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**CIVIL AND POLITICAL RIGHTS, INCLUDING THE QUESTIONS OF
RELIGIOUS INTOLERANCE**

**Written statement* submitted by the International Fellowship of Reconciliation
(IFOR), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is
circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[22 February 2006]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the
submitting non-governmental organization(s).

1. The Constitution of the People's Republic of China (PRC) provides for freedom of religious belief and the White Paper entitled "Regional Ethnic Autonomy in Tibet" released by the Chinese government on 23 May 2005 claims "*Tibetans fully enjoy the freedom of religious belief*".¹ However, despite statistics highlighting the numbers of renovated monasteries and resident clergy cited in that report, the situation with respect to religious freedom in Tibet, substantiated by independent sources, remains highly suspect.

2. Despite the guarantees in the Constitution, in practice, it is the Communist Party that defines which type of religious behaviour is acceptable. Religious activity is only tolerated as long as it does not interfere with or challenge the legitimacy and status of the Party.² Since the establishment of the People's Republic, practical measures in dealing with religion have varied from a pragmatic tolerance to complete repression and persecution. Current policy dictates that religion should be accommodated and utilized, but kept firmly under Party control. This has led, during the past 10 years, to the development of administrative and legal mechanisms that enable the authorities to clamp down on any religious activity viewed as a threat to social stability and national unity, while claiming they are operating according to the 'rule of law'.

3. The measures used to implement state religious policy have been particularly harsh in Tibetan areas of present-day China because of the close link between religion and Tibetan identity. Tibetan Buddhism continues to be an integral element of Tibetan cultural identity and is therefore perceived as a threat to the authority of the state and unity of the PRC. The Chinese leadership views the Dalai Lama and "his clique" as the main obstacles to political stability in Tibet. The very practice of Buddhism and the display of a picture of the Dalai Lama have become, for many Tibetans, a means of expressing their identity, and in some cases, their opposition to the Chinese authorities. Hence, issues relating to religion are perceived as being highly relevant to political control and the suppression of 'separatism' in Tibet - both factors underpinning China's strategic concerns and development aims in Tibetan areas.

4. New levels of repression were reached in recent years with the imprisonment of several senior religious figures known for their loyalty to the Dalai Lama and their religious and social activism - one of them, Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, is serving a commuted death sentence. The Chinese authorities' control over religious expression has been extended to control over monastic influence in general and local community leadership by respected religious teachers in particular.

5. A recent report³, published by the International Campaign for Tibet, documents the following trends in Tibet:

¹ http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2004-05/23/content_1485519_1.htm

² Chinese officials draw a distinction between "normal" and "abnormal" religious activities, whereby "normal" activities are defined as rites practiced either in a place of worship or at the home of a believer and are protected by law. "Abnormal" activities, on the other hand, are detrimental to the interests of the State and to the well-being and property of the people and are illegal. See the discussion in the report of by the Special Rapporteur on religious freedom on his visit to China in 1994 (E/CN.4/1995/91) and his follow-up report in 1996. In drawing this distinction, government policy has set an arbitrary standard which is easily instrumentalized for political ends.

³ When the Sky Fell to Earth: the New Crackdown on Buddhism in Tibet, International Campaign for Tibet - <http://www.savetibet.org/news/publications/religionreport2004.php>

- From the mid-1990s onwards, China's position towards the Dalai Lama has become more hostile.
- A wide-ranging patriotic re-education campaign has been carried out in monasteries and convents throughout Tibetan areas with the aim of undermining the Dalai Lama's influence by indoctrinating monks and nuns in Party policy and ideology and by identifying and expelling defiant monks and nuns.
- Democratic Management Committees (DMCs), originally established only in the larger monasteries, are now being strengthened and extended to all monasteries and convents in order to assert greater state control and surveillance over the daily life of monks and nuns.
- Limitations imposed on the numbers of monks and nuns in each religious institution remain in place and are selectively being enforced more than they were a decade ago.
- Beijing is more aggressively asserting control over the search and identification of Tibetan reincarnate lamas.
- The demolitions of homes and expulsion of monks and nuns in the religious institutes of Larung Gar and Yachen Gar show a new determination to enforce state-specified limitations on monastic life and control the activity of influential and charismatic spiritual leaders like the late Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok, the founder of Larung Gar.
- Obtaining a complete religious education remains extremely difficult or impossible in Tibet.
- Imprisonment for terms of 5 - 10 years or more and brutal torture continues to be a likely consequence of dissent for monks and nuns in Tibet.

6. This report also documents factors that have contributed to a situation in which many Tibetans feel they have no choice but to escape into exile if they are to pursue their religious vocation. These factors include the decimation of the older generation of senior teachers and scholars inside Tibet and an ensuing gap between older and younger generations due to death, exile or the absence of opportunity; the material devastation of the network of monasteries, Buddhist texts and whole libraries, religious artefacts, and pilgrimage sites; the systems in place to control and manage religious institutions; the political campaigns, obligatory political study sessions, and forced denunciations of the Dalai Lama; and restrictions on pilgrimage imposed in various areas by PRC authorities.

7. The Human Rights Watch "World Report 2006"⁴ states that "all congregation, mosques, temples, churches and monasteries must be registered to legal. However, registration brings vetting and ongoing monitoring of religious personnel, seminary applicants, and publications; scrutiny of financial records and membership rolls; and veto power over group activities. Failure to register renders a group illegal and subject to closure, fines and criminal sanctions." And further: "Chinese authorities view the Dalai Lama... as the linchpin of the effort to separate Tibet from China and view Tibetan Buddhist belief as supportive of his efforts. Thus, the government limits the number of monasteries and monks, vets all applicants for the monk-hood, interferes with the selection of monastic leaders, prohibits performance of traditional rites, and conducts ongoing re-education campaigns centered on opposition to the Dalai Lama. In July 2005, the chairman of the

⁴ <http://hrw.org/english/docs/2006/01/18/china12270.htm>

Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) announced that China would choose the next Dalai Lama.”

