Tibetan urban areas has been noted for several years, but as detailed below, there are indications that it is now becoming the norm there and is spreading to rural areas as well. In interviews that Human Rights Watch conducted in September 2019, parents with children at rural primary schools in six different townships in northern TAR said that a Chinese-medium teaching system had been introduced in their local primary schools the previous March. There have been no public announcements of a government policy in the TAR requiring rural primary schools to teach their classes in Chinese, but an official working on educational issues in the TAR told Human Rights Watch that he expects the government to introduce a policy requiring all primary schools in the TAR to shift to Chinese-medium education.

China formally introduced a policy of "bilingual education" in 2010 for schools in all minority areas in China, an approach to minority education considered appropriate internationally when it promotes competency in both the local and the national language. The official position of the TAR authorities is that both Tibetan and Chinese languages should be "promoted," leaving individual schools to decide which language to prioritize as the teaching medium. However, Human Rights Watch's research suggests that TAR authorities are using a strategy of cultivated ambiguity in their public statements while using indirect pressure to push primary schools, where an increasing number of ethnic Chinese teachers are teaching, to adopt Chinese-medium instruction at the expense of Tibetan, such as allocating increasing numbers of ethnic Chinese teachers who do not speak Tibetan to positions in Tibetan schools.

#### CHINESE-MEDIUM INSTRUCTION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS AND KINDERGARTENS

There is almost no publicly available data about the medium of instruction currently used in primary schools or kindergartens in the TAR or other Tibetan areas. But Human Rights Watch's research found that local authorities in the TAR began preparations from about the year 2000 to encourage and facilitate a gradual shift to Chinese-medium teaching in primary schools in the region. These preparations started with instructions by the central authorities in Beijing that required local administrations throughout China to prepare to introduce bilingual education for communities that are not ethnic Chinese.

What form that policy should take has varied significantly from province to province, but in 2001, all primary schools in urban areas of Tibet began to teach Tibetan pupils Chinese language from Grade 1, instead of Grade 3 as had been the case previously. However, there was no mention by officials as to which language should be used as the medium of instruction in Tibetan pre-schools or primary schools.

In 2010, all provincial-level administrations throughout China introduced formal programs for the implementation of “bilingual education.” Chinese analysts distinguish between “Model 1” bilingualism, which emphasizes the use of the local or minority language in classrooms, and “Model 2” bilingualism, which emphasizes the national language, Chinese. But in its 2010 announcement on implementation, the TAR authorities once again did not specify whether Chinese or Tibetan was to be the medium of instruction in primary schools and have continued to use the term “bilingual education” ambiguously, without specifying its meaning. In public reports they imply that the only requirement is extra classes for Tibetans to learn Chinese and that individual schools can choose the medium of instruction. In practice, however, there appears to be considerable pressure to shift to Chinese and Model 2.

This pressure is strongly reflected in official Chinese media reports on the benefits of “bilingual education” in the TAR. In early 2015, a report by China’s official news agency, Xinhua, said that Chinese-medium instruction had already been introduced, not just into secondary schools, as was well known, but also into urban primary schools in the TAR: “Different from the model widely implemented in pastoral regions, elementary schools in each of Tibet’s prefectures (and municipalities), some junior middle schools, senior middle schools, and Tibet classes in the interior adopt a teaching model that uses Chinese as the teaching language with Tibetan as an addition.” In January 2016, an article on Tibetan schools by China’s state-run *Global Times* confirmed that “increasingly schools, especially in urban areas, are using Putonghua [standard Chinese] as the primary language of instruction, with Tibetan being used only in classes where the Tibetan language is the topic of the class, if it is taught at all.”

Then, in June 2016, the Lhasa Education Bureau announced that Chinese was being used as the medium of instruction to teach mathematics in a majority of primary schools in the counties around Lhasa, including rural areas outside the region’s capital city. This was the first known direct admission by the government of a shift to Chinese-medium teaching in some classes within rural TAR primary schools.

