

# **TIBET 2022 HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The majority of ethnic Tibetans in the People's Republic of China live in the Tibetan Autonomous Region and Tibetan autonomous prefectures and counties in Sichuan, Qinghai, Yunnan, and Gansu Provinces. The Chinese Communist Party's Central Committee exercises paramount authority over Tibetan areas. As in other predominantly minority areas of the People's Republic of China, ethnic Han Chinese members of the party held the overwhelming majority of top party, government, police, and military positions. Ultimate authority rests with the 24-member Political Bureau (Politburo) of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee and its seven-member Standing Committee in Beijing, neither of which had any Tibetan members.

The main domestic security agencies include the Ministry of State Security, the Ministry of Public Security, and the People's Armed Police. The People's Armed Police continues to be under the dual authority of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the Central Military Commission. The People's Liberation Army is primarily responsible for external security but also has some domestic security responsibilities. Local jurisdictions also frequently use civilian municipal security forces, known as "urban management" officials, to enforce administrative measures. Civilian authorities maintained effective control of the security forces. Members of the security forces committed numerous abuses.

Significant human rights issues included credible reports of: unlawful or arbitrary killings, including extrajudicial killings by the government; disappearances; torture and cases of cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment or punishment by the government; arbitrary arrest or detention; political prisoners; transnational repression against individuals located in another country; serious problems with the independence of the judiciary; arbitrary or unlawful interference with privacy; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media, including censorship; serious restrictions on internet freedom including site blocking; substantial interference with the freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association; severe restrictions on freedom of religion or belief, despite nominal constitutional

protections voided by regulations restricting religious freedom and effectively placing Tibetan Buddhism under central government control; severe restrictions on freedom of movement; the inability of citizens to change their government peacefully through free and fair elections; restrictions on political participation; serious acts of government corruption; coerced abortion or forced sterilization; and violence or threats of violence targeting Indigenous persons.

Disciplinary procedures for officials were opaque, and aside from vague allegations of corruption or violations of “party discipline,” there was no publicly available information to indicate senior officials punished security personnel or other authorities for behavior defined under laws and regulations of the People’s Republic of China as abuses of power and authority.

## **Section 1. Respect for the Integrity of the Person**

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

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

Phayul.com, an India-based news site that publishes on Tibetan topics, reported in October that Ngodup Tsering died in police custody in Dartsedo County, Sichuan Province, after authorities detained and severely beat him on September 28. According to the report, authorities detained Tsering after he delivered food to a home for the elderly. According to the same report, authorities in Serthar County, Sichuan Province detained and severely beat Chugdar (last name unknown) for organizing a religious gathering. The beating was so severe that Chugdar died in police custody.

### **b. Disappearance**

There were reports of disappearances; the whereabouts of many persons detained by security officials were unknown (see information on incommunicado detention in section 1.c.).

Multiple news organizations reported that in February Tsewang Norbu, a famous

Tibetan singer, attempted to self-immolate at Potala Palace in Lhasa, Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR). Some organizations reported Norbu died from his wounds while others reported that he was in police custody. His whereabouts and well-being remained unknown as of October.

Radio Free Asia (RFA) reported in March that Tsering Samdup attempted to self-immolate in Qinghai Province. Sources told RFA that authorities detained Samdup and that his whereabouts and well-being remained unknown.

The whereabouts of the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the second most prominent figure after the Dalai Lama in Tibetan Buddhism's Gelug school, remained unknown. Neither he nor his parents have been seen since they were disappeared, allegedly by or on behalf of PRC authorities, in 1995, when he was age six.

### **c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and Other Related Abuses**

According to sources, police and prison authorities employed torture and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment in dealing with some detainees and prisoners. There were reports that PRC officials severely beat some Tibetans who were incarcerated or otherwise in custody. Tibet Watch reported in March that authorities in Gamba County, TAR arrested Pasang Norbu after he was ordered to close his tour company. Although Norbu's company was legally registered, authorities reportedly accused Norbu of operating an "unsafe" service. Tibet Watch reported police beat Norbu before taking him into custody; as of October his whereabouts were unknown.

Reports from released prisoners indicated some were permanently disabled or in extremely poor health because of the harsh treatment they endured in prison. Former prisoners also reported being isolated in small cells for months at a time and deprived of sleep, sunlight, and adequate food. Human Rights Watch reported in February that Go Sherab Gyatso, a monk who developed a chronic lung condition while imprisoned from 1998-2001, required immediate medical attention because of unspecified "declining health." Go was serving a second, 10-year term in prison after his 2020 arrest for "inciting secession." PRC authorities never

publicly released the evidence for the charges against him.

RFA reported in July that Tibetan monk Jigme Gyatso died at his home after suffering from long-term health problems connected to frequent torture during numerous imprisonments between 2006 and 2016. Gyatso reported authorities routinely and severely tortured him during his detention. “During his imprisonment, he has been subjected to severe beatings due to which he has been admitted in hospital for a long time without any sign of improvement,” a former student of Gyatso told RFA. Although authorities announced no official cause of death, Gyatso suffered persistent health issues after his release in 2016.

