



Tibet Report

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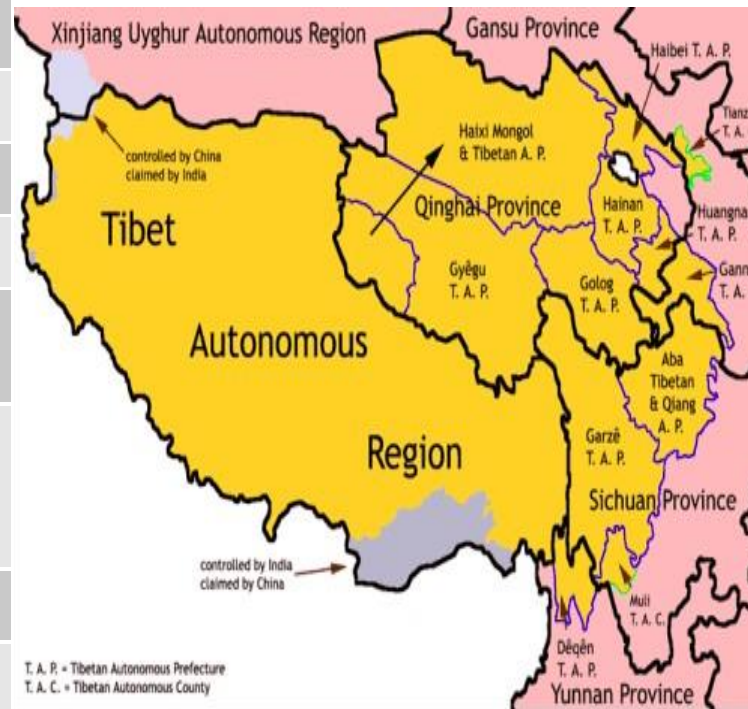
Aim

This report aims to raise awareness and keep track of the human rights violations occurring in Tibet monthly. This report provides a brief introduction to the region itself, to then go into the human rights violations occurring against minorities in Tibet. After this general overview, this report presents three selected cases of human rights violations that have occurred in Tibet in August 2021.

Tibet

Tibet is a highly disputed region located between the mountainous borders of China, India, Nepal and Bhutan. In 1950, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) invaded the Tibetan region and seized control by force. In 1959, Tibetans formed an uprising against Chinese sovereignty over their land, but it was crushed with brutal violence. A controversial deal was made with Tibetan representatives to accept Chinese sovereignty and engulf the region into the People's Republic of China. With the arrival of the Chinese, came the exile of the 14th Dalai Lama, who is the religious leader of Tibet. The spiritual leader left to Dharamshala, India, which became the location of the Tibetan government-in-exile. Dharamshala alone is estimated to be hosting 10,000 Tibetans while another estimated 160,000 Tibetans are living abroad (Baba, 2021).

Region-	Tibet
Population-	6.5 Million
Capital-	Lhasa
Largest City-	Nagqu
Major Languages-	Tibetan and other languages such as Mandarin and Hindi
Religion-	70% of the population follows Tibetan Buddhism, while rest are Tibetan Christians and Muslims
Ethnicities-	East Asian ethnicity mostly
Life Expectancy at Birth-	70.60 years in 2019



Source: -<https://www.britannica.com/place/Tibet>

Human rights violations against minorities in Tibet

Still today, Tibet is ruled by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) government, with local decision-making power concentrated in the hands of Chinese party officials (Freedom House, 2021). The residents of both Han Chinese and Tibetan ethnicity are regularly denied fundamental rights, with authorities particularly severe on Tibetans. State policies are increasingly prevalent in uniting the Chinese nation, and thus suppressing Tibetan culture and their fundamental rights. The authoritarian rule has repeatedly detained human rights defenders and lawyers tightened control over civil society, media, and the internet, and deployed invasive mass surveillance technology (Human Rights Watch, 2021). Tibetans continue to resist China's strict rule guided by their Buddhist faith and non-violent principles. Despite efforts, Tibetans are having fewer civil and political rights as China cracks down on acts that are deemed to threaten its rule. As such, Freedom House measures the Freedom status in Tibet to be 'Not Free' and marks alarmingly low on political rights and civil liberties (Freedom House, 2021). Some sources of human rights violations include political oppression and violence, cultural and religious suppression, social and economic discrimination, and environmental destruction.

1. Political Oppression and Violence

Tibetans are routinely subject to fierce punishment by Chinese officials. There is intense surveillance through security cameras, police checkpoints and party officials on the streets monitoring their daily lives. Acts deemed to be against the CCP are suppressed with severe violence. Acts such as waving the Tibetan flag, engaging with their spiritual leader or sending information abroad can lead to imprisonment, torture or death. Those of Tibetan ethnicity are often imprisoned on unclear or unspecified charges, without access to legal support nor fair trials according to international standards of justice. Even children are prone to abuses of their freedom and human rights.