Outside the TAR, the Chinese authorities have already imposed Chinese-medium instruction in primary schools in at least one Tibetan area. In the Golok Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, the prefectural government ordered primary schools to introduce primarily Chinese-medium instruction in the 2019–2020 school year. A similar plan to introduce Chinese-medium education was reported from Tsolho prefecture in Qinghai province in April 2017. Teaching in all schools in Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai is already conducted in Chinese. There are unconfirmed reports that similar policies will soon be introduced in other Tibetan prefectures in Qinghai.

Governmental pressure on Tibetan schools to use Chinese is also evident in the pre-school sector. According to China’s official media, the TAR government plans to ensure that by 2020, 80 percent of children in the TAR attend two to three years of kindergarten before entering primary school.<sup>1</sup> In 2016, TAR authorities announced that all kindergarten programs have to become “bilingual.” According to an academic paper published in *Xizang Jiaoyu* (“Tibetan Education”), an educational journal in the TAR, “bilingual education” was “basically universalized at preschool level” by 2017, which means that all of the 81,000 Tibetan children in pre-schools and kindergartens in the TAR above the age of 3 are already experiencing “bilingual education.”

In its January 2016 article on the Tibetan language, the *Global Times* explicitly linked the critical decline in the use of the Tibetan language to the decrease in the use of Tibetan in schools: “urbanization and the increasing amount of the school day spent speaking Putonghua has left the Tibetan language in a precarious situation.” It added that “many Tibetan parents have found that their kids are not learning how to speak their mother-tongue.”

Human Rights Watch found that among ordinary Tibetans, there is widespread concern about the increasing loss of fluency in Tibetan among the younger generation as a result of changing school policies and other factors. As a former part-time teacher from Lhasa told Human Rights Watch:

In primary school, the Tibetan teachers are very united and have a strong urgency to teach Tibetan, but the biggest problem is that they lack method and materials, and a lot of the kids in a way don’t like Tibetan because they think it will be quite useless . . . [Older] people always complain about the lack of Tibetan, [and] the fact that their grandkids cannot speak proper Tibetan at home.

<sup>1</sup>“250 bilingual kindergartens to be built in Tibet region,” *Global Times*, February 26, 2016, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/970539.shtml> (accessed December 29, 2019).

## PRESSURES ON TIBETAN SCHOOLS TO SWITCH TO CHINESE-MEDIUM TEACHING

While public policy statements by the TAR authorities remain ambiguous, there are increasing signs that they are using a range of indirect mechanisms to pressure schools in the TAR to switch to Chinese-medium teaching. These measures require Tibetan schools to increase Tibetan children's immersion in Chinese culture and language. They include "mixed classes," "concentrated schooling," the transfer of large numbers of Chinese teachers to Tibetan schools, sending Tibetan teachers for training to provinces where Chinese is the dominant language, and requiring all Tibetan teachers to be fluent in Chinese. The measures have indirectly increased pressure on schools in the TAR to reduce the availability of mother-tongue education for Tibetan children over the last decade and are accelerating the gradual shift to Chinese-medium teaching in TAR primary schools.

The number of non-Tibetan-speaking teachers working in Tibetan schools tripled between 1988 and 2005, and under the current program, 30,000 will be sent to Tibet and the Xinjiang region, in the northwest, by 2020. None of the non-Tibetan teachers are required to know Tibetan and they presumably teach in Chinese. While many of them teach in middle schools and high schools in the TAR, there has been an impact even at the pre-school level, especially in urban areas: according to a Chinese study in 2017, 30 percent of teachers in one Lhasa county did not know Tibetan.

In addition, from at least 2016, hundreds of Tibetan teachers have been sent for further training in other provinces, and since 2017, all Tibetan teachers have been required to know Chinese. As early as 2003 the number of primary school teachers using Chinese for instruction in the TAR had increased threefold over the previous 12 years, from 1,698 in 1991—then 20 percent of total teachers—to 4,228 or 33 percent of total teachers by 2003. We have not been able to find data showing the change since then.

Another measure that has contributed to the switch to Chinese-medium instruction has been the creation of "mixed classes," the inclusion of non-Tibetan pupils in classes with Tibetan ones. Another measure, known as "concentrated schooling," involves closing local schools in rural areas and consolidating them in a nearby town, where rural students usually have to board. While this brings benefits in terms of facilities and standards, it also reduces children's contact with their family and with a Tibetan-speaking environment. These measures all improve Tibetan children's exposure to Chinese but can weaken children's access to and familiarity with their own language.