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

### **Prison and Detention Center Conditions**

**Abusive Physical Conditions:** Prison conditions were harsh and potentially life threatening due to inadequate sanitary conditions and medical care. According to individuals who completed their prison terms in recent years, prisoners rarely received medical care except in cases of serious illness. According to Freedom House, there were reports that detained suspects and prisoners were subjected to torture and denied food, clothing, and medical care.

**Administration:** There was no information indicating that authorities investigated credible reports of abusive detention center conditions. Independent observers with access to members of the Tibetan community believed that in many cases officials denied visitors, including attorneys, access to detained and imprisoned persons. Detained suspects and prisoners were often subjected to nonreligious re-education. The PRC often used COVID-19 as a pretext to deny access to prisons.

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

### **d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention**

Arbitrary arrest and detention remained serious problems. Legal safeguards for

detained or imprisoned Tibetans were inadequate in both design and implementation. The right of any person to challenge the lawfulness of his or her arrest or detention in court does not exist in the TAR or other Tibetan areas.

### **Arrest Procedures and Treatment of Detainees**

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

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

Despite the laws and regulatory procedures, incommunicado detention was a common practice. London-based nongovernmental organization (NGO) Free Tibet reported in May that authorities in Yushu Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province, released driver Rinchen Dorjee in April after nine months of incommunicado detention in police custody. Dorjee remained under strict surveillance as of October. He and two others were arrested in 2021 after sharing photographs of a celebration marking the 70th anniversary of the establishment of Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in a WeChat group that included members outside the PRC. The whereabouts of the two individuals arrested with him remained unknown.

**Arbitrary Arrest:** Tibet.net reported that authorities arrested Tibetan monks

Tenzin Norbu and Wangchen Nyima in August 2021, but as of January had not informed their families about the charges or their whereabouts. Tenzin and Wangchen were brothers and had both worked at Nenang Monastery in Drago County, Sichuan Province. According to Tibet.net sources, the arrests were likely tied to the brothers' work at the monastery, where they taught classes, including on Tibetan language, culture, and religion.

Asian News Network reported in January that authorities in Kardze (Ganzi) Prefecture, Sichuan Province, arrested 11 monks from Gaden Namgyal Ling Monastery for sharing news and photos of the destruction of a statue of Buddha in December 2020. According to Asian News Network and RFA, authorities arrested Lhamo Yangkyi, Tsering Samdrup, Pelga, Nyima, Tashi Dorje, and six unnamed monks. Local sources told RFA that a PRC official said the monks "need to be taught a lesson" and that one of the monks had been badly beaten.

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

In a February letter to PRC authorities made public in April, a group of six UN special procedures mandate holders expressed serious concern over the case of Tibetan writer Lobsang Lhundup, who was arrested in June 2019 and held in pretrial detention for 18 months before PRC authorities sentenced him; Tibetan singer and musician Lhundup Drakpa, who was arrested in May 2019 and also held in prolonged incommunicado detention before PRC authorities sentenced him; and teacher Rinchen Kyi, who was arrested in August 2021 and as of October remained held in pretrial detention at an unknown facility.

## **e. Denial of Fair Public Trial**

There is no judicial independence from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) or the PRC government in law or practice. The TAR Higher People's Court seeks judicial candidates who can pass a "political background check." In cases that

authorities claimed involved “endangering state security” or “separatism,” trials often were cursory and closed.

## **Trial Procedures**

Criminal suspects in the PRC have the right to hire a lawyer or other defense representation, but many Tibetan defendants, particularly those facing politically motivated charges, did not have access to legal representation while in pretrial detention. Lawyers have become increasingly reluctant to take clients due to political risks or because Tibetan families often did not have the resources to cover legal fees. Observers also reported that Tibetan lawyers licensed to practice in Tibetan areas were often unwilling to defend individuals in front of ethnic Han judges and prosecutors due to fear of reprisals or disbarment.

In rare cases, defendants were denied access to legal representation entirely. For example, Tashi Wangdui, a Tibetan HIV and AIDS awareness campaigner sentenced to life imprisonment in 2008 for “endangering state security,” remained barred from access to any of his lawyers, as has been the case since his conviction.

Local sources noted trials were predominantly conducted in Mandarin, with government interpreters provided for defendants who did not speak Mandarin. Court decisions, proclamations, and other judicial documents generally were not published in Tibetan.

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

## **Political Prisoners and Detainees**

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

India-based online news website *Republic World* reported in February that

authorities in Drago County, TAR, detained an unknown number of Tibetan nomads after finding “politically inappropriate” content on their cell phones. The source reportedly said, “It is not just a few Tibetans, but many Tibetans arrested this time.” Those detained reportedly were sent to labor camps and their whereabouts were unknown as of October.