2. Cultural and Religious Suppression

Chinese officials are regularly monitoring cultural and religious activity in the region, particularly in monasteries and nunneries, in an attempt to suppress cultural and religious freedoms in the name of Chinese unity. Measures include banning the Tibetan national flag and anthem, engaging with Tibetan Buddhism, and teaching in the Tibetan language. These all hinder the freedoms of Tibetans as they are major pillars of culture. Tibetans have been imprisoned and given death penalties for expressing Tibetan culture. Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the Chinese government closed Buddhist temples and monasteries for many months. Once restrictions could be eased, temples and monasteries were obliged to participate in political indoctrination sessions and display political loyalty to the CCP to be able to reopen (Freedom House, 2021). In June 2021, the Chinese government also announced the requirements of denouncing the Dalai Lama, abandoning political beliefs, and swearing loyalty to the CCP, in order to receive government employment or state benefits.

Writers, singers, and artists who have promoted the language in their work have been jailed for doing so. Schools in the Tibetan language are being shut down, with Tibetan school children being denied classes in their mother tongue as their schools are replaced with Chinese speaking schools. Already today, signs in public are increasingly bilingual with Chinese becoming the dominant language used. Also, younger generations are now speaking a mix of the two languages, with an increasing amount of the population incapable of forming Tibetan sentences without Chinese words. The response of Tibetans to start informal classes in their traditional language was faced with immediate objection from authorities as classes by monks were deemed to be ‘ideological infiltration among the young’, ‘dangerous’ and ‘harmful’ (Kyab, 2021). Although China’s constitution enshrines the languages of minority groups, authorities are increasingly restricting Tibetan use in all forms.

Another way Chinese authorities are limiting Tibetan culture is by changing the demographics of the region. They have provided incentives for non-Tibetan people to migrate from other regions of China while ethnic Tibetans are encouraged to relocate. This has led to a reduction of the Tibetan share of the population, with Chinese culture growing in the region.

3. Social and Economic Discrimination

Tibetans are also facing more social and economic discrimination within their own region as China continues to take control over more aspects of Tibetan life. For example, Tibet is governed by the CCP in Beijing, and even within the Tibetan Autonomous Region, no Tibetan has ever been appointed to the highest government position (Free Tibet, 2021). Tibetans are also becoming increasingly disadvantaged as the Chinese language becomes a crucial requirement for employment. Thus, higher-income employment is more often awarded to those who are of Chinese ethnicity or who stray away from Tibetan traditional life. Also, with migration policies encouraging more individuals with Chinese ethnicity to enter Tibet and with Tibetans promoted to move abroad, Tibetans are becoming an increasing minority in their region. Tibetans are also highly limited in movement with police checkpoints monitoring their travel and imposing the need for permits to visit religious areas. The limits of travel are also illustrated by the fact that Tibetans have no automatic right to a Chinese passport, and thus making international travel often impossible (Free Tibet, 2021).

4. Environmental Destruction

Moreover, China routinely takes advantage and sovereignty over Tibet's rich natural resources such as gold, copper and water (Free Tibet, 2021). The violent extraction projects across the region disregard Tibetan communities and impose pollution and destruction of sacred land. Protests from Tibetans are met with high punishment, although their fundamental rights are being violated. From these projects, China has already displaced over 2 million Tibetan nomads from the land on which they have habited and depended on their survival for generations (Free Tibet, 2021). These populations were moved to urban settlements and forced into society, yet with no plans of social inclusion.

These four forms of human rights abuses are only a small part of what Tibetans endure daily. The reality is far from comprehensible from an external point of view, and any attempt to capture it will be inadequate. The human rights violations occurring in the region are intensive as China cracks down on all aspects of Tibetan traditional life.