The imposition of teaching practices that encourage the switch to Chinese-medium instruction in the TAR is the result of increasing moves by the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP or the "Party") since 2014 to shift away from encouragement of cultural diversity, which had been the official policy toward minorities since the early 1980s, including respect for the distinctive cultures and languages of minorities. As detailed in section III of this report, the new policy aims to increase the assimilation of minorities in China and requires officials to prioritize "ethnic mingling" (*minzu jiaorong*) of China's nationalities and "identification" (*rentong*) by the minority nationalities with "Chinese culture" (*Zhonghua wenhua*). The government contends that these measures are necessary to achieve not just economic development for minorities but also "nationality unity" and "national stability" within China.

Global evidence shows that children's educational development is adversely affected, particularly in the case of minority and indigenous children, when they are not taught in their mother tongue in the early years of education. Mother-tongue policy experts agree that children who have grasped foundational skills and literacy in their own mother tongue are better placed to learn in a second or foreign language.

Human Rights Watch supports policies that promote genuine bilingual education, in particular through the use of mother-tongue instruction in the early years of education and through curricula sensitive to indigenous and ethnic minority customs and practices. China's policies for Tibetan children in the TAR, however, show decreasing respect for their right to use their mother tongue or learn about and freely express Tibetan cultural identity and values in schools. Rather, they embody an approach to schools and schoolchildren that appears to be eroding the Tibetan language skills of children and forcing them to consume political ideology and ideas contrary to those of their parents and community.

## JUSTIFICATIONS FOR SHIFTING TO CHINESE-MEDIUM INSTRUCTION

Chinese officials usually justify the switch to Chinese-medium instruction in Tibetan schools by arguing that improved knowledge of Chinese will help Tibetans



gain employment in later life, a claim that is widely acknowledged in Tibet. However, the justification for imposing Chinese-language teaching in Tibetan kindergartens is quite different, at least according to a 2014 report by the Chinese scholar Yao Jijun, who said the aim of bilingual education at the pre-school level is to “better integrate the Chinese language” into Tibetan kindergarten children as “a means of eliminating elements of instability in Tibetan regions” (“instability” is a term used in China to refer to political unrest). According to Yao, “Tibet’s stability” depends on the full development of “bilingual education” at the kindergarten level.

Concern with eliminating the risk of future political dissent or unrest is also explicit in Party justifications for its “ethnic mingling” and “cultural identification” policies, which were endorsed by the central leadership as the new direction of minority policy in 2014. Children of minorities in kindergartens and primary schools undergo intensive political indoctrination that asserts the unquestioned benefits of the Party’s policies of ethnic mingling and its other political objectives. The children have little access to alternative ideas, since the media reinforce the necessity of prioritizing the use of Chinese language in education, with little or no discussion of educational alternatives.

There are no signs of significant popular involvement in the decision-making process that leads to these policies, particularly when they involve the minority regions; the policies are designed and imposed by the Communist Party.

#### SCHOOL CLOSURES AND PROTESTS

Human Rights Watch has reported on protests in a number of Tibetan areas since 2010 against earlier attempts to introduce Chinese-medium education in Tibetan schools. It has also reported on the closure of privately run schools in Tibetan areas and has received reports that three monastery-run schools were closed in Tibetan parts of Sichuan province in or around June 2018. It notes also an unconfirmed report of the forced closure of a private kindergarten in the TAR in 2008 for giving priority to Tibetan language teaching.

Tibetans in China already suffer extensive restrictions on rights to free speech and opinion, peaceful assembly, movement, and religion that are more severe than in ethnic Chinese-majority areas of China. Chinese laws preclude them from open discussion of their history, allow them little say in policymaking in their own areas, and place extreme restrictions on their religious practice, access to information, and foreign travel.