The International Campaign for Tibet reported in October that PRC authorities in Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture sentenced six Tibetan writers and formal political prisoners to between four and 14 years in prison on politically motivated charges of “inciting separatism” and “endangering state security.” The six individuals were Gangkye Drubpa Kyab, Tsering Dolma, Samdup, Gangbu Yudrum, Seynam, and Pema Rinchen.

The Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy maintained a database of more than 2,000 Tibetans known or believed to be detained or imprisoned by PRC authorities in violation of international human rights standards. Of the 115 cases for which there was information available during the year on sentencing, punishment ranged from 15 months’ to life imprisonment. These data, for both overall detentions and sentencing, were believed to cover only a small fraction of the actual number of political prisoners.

### **Transnational Repression**

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

**Threats, Harassment, Surveillance, and Coercion:** The Tibetan overseas community was frequently subjected to harassment, monitoring, and cyberattacks believed to be carried out by the PRC government. Freedom House reported in September that “Tibetans in exile and members of the Tibetan diaspora have faced relentless phishing and hacking attacks, as well as intimidation and threats online, from the Chinese government.” A January report from Safeguard Defenders also noted that PRC authorities have issued death threats to Tibetans overseas to force them to be silent or return to the PRC.

**Efforts to Control Mobility:** In 2021 the Jamestown Foundation reported on



tactics PRC officials used to target Tibetan activists overseas and the Tibetan diaspora community. The report indicated Chinese consulates abroad often collected data from family members applying for visas to use the information to identify and target Tibetans in the PRC. The PRC government at times compelled Tibetans in China to pressure family members seeking asylum overseas to return home.

**Bilateral Pressure:** There were credible reports that the PRC continued to put heavy pressure on Nepal to implement a border systems management agreement and a mutual legal assistance treaty, as well as to conclude an extradition treaty that could result in the refoulement of Tibetan refugees to the PRC. Nepal did not implement the first two and postponed action on the extradition treaty.

**Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies:** See section 1.e., Civil Judicial Procedures and Remedies, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2022* for China.

## **f. Arbitrary or Unlawful Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence**

Authorities electronically and manually monitored private correspondence and searched, without warrant, private homes and businesses for photographs of the Dalai Lama and other forbidden items. Police routinely examined the cell phones of TAR residents in random stops or as part of other investigations to search for “reactionary music” from India or photographs of the Dalai Lama. Authorities also questioned and detained some individuals who disseminated writings and photographs over the internet or listened to teachings of the Dalai Lama on their cell phones. Authorities continued to employ pervasive surveillance systems, including the use of facial recognition and smart identity cards.

The Human Rights Protection Network reported in April that many Tibetan families continued to face persecution for maintaining contact with their relatives living in exile. Sharing of photos with or sending money to relatives abroad can lead to harassment and arrest. The report indicated that Tibetans living in China were sentenced for “illegal business operation” for sending donations to Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in India and Nepal.

Tibet Watch reported in May that authorities in Gyalzu County, Sichuan Province, arrested a couple after authorities accused the husband of contacting his relatives in exile. Authorities arrested Logo and Yuto (last names unknown) in April and their families were not allowed to visit them. As of year's end, their whereabouts remained unknown.

The “grid system,” an informant system also known as the “double-linked household system,” facilitated authorities’ efforts to identify and control persons considered “extremist” or “splittist.” The grid system groups households and other establishments and encourages them to report problems, including financial problems and political transgressions in other group households, to the government.

According to sources in the TAR, Tibetans frequently received telephone calls from security officials ordering them to remove from their cell phones photographs, articles, and information on international contacts the government deemed sensitive. Security officials visited the residences of those who did not comply with such orders. Local sources reported that in some areas, households were required to have photographs of PRC President Xi Jinping in prominent positions and were subject to inspections and fines for noncompliance. The TAR regional government punished CCP members who possessed photos of or quotes from the Dalai Lama, secretly harbored religious beliefs, made pilgrimages to India, or sent their children to study with Tibetans in exile.

Observers also reported that many Tibetans traveling to visit family overseas were required to spend several weeks in political education classes after returning to China.

The government also interfered with the ability of persons to find employment. Job announcements of different types in the TAR required applicants to “align ideologically, politically, and in action with the CCP Central Committee,” “oppose any splittist tendencies,” and “expose and criticize the Dalai Lama.” The advertisements explained that all applicants were subject to a political review prior to employment.

U.S.-Canadian online news website *Vice.com*, drawing from reports by the Citizen

Lab of the University of Toronto and Human Rights Watch, reported in September on authorities' collection of vast amounts of DNA information from nearly one-third of Tibet's population. The report suggested the collection of Tibetans' DNA "could offer the government a powerful tool for surveillance of ethnic minorities." The data could be used to identify relatives of persons sought by police or for a range of other purposes. Emile Dirks, the author of the Citizen Lab report, noting that "there really aren't any limits on police powers in China," thought police could "use this [data] for whatever purpose they see fit." Human Rights Watch reported Tibetans did not appear to have the right to refuse collection of their DNA information, citing a Lhasa municipality report that stated, "blood samples for DNA collection were being systematically collected from children at kindergartens and from other local residents." Human Rights Watch declared, "the authorities are literally taking blood without consent to strengthen their surveillance capabilities."