8. The focus on the Dalai Lama as the nucleus and source of ‘splittist’ activities inside Tibet is a main element of the ‘patriotic re-education’ campaign, one of the control measures which has been introduced into religious institutions in Tibet. The ‘patriotic re-education’ campaign, launched in Tibet in 1996 as part of the nation-wide “Strike Hard” campaign, requires resident monks and nuns to study party ideology and to denounce the Dalai Lama. It imposes restrictions on the size of monastic communities and generally intrudes upon traditional religious studies and practice through constant surveillance over curriculum and activities. Since the initiation of the campaign, more than 12,000 monks and nuns have been expelled from their religious institutions for disagreeing with the Chinese version of Tibetan history and for refusing to denounce the Dalai Lama.

9. Recent information on the repressive nature of the campaign has been published by the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, an independent Tibetan NGO operating in Dharamsala, India. On 23 November 2005, five monks were arrested and handed over to the Public Security Bureau of their respective places of origin after a demonstration of silent protest during a ‘patriotic re-education’ campaign session in Drepung Monastery, Lhasa. The monks refused a demand by work team officials to sign a document requiring them to denounce the Dalai Lama, to pledge their loyalty to China, and to recognize Tibet as a part of China.⁵ The five monks arrested are:

- Ngawang Namdrol from Tsotod Township, Phenpo Lhundrup County, Lhasa Municipality, "Tibet Autonomous Region" ("TAR");
- Ngawang Nyingpo from Khartse Township, Phenpo Lhundrup County, Lhasa Municipality, "TAR";
- Ngawang Thupten a.k.a Shogbu Metok from Lhasa Inner City, Lhasa Municipality, "TAR";
- Ngawang Phelgey from Rinlung County, Shigatse Prefecture, "TAR";
- Phuntsok Thupwang from Gongkar County, Lhoka Prefecture, "TAR".

Seven weeks earlier, in the first week of October, during the same session of the ‘patriotic re-education’ campaign in the monastery, a monk named Ngawang Jangchub, 28 years old, died in his quarters under mysterious circumstances. He was found dead the day after he had engaged in a heated argument with work team officials. It is suspected that he committed suicide.⁶

10. Official efforts to control religious expression extend even to the banning of portraits of the Dalai Lama, regarded by Tibetans as objects of particular veneration. In November 2003, local authorities and work team officials ordered residents of all villages and townships of Kardze county and Lithang county in Kardze “TAP”, Sichuan Province to hand over portraits of the Dalai Lama within a month or else face confiscation of their lands.⁷

11. The long-term effects of the ‘patriotic re-education’ campaign on monistic education and practice is confirmed by the United States International Committee on Religious

⁵ http://www.tchrd.org/publications/hr_updates/2005/hr200511.pdf

⁶ http://www.tchrd.org/publications/hr_updates/2005/hr200510.html

⁷ http://www.tchrd.org/publications/hr_updates/2003/hr200311.html#anti

Freedom (USCIRF). In its report for 2005, it notes that: "The quality and availability of high-level religious teachers in the TAR and other Tibetan areas remained inadequate; many teachers were in exile, older teachers were not being replaced, and those remaining in Tibetan areas outside the TAR had difficulty securing permission to teach in the TAR. In recent years, DMCs at several large monasteries began to use funds generated by the sales of entrance tickets or donated by pilgrims for purposes other than the support of monks engaged in full-time religious study. As a result, some 'scholar monks' who had formerly been fully supported had to engage in income-generating activities. Some experts were concerned that, as a result, fewer monks would be qualified to serve as teachers in the future."⁸

12. The future of Tibetan Buddhism is inextricably linked with its ability to transmit its heritage. An all important element therein is the reincarnation of its great teachers. Although the White Paper cited above affirms that "the transmission lineage system of reincarnation of great lama(s)... has been respected by the state and governments at all levels in Tibet"⁹, in practice, Chinese officials have routinely interfered in the process of finding and educating reincarnate lamas.

The most famous example is the case of the Panchen Lama, Tibet's second most prominent religious figure. Gendun Choekyi Nyima, the six year old boy recognized by the Dalai Lama in 1995 as the 11th Panchen Lama, disappeared soon after his identity became known and his whereabouts and well being still remain unknown. China claims that the boy is under government "protection" at an undisclosed location for his own protection and that he attends classes as a "normal schoolboy." All requests by the international community for access to the Panchen Lama to confirm his well-being have been refused.

In September 2005, the 40th session of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) called upon the Chinese authorities to allow an independent expert verify the fate of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima. The consideration and recommendation by the CRC came less than a month after UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Louise Arbour visited China and presented a list of 10 prisoners of concern to the UN to the Chinese authorities. The name of the young Panchen Lama was included on that list.

13. In conclusion, the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) calls upon the Chinese government:

- To release the five monks mentioned above from detention, pending a review of their cases and to permit an independent investigation into the circumstances surrounding the death of the monk Ngawang Jangchub
- To receive an independent expert to visit and verify the well-being of Gedun Choekyi Nyima, as recommended by the UN Committee on the Rights of Child
- To end the "patriotic education" campaign and to refrain from other measures which interfere with the traditions of Tibetan Buddhist education and practice.

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⁸ <http://www.state.gov/gdrl/rls/irf/2005/51509.htm>

⁹ http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2004-05/23/content_1485519_5.htm