In January 2016, a Tibetan campaigner on language rights, Tashi Wangchuk, was detained by the authorities and charged with “jeopardizing state security” after giving interviews to the New York Times stating that there was no longer any provision for Tibetan to be taught as a language, let alone Tibetan-medium education, in Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai. In May 2018, a court sentenced him to five years in prison for “incitement to split the country” by “distorting the state of education and cultural development in Tibetan areas, slandering the government by saying it restricts the development of minority cultures and eliminates minority language and culture, undermining ethnic unity and social stability in Tibetan areas, and national unity,” according to court documents.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the risks of speaking out, Tibetan intellectuals continue to express concerns about China’s education policies in Tibetan areas. In response to the April 2017 announcement of a plan by the Party committee in Tsolho Prefecture in Qinghai to reduce or replace Tibetan-medium education in local schools, leading Tibetan scholar and lama Alak Dorzhi posted this comment online: “In recent years in Tibetan areas, self-deluding and arbitrary policy documents in violation of the national constitution and nationality laws, which do not fully respect the Party’s nationality policies or consult expert or public opinion, have upset the public time and again. When this happens, the authorities resort to the use of force, those in authority go after the public and use the convenient brutality of stability maintenance measures to try and solve the problem. . . .”

Alak Dorzhi added that this issue “has not been considered carefully enough by the authorities.” Despite his cautious tone, his comment was quickly deleted from the internet, signaling the increasing limitations on public debate among Tibetans about language policies in their schools.

<sup>2</sup> “Translated court documents expose China’s sham prosecution of Tibetan language rights advocate Tashi Wangchuk, raise fears about use of torture,” Save Tibet, August 29, 2018, <https://www.savetibet.org/translated-court-documents-expose-chinas-sham-prosecution-of-tibetan-language-rights-advocate-tashi-wangchuk-raise-fears-about-use-of-torture/> (accessed December 29, 2019).

The transition to Chinese-medium instruction in Tibetan primary schools is in tension with if not contradictory to some Chinese laws and policies. This includes the 2001 Law on Regional National Autonomy, which states that minority schools “should, if possible, use textbooks printed in their own languages, and lessons should be taught in those languages.”<sup>3</sup> The law specifies that minority schools should teach Chinese language only from the early stages of primary education and does not direct that Chinese language be the language of instruction or even taught in kindergartens for minority children.

International human rights law obligates China to provide Tibetan-language instruction to the ethnic Tibetan population. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which China ratified in 1992, states that “a child belonging to a . . . minority . . . shall not be denied the right . . . to use his or her own language.”<sup>4</sup> The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which China has signed but not ratified, contains similar language.<sup>5</sup> China also supported the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which both endorses rights to indigenous language education and the right of indigenous people to control their educational systems and institutions.<sup>6</sup>

Three UN human rights expert committees have repeatedly expressed concern at China’s handling of mother-tongue instruction and have called on the government to ensure that Tibetan children are able to learn in their own language and to protect those who advocate for mother-tongue education. In 1996, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the international expert body that monitors state compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, called on Chinese authorities “to ensure that children in the Tibet Autonomous Region and other minority areas are guaranteed full opportunities to develop knowledge about their own language and culture as well as to learn the Chinese language.”<sup>7</sup> In a subsequent statement in 2013, the committee called on the government to “effectively implement the bilingual language policy to ensure use and promotion of ethnic minority languages and ensure participation by ethnic minorities, including Tibetan and Uighur children . . . in the decision-making process of the education system.”<sup>8</sup>

In 2014, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) expressed concern that ethnic minorities in China continue to face severe restrictions in the realization of their right to participate in cultural life, including the right to use and teach minority languages. The committee specifically noted the restrictions faced by Tibetans and Uighurs, “in particular regarding the restriction of education in the Tibetan and Uighur languages.” The committee called on China to “ensure the use and practice of their language and culture.”<sup>9</sup>

China has failed to comply with several key requirements of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the recommendations of its committee. Instances include not providing adequate numbers of teachers trained to carry out bilingual education and enough textbooks in Tibetan, together with culturally appropriate teaching materials. In 2018, the UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) expressed concern that “Tibetan language teaching in schools in the [TAR] has not been placed on an equal footing in law, policy and practice with Chinese, and that it has been significantly restricted.” It called on the govern-

<sup>3</sup>Law of the People’s Republic of China on Regional National Autonomy, art. 37, <http://www.china.org.cn/english/government/207138.htm> (accessed December 29, 2019).