## **Section 2. Respect for Civil Liberties**

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

Constitutional provisions for freedom of expression were not respected in law or in practice.

**Freedom of Expression:** Authorities in the TAR and other Tibetan regions punished persons for the vaguely defined crime of "creating and spreading rumors." RFA reported in January that Qinghai authorities banned Tibetan social media groups involved in religious expression. Authorities reportedly warned Tibetan groups that they could face investigation and imprisonment for failure to comply with new rules restricting religious activity on the internet. "All online coordinating of religious activities and related events will be banned" and anyone "found violating this order will be investigated and punished," RFA's source said.

U.S.-based news website *China Digital Times* reported in September that censors removed posts from Weibo, China's Twitter equivalent, discussing zero-COVID pandemic controls in Tibet. When an outbreak occurred in August, Tibetans took to Weibo to post their frustration with the lack of food and medical care, and the

severity of pandemic controls. Censors quickly responded by first shutting down Lhasa-related social media posts, then co-opting the Lhasa hashtag to laud the authorities' response to the COVID-19 outbreak. In addition, state media outlets began publishing articles declaring the pandemic controls successful, although strict lockdowns continued.

Voice of America reported that Tibetans who spoke to foreigners or foreign reporters, attempted to provide information to persons outside the country, or communicated information about protests or other expressions of discontent, including via mobile phones and internet-based communications, were subject to harassment or detention for “undermining social stability and inciting separatism.”

According to multiple observers, security officials often cancelled WeChat accounts carrying “sensitive information,” such as discussions about Tibetan-language education, and interrogated the account owners.

During the year, the TAR carried out numerous propaganda campaigns to encourage pro-CCP speech, thought, and conduct. Local sources reported that starting in July, authorities required monasteries across Tibetan-inhabited areas to hold “patriotic activities” under the slogan of “wholeheartedly thanking the Party and happily welcome the 20th Party Congress.” One such celebration, held in Yunnan Province in September, was entitled “Happily welcome the 20th Party Congress and work hard to be outstanding monks and nuns in accordance with the Party.”

India-based Asian News International reported in February that authorities continued to surveil and restrict the movement of a former Tibetan monk several years after he was released from prison. Geshe Tsewang Namgyal, a former monk at the Draggo Monastery in Ganzi Prefecture, Sichuan Province, served six years in prison for his participation in a protest. Authorities released Namgyal in 2018, but have prohibited his return to the Draggo Monastery, barred him from owning a cell phone, and required that he seek permission before traveling.

A re-education program called “Unity and Love for the Motherland” continued to expand. Participants in the program received state subsidies and incentives for demonstrating support for and knowledge of CCP leaders and ideology, often

requiring them to memorize party slogans and quotations from past CCP leaders and to sing the national anthem. These tests were carried out in Mandarin.

After several years when no such incidents were reported, there were at least three cases of self-immolation as of October. In one case, the protestor may have survived and been taken into police custody; as of October, his whereabouts and condition were unknown (see section 1.b.). In March, Tibet Watch reported that Tashi Phunstsok, age 81, set himself on fire in front of a police station near Kirti Monastery in Sichuan Province. The report indicated Phunstsok died shortly after police arrived at the scene. Police removed the body and as of October it had not been released to the family. Authorities reportedly maintained close surveillance of the family following Phunstsok's death. In March Radio Free Asia reported that Tsering Samdup self-immolated in front of a police station in Yushul Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.

**Violence and Harassment:** PRC authorities arrested and sentenced many Tibetan writers, intellectuals, and singers for “inciting separatism.” Numerous prominent Tibetan political writers, including Jangtse Donkho, Kelsang Jinpa, Buddha (no last name), Tashi Rabten, Arik Dolma Kyab, Gangkye Drupa Kyab, Shojkhang (also known as Druklo), and Tashi Wangchuk, reported security officers closely monitored them following their releases from prison between 2013 and 2021 and often ordered them to return to police stations for further interrogation, particularly after they received messages or calls from friends overseas or from foreigners in other parts of the PRC. Some of these persons deleted their social media contacts or shut down their accounts completely.

**Censorship or Content Restrictions for Members of the Press and Other Media, Including Online Media:** Authorities tightly controlled journalists who worked for the domestic press and could hire and fire them based on assessments of their political reliability. CCP propaganda authorities oversaw journalist accreditation in the TAR and required journalists working there to display “loyalty to the party and motherland.” The deputy head of the TAR Propaganda Department simultaneously held a prominent position in the TAR Journalists Association, a state-controlled professional association to which local journalists must belong.