Human rights events of August 2021

Schools Threatened as Tibetan Language and Culture is under further scrutiny

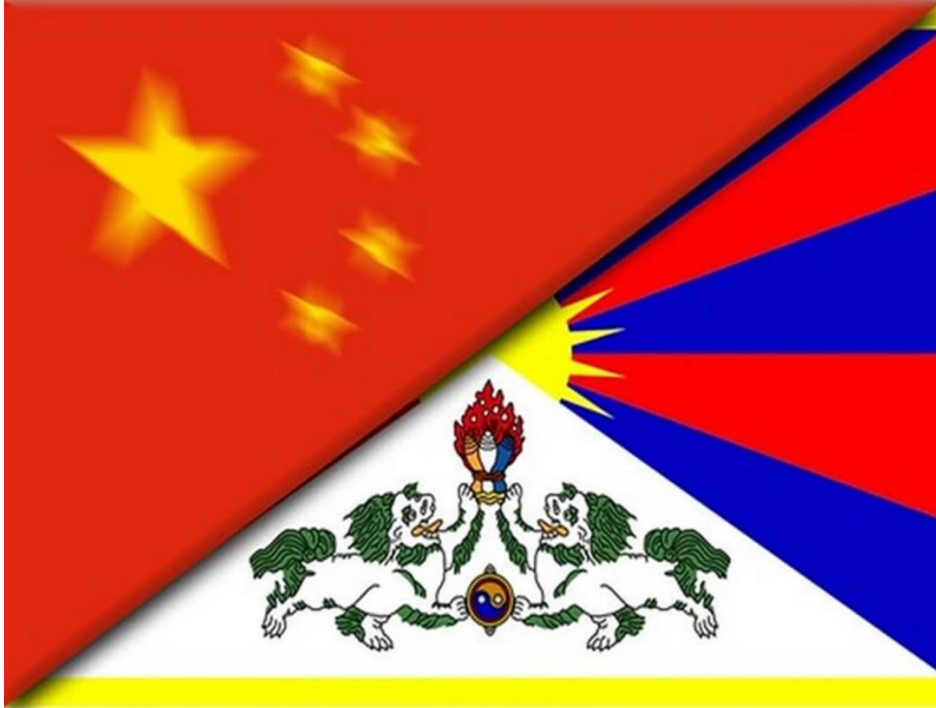


Image of the Chinese flag covering the Tibetan flag. Image: <https://www.devdiscourse.com/article/international/1710564-tibetans-detained-for-opposing-imposition-of-chinese-language>

Beijing has announced the imposition of the Chinese language in Tibetan schools (Kyab, 2021; ANI, 2021a). This month, more schools are receiving orders to change their language of instruction to Chinese. If schools refuse to implement these changes, the Chinese government threaten to shut them down entirely. Private or informal classes taught in the Tibetan language are also forbidden (Kyab, 2021). As such, China continues to push the adoption of the Chinese language and culture in Tibet, against the fundamental rights of the minority group.

For example, one Tibetan school in the Sichuan province in western China has been warned to adapt (Kunchock, 2021a). Although the school was founded by a Tibetan lama, it is operated by the Chinese government. Private Tibetan schools offering lessons taught in the Tibetan language have been closed, forcing students towards government-run schools taught in Chinese.

Although Chinese authorities claim this is a move towards unity, parents have expressed concerns that removing language from schools will have severe consequences on the long-term existence of the Tibetan language and culture (Kunchock, 2021a).

Tibetan Students Detained for Resisting Chinese-Only Instruction in School



Image from 24 August 2021, shows two Tibetan students names Gyuldrak and Yangrik being handcuffed alongside three officials in Darlag county in Qinghai's Golog Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Source: <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/students-08272021182339.html>

Chinese authorities have detained two 19-year-old Tibetan students for speaking out against Beijing's imposition of the use of the Chinese language as the only language of instruction in Tibetan schools (ANI, 2021c; India Blooms News Service, 2021; Kunchock, 2021b). Schools instructed in the Tibetan language are increasingly under threat, along with bans on private tutoring to encourage students to undergo government education, instructed solely in Chinese. The students, identified as Gyuldrak and Yangrik, expressed their disagreement on social media regarding the policy of all classes being taught only in Chinese in the Tibetan region. The social media platform, WeChat, is a Chinese messaging app and has been under heavy surveillance of the local Chinese authorities. The two are now being held in the Darlag county police station.

Chinese Authorities arrest 60 Tibetans for owning pictures of their Spiritual Leader



An image of the 14th Dalai Lama. Source: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2021-04-14/who-will-be-the-next-dalai-lama-u-s-india-china-try-to-control-process>

This year, the month of July celebrated the 86th birthday of the 14th Dalai Lama. The exiled spiritual leader remains a symbol of compassion and hope of peace in Tibet yet, any celebrations are severely punished by Chinese authorities. In July, two Tibetans were arrested in the Tibetan Autonomous Region on suspicion of encouraging the reciting of Tibetan prayers on social media in celebration of the leader's birthday. In this time, twenty others were detained due to suspicion of having conversed with other Tibetans abroad or of having photographs or literature related to the Dalai Lama. This was followed by internet connections being shut down in their village with most of them being detained without trial for months. Most recently, on the 29th of August 2021 (ANI, 2021b), Chinese authorities were reported to have arrested approximately 60 Tibetans from the Kardze's Dza Wonpo township for possessing images of their spiritual leader. The officials were said to have arrested 19 monks from a local monastery located in the Tibetan Autonomous Region, with 40 people's homes thoroughly searched.

While the spiritual leader is praised by many Tibetans, the Chinese authorities have prohibited engaging with the Dalai Lama due to the perceived threat of separatism, extremism, and terrorism. The intensifying pressure on Tibetans, through arrests, raids, and violence from the part of Chinese authorities for engaging with the Dalai Lama are direct violations of religious

and cultural freedoms and only seem to be getting worse (EU Reporter, 2021; Human Rights Watch, 2021).

Concluding Remarks

The reality of Tibetans is hard to capture from an external perspective. The history and the presence of Tibet is loaded with human rights violations from political oppression and violence, cultural and religious suppression, social and economic discrimination, and environmental destruction. Yet the list can go on for much longer. It is difficult to even begin to understand the situation in the region as information is highly restricted, with more incidents going unreported. The national and international bodies need to act to improve the situation in Tibet and help protect the fundamental human rights of all Tibetans. Justice needs to be placed at the highest importance.

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