<sup>4</sup>Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), adopted November 20, 1989, G.A. Res. 44/25, annex, 44 U.N. GAOR Supp. (No. 49) at 167, U.N. Doc. A/44/49 (1989), entered into force September 2, 1990, art. 30.

<sup>5</sup>ICCPR art. 27.

<sup>6</sup>UN General Assembly, United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: resolution/adopted by the General Assembly, 2 October 2007, A/RES/61/295, art. 14.

<sup>7</sup>UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, “Concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child: China,” CRC/C/15/Add.56, para. 40, June 17, 1996, [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%2fC%2f15%2fAdd.56&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%2fC%2f15%2fAdd.56&Lang=en) (accessed December 29, 2019).

<sup>8</sup>UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, “Concluding observations on the combined third and fourth period reports of China, adopted by the Committee at its sixty-fourth session (16 September–4 October 2013), CRC/C/CHN/CO/3–4, para. 76(c), October 29, 2013, [https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC/C/CHN/CO/3-4&Lang=En](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC/C/CHN/CO/3-4&Lang=En) (accessed December 29, 2019).

<sup>9</sup>UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Concluding observations on the second periodic report of China, including Hong Kong, China, and Macao, China, June 13, 2014, E/C.12/CHN/CO/2, para. 36.

ment of China to preserve the language by encouraging its use in education and other fields.<sup>10</sup>

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

To Tibet Autonomous Region Officials:

- Ensure that all Tibetan children are able to learn and use Tibetan in schools.
- End the forced imposition of “ethnic mingling” measures in Tibetan education such as concentrated schooling and “mixed classes.”
- Unconditionally release Tashi Wangchuk and others prosecuted for peaceful opposition to state education policies.
- End the suppression of any activities or organizations calling for increased mother-tongue education and reverse the classification of such activities as “organized crime.” Allow all public discussion of education issues without threat of reprisal.
- Publish the regulations used to assess education in privately run kindergartens and primary and secondary schools in the TAR.
- Make it mandatory to provide clear reasons and the factual basis for closing such schools. Ensure that such regulations do not restrict or prohibit a school’s ability to choose the Tibetan language as a medium of instruction and that inspectors do not unfairly target or discriminate against Tibetan-run schools in their decisions to close schools.

To National Officials:

- Reaffirm the established rights of minorities to mother-tongue instruction in schools.
- Revise the bilingual education policy to ensure the use and promotion of ethnic minority languages in schools, allow mother-tongue instruction in pre-school and primary school, and ensure voluntary and consensual implementation of language policy in schools, including by consulting with and ensuring participation of ethnic minorities during the revision process.
- Ensure that educational objectives and not political objectives hold priority in the formulation of education policy in minority areas.
- Ensure that promotion of “nationality unity” does not violate basic civil and cultural rights and does not restrict public debate over issues such as education and migration in nationality areas.
- End Communist Party political control over schools and their educational decisions.
- Ensure that all teaching and learning materials for pre-school and primary levels are available in ethnic minority languages and as feasible for secondary levels, and reflect culturally appropriate content.
- Ensure that teachers who are moved to teach in autonomous regions, including those enrolled in Aid Tibet programs, are provided with in-service training in the relevant and appropriate minority language for the region they are sent to.
- End the layoff of teachers from autonomous regions caused by the current “bilingual” policy and ensure that all minority teachers are provided with in-service training to match requirements for public school teachers.
- Comply with all outstanding recommendations on education from UN treaty bodies.

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#### PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. JAMES P. MCGOVERN

Good morning and welcome to today’s hearing of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China on “The Human Rights Situation in Tibet and the International Response.” While the world has rightly focused on the crimes against humanity, and perhaps genocide, in Xinjiang, and the dismantling of Hong Kong’s autonomy and rule of law, the human rights situation in Tibet continues to deteriorate.