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

Foreign journalists may visit the TAR only after obtaining a special travel permit from the government; authorities rarely granted such permission. When authorities permitted journalists to travel to the TAR, the government severely limited the scope of reporting by monitoring and controlling their movements and intimidating and preventing Tibetans from interacting with them.

Authorities prohibited domestic journalists from reporting on repression in Tibetan areas. Authorities promptly censored the postings of bloggers and users of WeChat who did so, and the authors sometimes faced punishment. Authorities banned some writers from publishing; prohibited them from receiving services and benefits, such as government jobs, bank loans, and passports; and denied them membership in formal organizations.

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

The PRC continued to disrupt RFA Tibetan- and Mandarin-language services in Tibetan areas, as well as those of the Voice of Tibet, an independent radio station based in Norway.

In addition to maintaining strict censorship of print and online content in Tibetan areas, PRC authorities sought to censor the expression of views or distribution of information related to Tibet in countries and regions outside mainland China.

## **Internet Freedom**

There was no internet freedom. In mid-2021, TAR party secretary Wu Yingjie made this explicit, urging authorities to “resolutely control the internet, strengthen online propaganda, maintain the correct cybersecurity view, and make the masses listen to and follow the Party.”

Authorities curtailed cell phone and internet service in many parts of the TAR and

other Tibetan areas, sometimes for weeks or months at a time. Interruptions in internet service were especially pronounced during periods of unrest and political sensitivity, such as the March anniversaries of the 1959 and 2008 protests, “Serf Emancipation Day,” and around the Dalai Lama’s birthday in July. When authorities restored internet service, they closely monitored its usage. In its *Freedom in the World 2021* report, Freedom House noted that authorities also monitored and censored Tibet-related keywords on WeChat.

Many sources also reported it was almost impossible to register with the government, as required by law, websites promoting Tibetan culture and language in the TAR.

Tibet.net reported in February that new restrictions governing online religious content were being used to silence and punish those sharing religious materials on social media. The new measures which went into effect in March prohibited unlicensed organizations from organizing religious activities on the internet and broadcasting or recording religious ceremonies “such as worshipping Buddha, burning incense, ordaining, chanting...in the form of words, pictures, audio, and video.”

In advance of the Dalai Lama’s birthday in July, authorities again warned Tibetans not to use social media chat groups to send any messages, organize gatherings, or use symbols that would imply a celebration of the spiritual leader’s birthday. The TAR Internet and Information Office continued a research project known as “Countermeasures to Internet-based Reactionary Infiltration by the Dalai Lama Clique.” Throughout the year authorities blocked users in China from accessing foreign-based, Tibet-related websites critical of official government policy in Tibetan areas. Technically sophisticated hacking attempts originating from China also targeted Tibetan activists and organizations outside mainland China.

### **Restrictions on Academic Freedom and Cultural Events**

Authorities in many Tibetan areas required professors and students at institutions of higher education to attend regular political education sessions, particularly during politically sensitive months, to prevent “separatist” political and religious activities on campus. Authorities frequently pressured Tibetan academics to

participate in government propaganda efforts, both domestically and overseas, such as by making public speeches supporting government policies. Academics who refused to cooperate with such efforts faced diminished prospects for promotion and research grants. Academics in the PRC who publicly criticized CCP policies on Tibetan affairs faced official reprisal, including the loss of their jobs and the risk of imprisonment.

The government controlled curricula, texts, and other course materials as well as the publication of historically or politically sensitive academic books. Authorities frequently denied Tibetan academics permission to travel overseas for conferences and academic or cultural exchanges the CCP had not organized or approved.

In September *Foreign Policy* reported that the PRC's campaign against the Tibetan language had intensified and was "part of a longer trend of ethnic cleansing and minority suppression – seeking to strike at Tibetans' ability to access their heritage and identity through their language." The report noted, "Today in Lhasa, Tibetan teachers are almost wholly prevented from teaching in Tibetan to students; Tibetan students are taught almost all their subjects (except for their Tibetan language courses) in Chinese. The CCP's ideology is also forced into curriculums. Instead of education that appreciates and preserves their heritage, Tibetans face psychic attacks against their very existence in an educational curriculum that is imposed on them."

Human rights NGO Tibet Watch reported in April that authorities began requiring Tibetan parents to attend Mandarin language training in order for them to teach their children Mandarin. The report stated that the required classes were part of the PRC's broader campaign to erode non-Han ethnic groups in China, which included a network of boarding schools that taught children in Mandarin (see below), not their native Tibetan. Training sessions for parents occurred in several Tibetan-inhabited areas and the focus was to "reform [participants'] thoughts through Chinese education."

In areas officially designated as "autonomous," Tibetans generally lacked the right to organize or play a meaningful role in the protection of their cultural heritage. In accordance with government guidance on ethnic assimilation, state policies continued to disrupt traditional Tibetan culture, living patterns, and customs.



