UNITED NATIONS **A**

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/HRC/11/NGO/39
8 June 2009

ENGLISH ONLY

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
Eleventh session
Agenda item 3

PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF ALL HUMAN RIGHTS, CIVIL, POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS, INCLUDING THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

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 May 2009]

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

The Freedom of Religion and Belief in Tibet

1. In an effort to uphold the freedom of religion and belief in Tibet, the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) has reported regularly to the UN Human Rights Council on the human rights situation in China. Particular attention has been drawn to the so-called “Strike Hard” campaign which was initially introduced in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) in 1996. Although the campaign in other parts of China was designed to combat crime and government corruption, in Tibet it was directed against “splittist” activity and focused on the suppression of political dissent in religious institutions and among the lay population.

2. The “Strike Hard” campaign has been supplemented in the TAR and in other regions with a large Tibetan population by the element of “patriotic re-education” as an instrument of control in religious institutions. The purpose of “patriotic education” is to adapt Tibetan Buddhism to socialist norms and to enforce regulations governing the management of monasteries and convents and the registration of resident clergy.

Re-launch of the “Strike Hard” and “Patriotic Re-Education” Campaigns in Tibet

3. The Chinese authorities launched its winter "Strike Hard" campaign in Lhasa on 18 January 2009. The 600 officers deployed under this campaign conducted extensive raids of nearly 3000 rented houses, guesthouses, hotels, bars, and internet cafes. Within three days of the launch of the campaign, 5,766 suspects were detained and interrogated. Around the same time, a notice was issued from the Lhasa City Government strictly requiring all outside visitors who wish to stay longer than three days and less than a month to apply for temporary stay permit. Later, China's state-run *Tibet Daily* acknowledged the arrest and detention of 81 Tibetans from Lhasa under the “Strike Hard” campaign. The detainees include two Tibetans whose mobile phone had “reactionary music", probably songs in praise of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

4. Presently, Tibetans are experiencing a dramatic increase in the repression of fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of speech, the freedom of movement, and the right to freely practice their religious beliefs and traditional culture. As a central instrument of this policy, the "patriotic re-education" campaign was intensified in monasteries and nunneries with its re-launch on 1 April 2008.

5. In practice, “patriotic education” is undertaken by work teams recruited from the Public Security Bureau, who visit religious institutions for extended periods of time and instruct the monks and nuns on the “proper” understanding of Tibetan religion and history. The campaign strictly requires the resident clergy to affirm their loyalty to the Chinese motherland and to denounce His Holiness the Dalai Lama as a "splittist". The work teams also establish Democratic Management Committees (DMC) and local Religious Affairs Bureaus (RAB) whose task it is to monitor activities and to ensure that the regulations put in place by the work teams are carried out.

6. The current repression is a consequence of policy decisions which have been taken at the highest levels of provincial government. The appointment of Zhang Qingli, present Communist Party Secretary of the TAR, on 26 May 2006 ushered in a period of especially harsh and restrictive interventions. Within a month of his appointment, Zhang Qingli called for the intensification of "patriotic re-education" campaign and said that the Party is engaged in a "fight

to the death struggle against the Dalai clique". In justifying repressive measures, he denounced the influence of His Holiness the Dalai Lama as "the biggest obstacle in preventing Tibetan Buddhism from establishing normal Buddhist order". Again, during the March 2008 unrest in Tibet, Zhang Qingli attacked His Holiness the Dalai Lama in vicious terms, calling him "a wolf in monk's robe, a devil with a human face and the heart of a beast". The subsequent violent crackdown in Tibet left an estimated 219 Tibetans dead, 1294 injured, 5,600 people arrested or detained and more than 1000 still missing.

7. In January 2009, Mr. Zhu Weiqun, Executive Vice-Minister of the Central United Work Front, visited the Drepung monastery in Lhasa, one of the major religious centers in Tibet and known as the monastery that initiated non-violent political protests in 1987 and in 2008. He strongly urged the "work team" members there to reinforce stricter measures to maintain stability in the monastery. In reality, the normal functioning of religious studies and related activities has suffered severe disruption since the closure of the monastery at the outset of the March 2008 unrest. Students from Tibet's Amdo and Kham provinces, who undertake studies in Drepung monastery, were subsequently forced to return to their homes. According to sources, 42 monks of Drepung monastery have been sentenced to imprisonment with terms ranging from 2 to 15 years. Those serving jail terms include Ven. Ngawang Choenyi, a monk from Lhasa, and Ven. Ngawang Dondham from Toelung County, who could not even hold a bowl in his hands as a result of severe torture. In another case, severe beating left Ven. Lobsang Wangchuk from Lhasa virtually blind. He is currently serving imprisonment at an unknown location in the capital.