More than 60 years have passed since the Dalai Lama escaped into exile and Tibetans in China are still struggling to exercise their basic human rights—to speak and teach their language, protect their culture, control their land and water, travel within and outside their country, and practice their religion as they choose. Reli-

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<sup>10</sup> UN Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, “Concluding observations on the combined fourteenth to seventeenth periodic reports of China (including Hong Kong, China and Macao, China),” CERD/C/CHN/CO/14–17, September 19, 2018, paras. 43 and 44(b).

religious freedom continues to be severely curtailed, including through mandatory political education for religious leaders and arrests of Tibetans who display, or even possess, a photo of the Dalai Lama. Several buildings at religious centers of Tibetan Buddhist learning have been demolished. Religious practitioners have been expelled from Larung Gar and Yachen Gar which used to be home to thousands of Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns.

It has now been 25 years since the 11th Panchen Lama was abducted and forcibly disappeared, making him one of the world's longest detained prisoners of conscience. We continue to call for his immediate and unconditional release.

This year, "ethnic unity" regulations were passed that mandate acceptance and promotion of government ethnic and religious policy. There has also been a Chinese government-led effort, misleadingly referred to as "bilingual education," instituted in minority areas throughout China, that mandate that schools and teachers shift to Mandarin as the language of instruction. These violations of linguistic rights in Tibet are also being implemented in Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia, where new limits on Mongolian-language instruction recently sparked large-scale demonstrations. In the name of "poverty alleviation" and environmental protection, Tibetan herders and nomads are under pressure to give up their traditional land rights and way of life, displaced according to the whims of government and business.

Make no mistake about it, Chinese authorities are engaged in a systematic effort to eliminate the distinct religious, linguistic, and cultural identity of the Tibetan people. They are in clear violation of China's international obligations to protect human rights and religious freedom, and to respect the rights of indigenous peoples and tribal and ethnic minorities. Access to Tibet remains tightly controlled, with journalists reporting that it is as difficult to visit Tibet as North Korea. As a result, human rights abuses and environmental degradation are concealed from the world.

In 2018, Congress passed the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act and I was heartened to finally see the Trump Administration implement this legislation by restricting visas for Chinese officials involved in blocking access to Tibetan areas. However, a Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues has still not been appointed, as mandated by law. Every other U.S. President of the last two decades has made this appointment. Not doing so sends a signal that the human rights of the Tibetan people are not a priority for the President or the U.S. Government.

I am very concerned about recent reports that a systematic and large-scale training and transfer of Tibetan "rural surplus laborers" to work in factories is taking place. This program seems eerily similar to Uyghur forced labor abuses that have been well documented by this Commission.

I am also concerned about the targeting of the Tibetan diaspora, including such tactics as allegedly engaging a New York police officer to gather intelligence for the Chinese government about the New York Tibetan community. I look forward to hearing more about these issues from our witnesses today.

In a white paper last year, the Chinese government restated its claim that it has the sole authority to control the next reincarnation of the Dalai Lama, in clear violation of the religious freedom of the Tibetan Buddhist community. In light of new threats to interfere in the reincarnation process and the increased human rights violations, U.S. policy toward Tibet needs to be updated and strengthened.

In January 2020, the House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed the Tibetan Policy and Support Act by a vote of 392–22. At a time when Democrats and Republicans can't even agree on what to have for lunch, this bipartisanship shows overwhelming support for the human rights of Tibetans. This legislation would:

- Establish as U.S. policy that the succession or reincarnation of Tibetan Buddhist leaders, including a future 15th Dalai Lama, is an exclusively religious matter that should be decided solely by the Tibetan Buddhist community.
- State that Chinese officials who interfere in the succession or reincarnation process will be subject to targeted sanctions, including those contained in the Global Magnitsky Act.
- Strengthen the role of the State Department Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues by including a mandate to work multilaterally.
- Mandate that no new Chinese consulates should be established in the United States until a U.S. consulate is established in Tibet.
- Direct the State Department to begin multinational efforts to protect the environment and water resources of the Tibetan Plateau, and
- Support democratic governance in the Tibetan exile community.