Forced assimilation was pursued by promoting the influx of non-Tibetans to traditionally Tibetan areas, expanding the domestic tourism industry, forcibly resettling and urbanizing nomads and farmers, weakening Tibetan language education in public schools, and weakening monasteries' role in Tibetan society, especially with respect to religious education.

The government gave many ethnic Han individuals, especially retired soldiers, incentives to move to Tibet. Migrants to the TAR and other parts of the Tibetan plateau were overwhelmingly concentrated in urban areas. Government policies to subsidize economic development often benefited Han Chinese migrants more than Tibetans.

The PRC government continued its campaign to resettle Tibetan nomads into urban areas and newly created communities in rural areas across the TAR and other Tibetan areas. Improving housing conditions, health care, and education for Tibet's poorest persons were among the stated goals of resettlement. There was, however, also a pattern of settling herders near townships and roads and away from monasteries, the traditional providers of community and social services. A requirement that herders bear a substantial part of the resettlement costs often forced resettled families into debt. The government's campaign cost many resettled herders their livelihoods and left them living in poverty in urban areas.

The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy reported in April that authorities ordered the closure of six Tibetan language schools in Garzi, TAR. Authorities forced the students from these schools to enroll in schools that taught Mandarin only. Although the center reported several local residents submitted petitions requesting authorities to reverse the order, authorities threatened those who resisted the order with prison. The center said the closure of these schools aligned with the PRC's broader strategy to build a "Chinese national identity" with a single language.

While Mandarin Chinese and Tibetan are both official languages of the TAR, official buildings and businesses, including banks, post offices, and hospitals, frequently lacked signage in Tibetan. In many instances forms and documents were available only in Mandarin. Mandarin was used for most official communications and was the predominant language of instruction in public schools

in many Tibetan areas. To print in the Tibetan language, private printing businesses in Chengdu needed special government approval, which was often difficult to obtain.

PRC law states that “schools and other institutions of education where most of the students come from minority nationalities shall, whenever possible, use textbooks in their own languages and use their languages as the media of instruction.”

Despite guarantees of cultural and linguistic rights, many students at all levels had limited access to officially approved Tibetan language instruction and textbooks, particularly in the areas of “modern-day education,” which refers to nontraditional, nonreligious subjects, particularly computer science, physical education, the arts, and other “modern” subjects.

“Nationalities” universities, established to serve ethnic minority students and ethnic Han Chinese students interested in ethnic minority subjects, only used Tibetan as the language of instruction in Tibetan language or culture courses. Mandarin was used in courses that taught technical skills and qualifications.

According to multiple sources, monasteries throughout Tibetan areas of China were required to integrate CCP members into their governance structures, where they exercised control over monastic admission, education, security, and finances. Requirements introduced by the party included geographic residency limitations on who may attend each monastery. This restriction, especially rigorous in the TAR, undermined the traditional Tibetan Buddhist practice of seeking advanced religious instruction from a select number of senior teachers based at monasteries across the Tibetan plateau.

Authorities in Tibetan areas regularly banned the sale and distribution of music they deemed to have sensitive political content.

## **b. Freedoms of Peaceful Assembly and Association**

Tibetans do not enjoy the rights to assemble peacefully or to associate freely.

### **Freedom of Peaceful Assembly**

Even in areas officially designated as “autonomous,” Tibetans generally lacked the

right to organize. Persons who organized public events for any purpose not endorsed by authorities faced harassment, arrest, prosecution, and violence. Unauthorized assemblies were frequently broken up by force. Any assembly authorities deemed a challenge to the PRC or its policies, for example, to advocate for Tibetan language rights, to mark religious holidays, or to protect the area's unique natural environment, provoked a particularly strong response both directly against the assembled persons and in authorities' public condemnation of the assembly. Authorities acted preemptively to forestall unauthorized assemblies.

FreeTibet reported in May that authorities in Lhasa, TAR, increased the security presence in anticipation of the Dalai Lama's birthday in July. Authorities reportedly set up security checkpoints on street corners and carried out increased random searches of Tibetans' cell phones. Such restrictions on gatherings and movements were reported before and during other Tibetan holidays and religious celebrations as well.

RFA reported in July on small private (albeit in public) and covert celebrations of the Dalai Lama's 87th birthday on July 6, despite authorities' efforts in recent years to prevent them, as well as any sizable public celebrations. Authorities arrested numerous Tibetans before July 6 to prevent celebrations. The report indicated authorities across the Tibetan region required Tibetans to attend meetings to discourage any veneration of the Dalai Lama. RFA sources said authorities also arranged police checkpoints where they would check for photos of the Dalai Lama or other "banned content."

## **Freedom of Association**

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

## **c. Freedom of Religion**

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

#### **d. Freedom of Movement**

PRC law provides for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation. The government, however, severely restricted travel and freedom of movement for Tibetans, particularly Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns, as well as lay persons whom the government considered to have “poor political records.”