8. In related development, the Chinese government has turned down three petitions submitted by the monks of Kirti monastery to organise *Jang Gunchoe Chenmo*, an annual debate where approximately 4,000 monks from monasteries from all across Tibet gather to debate during the 11th month of the Tibetan lunar calendar.

9. Just three weeks before 50th anniversary of the Tibetan uprising on 10 March 2009, Lobsang Gyaltsen, a member of the Standing Committee of the "TAR" Communist Party and head of the regional United Work Front Department, urged monks and nuns to recognise the "reactionary nature of the Dalai clique", to "safeguard social stability", and to "consciously keep themselves away from separatists activities and illegal demonstrations that impair the social order". In an unusual development, the Chinese authorities then awarded 36 monks and nuns and 10 monasteries the title of "patriotic and law-abiding".

10. On 9 April 2009, five monks, formerly members of the Labrang monastery in Sangchu County, Tsongon (Ch: Kanlho Tibet Autonomous Prefecture, incorporated into Gansu Province), who had escaped to India, spoke at a press conference in Dharamsala about their role in organizing peaceful protests, including a public protest before international journalists in Tibet in April 2008.[1] According to their statements, the peaceful protest in Tibet is an expression of Tibetan people's deep-seated resentment and concern about the repressive policies of the Chinese government in Tibet during the last 50 years. With regard to the issue of human rights and civil liberties, they emphasized that, although the Chinese Constitution guarantees many rights and freedoms such as freedom of speech, freedom of opinion, freedom of religious belief and practice, etc., these are not implemented on the ground. As they themselves experienced, when

[1] For a eye-witness report by Reuters about the protest, see:
http://www.reuters.com/article/topNews/idUSPEK17816120080409?sp=true

Tibetans exercise their basic rights and freedoms, they are arrested and tortured. In particular, they cited a deep-seated resentment among the population toward the “patriotic re-education” campaign with its insistence on denouncing His Holiness the Dalai Lama. In their hearts, the Tibetan people consider His Holiness the Dalai Lama to be as the sun and moon. Their faith in His Holiness can never be destroyed by the Chinese government.

11. As the unrest since March 2008 has shown, monks and nuns constitute majority of the Tibetans involved in political protest. As such, the Chinese authorities view them with suspicion and punish them with expulsion from monasteries or by subjecting them to arrest and detention. The Chinese Constitution as well as China's religious policy on Tibet places more emphasis on external acts or practices of Tibetan Buddhism such as repair of monasteries, circumambulation, printing of sutra scriptures, etc. These acts are an important aspect of Tibetan Buddhism but they are only one aspect or dimension of it. At its core, Tibetan Buddhism mandates intensive study sessions, contemplation, and strict practices. China's imposition of "patriotic re-education" campaigns grossly interferes in the transmission of Tibetan Buddhism and thus greatly affects the monastic routine and study.

12. In conclusion, the IFOR calls upon the members of the UN Human Rights Council to urge China:

1. To immediately end policies and practices which undermines the practice and preservation of Tibetan Buddhism, including government intervention in the identification and training of Tibetan reincarnate lamas and the imposition of repressive measures, such as the “Strike Hard” and “patriotic re-education” campaigns;

2. To provide independent information and access to Gendün Chökyi Nima, the 11th Panchen Lama appointed by H. H. the Dalai Lama, and his family, who have been held incommunicado by the Chinese authorities for the last 14 years;

3. To receive and allow access to Tibet for the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief and other invited Special Procedure mandate-holders, including the Special Rapporteur on Summary or Arbitrary Executions;

4. To fully implement the recommendations made by the Special Procedures mandate-holders and UN Treaty Bodies on Tibet;

5. To release immediately and unconditionally all those detained and imprisoned solely for engaging in peaceful protest and/or other peaceful political activities.

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