It is long past time for the Senate to act on this legislation. Frankly, I'm not sure why it has not moved forward. I hope my Senate colleagues, and all supporters of human rights in Tibet, will contact Republican Leader Mitch McConnell and For-

Foreign Relations Committee Chairman Jim Risch and ask them to pass this bipartisan legislation as soon as possible.

Our hearing today will examine the current situation facing Tibetans, both inside China and globally; explore restrictions on linguistic and religious rights; and identify diplomatic and multilateral options to address restrictions on access and the process of religious succession.



**United States House of Representatives  
Congressional-Executive Commission on China**

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**Witness Signature**

**Date**

*Witness Biographies***Zeekgyab Rinpoche, Abbot of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery**

The 5th Zeekgyab Rinpoche, Jetsun Tenzin Thupten Rabyal Pal Sangpo, was born in 1982 in a Tibetan refugee settlement in south India. At the age of two, he was recognized by the 14th Dalai Lama as the reincarnation of the 4th Zeekgyab Rinpoche—an eminent religious scholar and Buddhist practitioner. The Zeekgyab lineage stretches back over a century to eastern Tibet with close connections to Tashi Lhunpo Monastery and the Panchen Lamas. Rinpoche has undertaken over three decades of Buddhist education at key centers of learning in India including Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, Gaden Jangtse Monastery and Gyudmed Tantric University. Upon completing the full curriculum of Buddhist philosophic and dialectic studies, Rinpoche received many academic honors including his Geshe degree (equivalent to a Ph.D.) and his Kachen degree from Tashi Lhunpo Monastery. Rinpoche studied Mandarin in Taiwan and opened a Buddhist Study Center in Taipei where he continues to teach Buddhist philosophy. The 14th Dalai Lama appointed Rinpoche as Abbot of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in late 2018.

**Matteo Mecacci, President, International Campaign for Tibet and former member of the Italian Parliament**

Matteo Mecacci was born in Florence, Italy, and studied international law at the University of Firenze (Florence). He is an expert in international relations, advocacy strategies and international human rights law. From 2008 to 2013, Matteo served in the Italian Parliament as a member of the Italian Chamber of Deputies (on the Foreign Affairs Committee) after being voted in as Deputy for the Democratic Party, during which time he served as Chairperson of the Italian Parliamentary Intergroup for Tibet. As an elected official of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, he participated in over 20 OSCE election observation missions and led two of them in 2012, in Serbia and Belarus. He also served as the Head of Mission of the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission for the 2013 Presidential election in Georgia. Earlier in his career, Matteo represented the international non-governmental organization No Peace Without Justice at the UN in New York working on human rights issues. Mr. Matteo Mecacci joined the International Campaign for Tibet as President in December 2013.

**Tenzin Dorjee, Senior Researcher and Strategist at Tibet Action Institute**

Tenzin Dorjee (Tendor) is a Tibetan activist, writer, and Senior Researcher and Strategist at Tibet Action Institute. He graduated from the Tibetan refugee school system in India and immigrated to the United States under the Tibetan Resettlement Project's family reunification program. He holds a bachelor's degree in international relations from Brown University and is currently a Ph.D. candidate in political science at Columbia University. He is the former director of Students for a Free Tibet and the author of *The Tibetan Nonviolent Struggle: A Strategic and Historical Analysis*. His work has been published in the Washington Post, the Oxford Research Encyclopedia, the CNN Blog, and the Tibetan Review.

**Sophie Richardson, China Director, Human Rights Watch**

Sophie Richardson is the China Director at Human Rights Watch. A graduate of the University of Virginia, the Hopkins-Nanjing Program, and Oberlin College, Dr. Richardson is the author of numerous articles on domestic Chinese political reform, democratization, and human rights in Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Hong Kong, the Philippines, and Vietnam. She has testified before the European Parliament and the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. She has provided commentary to the BBC, CNN, the Far Eastern Economic Review, Foreign Policy, National Public Radio, the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, and the Washington Post. Dr. Richardson is the author of "China, Cambodia, and the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence" (Columbia University Press, Dec. 2009), an in-depth examination of China's foreign policy since 1954's Geneva Conference, including rare interviews with policy makers.