**In-country Movement:** The outbreak of COVID-19 led to countrywide restrictions on travel which affected movement in the TAR and other Tibetan areas. During the year, the TAR and other Tibetan areas were often in “closed-management,” which restricted Tibetans’ in-country movement. This also meant all major sites, including monasteries and cultural sites, were closed. Authorities manipulated health restrictions at various times and places for political purposes.

The *New York Times* reported in September that authorities’ implementation of zero-COVID policies in Tibet was more severe than in other parts of China. The lockdowns in the TAR left families without access to food or the right to leave their homes and caused mingling of infected and uninfected patients in quarantine facilities. Compared to residents of areas under COVID-19 lockdowns outside Tibet, TAR residents were less effective in raising international and public awareness of their concerns due to the PRC’s control of information in the TAR.

People’s Armed Police and local public security bureaus have for years set up roadblocks and checkpoints in Tibetan areas on major roads, in cities, and on the outskirts of cities and monasteries, particularly around sensitive dates. These roadblocks restricted and controlled access for Tibetans and foreigners to sensitive areas. Tibetans traveling in monastic attire were subjected to extra scrutiny by police at roadside checkpoints and at airports. Tibetans without local residency were turned away from many Tibetan areas deemed sensitive by the government.

Authorities sometimes banned Tibetans, particularly monks and nuns, from leaving the TAR or traveling to it without first obtaining special permission from multiple government offices. Some Tibetans reported encountering difficulties obtaining the required permissions. Such restrictions made it difficult for Tibetans to practice their religion, visit family, conduct business, or travel for leisure. Tibetans from outside the TAR who traveled to Lhasa also reported that authorities there

required them to surrender their national identification cards and notify authorities of their plans in detail on a daily basis. These requirements did not apply to Han Chinese visitors to the TAR.

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

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

Authorities' unwillingness to issue new or renew old passports in effect created a ban on foreign travel for the Tibetan population. Some Tibetans reported they were able to obtain passports, but only after paying substantial bribes and providing written promises to undertake only apolitical or non-sensitive international travel. Many Tibetans with passports were concerned authorities would place them on the government's blacklist and therefore did not travel abroad.

Tibetans encountered particular obstacles in traveling to India for religious, educational, and other purposes.

According to the Human Rights Organization of Nepal, an NGO, the majority of the estimated 12,000 Tibetans in Nepal lacked refugee registration and identity documentations. There were reports that the PRC continued to put heavy pressure on Nepal, including through PRC-aligned political parties, to deny Tibetans refugee status or other official recognition and to implement legal agreements that may facilitate their forced return or extradition to China.

Sources reported that extrajudicial punishments for disfavored travel included blacklisting family members, which could lead to loss of a government job or difficulty in finding employment; expulsion of children from the public education system; and revocation of national identification cards, thereby preventing access

to social services such as health care. The government restricted the movement of Tibetans through increased border controls before and during sensitive anniversaries and events.

Government regulations on the travel of international visitors to the TAR were uniquely strict compared to other areas of the PRC. The government required all international visitors to apply for a Tibet travel permit to visit the TAR and regularly denied requests by international journalists, diplomats, and other officials for official travel. Approval for tourist travel to the TAR was easier to secure but was often restricted around sensitive dates. PRC security forces used conspicuous monitoring to intimidate foreign officials and followed them at all times, preventing them from meeting or speaking with local contacts, harassing them, and restricting their movement in these areas.

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

### **Section 3. Freedom to Participate in the Political Process**

According to law, Tibetans, like other Chinese citizens, have the right to vote in some local elections. The PRC government, however, severely restricted its citizens' ability to participate in any meaningful elections. Citizens could not freely choose the officials who governed them, and the CCP continued to control appointments to positions of political power.

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

**Recent Elections:** Not applicable.

**Political Parties and Political Participation:** TAR authorities banned traditional tribal leaders from running their villages and often warned those leaders not to interfere in village affairs. The top CCP position of TAR party secretary continued

to be held by a Han Chinese, as were the corresponding positions in the vast majority of all TAR counties. Within the TAR, Han Chinese persons also continued to hold a disproportionate number of top security, military, financial, economic, legal, judicial, and educational positions. The law requires CCP local leadership of ethnic minority autonomous prefectures and regions to be from that ethnic minority; nonetheless, party secretaries were Han Chinese in eight of the nine autonomous prefectures in Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan, and Yunnan Provinces. One autonomous prefecture in Qinghai had an ethnic Tibetan party secretary.

**Participation of Women and Members of Minority Groups:** There were no formal restrictions on women's participation in the political system, and women held many lower-level government positions. Nevertheless, women were underrepresented at the provincial and prefectural levels of party and government.

## **Section 4. Corruption and Lack of Transparency in Government**

PRC law provides criminal penalties for corrupt acts by officials, but the government did not implement the law effectively in Tibetan areas, and high-ranking officials often engaged in corrupt practices with impunity. There were numerous reports of government corruption in Tibetan areas and some low-ranking officials were punished.

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

## **Section 5. Governmental Posture Towards International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Abuses of Human Rights**

Some domestic NGOs were able to operate in Tibetan areas, although under substantial government restrictions. Their ability to investigate impartially and publish their findings on human rights cases was extremely limited. PRC law on the activities of overseas NGOs limits the number of local NGOs able to receive foreign funding and the ability of international NGOs to assist Tibetan

communities. Foreign NGOs reported being unable to find local partners willing to work with them. There were no known international NGOs operating in the TAR. PRC government officials were not cooperative or responsive to the views of Tibetan or foreign human rights groups.

## **Section 6. Discrimination and Societal Abuses**

### **Women**

See section 6, Women, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2022* for China.

### **Systemic Racial or Ethnic Violence and Discrimination**

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

Observers continued to express concern that major development projects and other central government policies disproportionately benefited non-Tibetans and contributed to the considerable influx of Han Chinese into the TAR and other Tibetan areas. Large state-owned enterprises based outside the TAR engineered or built many major infrastructure projects across the Tibetan plateau; Han Chinese professionals and low-wage temporary migrant workers from other provinces, rather than local residents, generally managed and staffed the projects.

Economic and social exclusion was a major source of discontent among a varied cross-section of Tibetans.

Government propaganda against alleged Tibetan “pro-independence forces” contributed to Chinese social discrimination against ordinary Tibetans. Many Tibetan monks and nuns chose to wear nonreligious clothing to avoid harassment when traveling outside their monasteries. Some Tibetans reported that taxi drivers outside Tibetan areas refused to stop for them, hotels refused to provide lodging, and Han Chinese landlords refused to rent to them.



Unlike in prior years, there were no media reports of employers specifically barred Tibetans and other minority group members from applying for job openings.

## Children

**Birth Registration:** See section 6, Children, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2022* for China.

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

Tibet Action Net reported in May that authorities used an expansive system of mandatory boarding preschools for children between ages four and six. An eyewitness cited in the report estimated that at least 100,000 Tibetan preschoolers lived in these institutions. These reports followed a December 2021 report from the Tibet Action Institute, which estimated that 800,000 Tibetan children ages 6 to 18 were also housed in mandatory government-run boarding schools. Gyal Lo, a Tibetan education expert, visited 50 boarding preschools, at which children were required to spend five days a week. The report stated the students were "immersed in Chinese language [and] intentionally cut off from learning their mother tongue at a time when this linguistic foundation is needed the most for their development."

Lo described such schools as places of political indoctrination where students were taught to "identify and re-imagine themselves as Chinese first and foremost. They engage in Chinese cultural performances as well as war reenactments, dressed in People's Liberation Army uniforms or Red Army suits. A preschool reader from one Tibetan Autonomous County shows racialized caricatures of Japanese soldiers with swords, guns, and bayonets harassing and threatening Chinese citizens, including children, with Red Army soldiers firing on the Japanese." Further, Lo said the schools intentionally removed Tibetan culture and history from the children's classroom experiences, disconnecting students from their Tibetan identity.

NGO Tibet Action Institute issued a report in December 2021 on how PRC Sinicization policies in Tibetan areas affected the education of Tibetan children. The report cited PRC statistics that showed approximately 800,000 Tibetan children (nearly 78 percent of Tibetan students ages 6 to 18) attending state-run boarding schools. Ethnic Chinese children, even in rural areas, attended boarding schools at far lower rates.

The report contended that these boarding schools and other PRC Sinicization efforts were “part of a deliberate effort by the state to eliminate the core of Tibetan identity and replace it with a hollowed-out version compatible with the Party’s aims” (see section 2.a., Restrictions on Academic Freedom and Cultural Events).

Media reports also highlighted discrimination within government boarding school programs. Tibetans attending government boarding schools in eastern China reported studying and living in ethnically segregated classrooms and dormitories justified as necessary security measures, although the government claimed cultural integration was one purpose of these programs.

Authorities enforced regulations limiting traditional monastic education to monks older than 18. Instruction in Tibetan, while provided for by PRC law, was often inadequate or unavailable at schools in Tibetan areas.

**Child Abuse:** See section 6, Children, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2022* for China.

**Child, Early, and Forced Marriage:** See section 6, Children, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2022* for China.

**Sexual Exploitation of Children:** See section 6, Children, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2022* for China.

## **Antisemitism**

See section 6, Antisemitism, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2022* for China.

## **Trafficking in Persons**

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

## **Acts of Violence, Criminalization, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity or Expression, or Sex Characteristics**

See section 6, Acts of Violence, Criminalization, and Other Abuses Based on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity or Expression, or Sex Characteristics, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2022* for China.

## **Persons with Disabilities**

See section 6, Persons with Disabilities, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2022* for China.

## **Section 7. Worker Rights**

See section 7, Worker Rights, in the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2022* for China.