



TIBET WATCH
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Women's Rights in Tibet

Tibet Watch submission to CEDAW
September 2014

Women's Rights in Tibet

Submission to
the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
in advance of the review of the combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of the
People's Republic of China
(CEDAW/C/CHN/7-8)

September 2014



Tibet Watch works to promote the human rights of the Tibetan people through monitoring, research and advocacy. We are a UK registered charity (no. 1114404) with an office in London and a field office in Dharamsala, India. We believe in the power of bearing witness, the power of truth.

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Introduction

Tibet Watch works to promote the human rights of the Tibetan people through human rights monitoring, research and advocacy. We are a UK registered charity, established in 2006, with an office in London, UK, and a field team based in Dharamsala, India. The majority of our staff are Tibetan, with first-hand experience of the occupation.

We document and expose the ongoing human rights abuse in Tibet using a wide range of sources, although our information is primarily based on interviews and witness testimony. We believe that accuracy is vital in our work and all of the information we record is carefully verified and corroborated before being published. We also carry out thematic research and collaborate with academic and NGO partners as appropriate.

We have previously provided evidence to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Committee Against Torture and engaged in the Universal Periodic Review process. We also provide regular briefings to the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Throughout this report we have used Tibetan place names, with the full location details and the Chinese version of the name provided in the footnotes.

Background

China invaded Tibet in 1950. Its occupation has resulted in approximately 1.2 million deaths and the imprisonment and torture of thousands more. Tibetans have suffered severe human rights abuses that continue to this day and peaceful protests by Tibetans have repeatedly been brutally suppressed by China's security forces. Many areas in Tibet currently remain under military lockdown.

State violence against Tibetan women is a regular occurrence in the period since China's last review. The most recent incident documented by Tibet Watch took place in August 2014 when ten Tibetans were seriously injured after security forces opened fire on a peaceful protest in Derge County.¹ The violence took place after the village leader complained that Chinese officials had harassed female members of the community dance troupe. Many of those detained in the subsequent clampdown were women, including Yangchen Lhamo, Tsekyab Wangmo, Yeshi Dolma and Yangchen Phamo. Earlier this year, in July 2014, a female protestor was hospitalised after being severely beaten in Dechen County, during a peaceful protest against mining²³.

Last year, on 6 July 2013, Chinese security forces opened fire on a Tibetan crowd who had gathered to celebrate the Dalai Lama's birthday in Dawu County⁴. Tibet Watch was able to identify 14 of those injured, including a monk who was shot in the head and one woman, a nun named Dolma. Another nun, Lobsang Choedon, was arrested during the same incident, beaten in detention and hospitalised as a result of the injuries sustained. Meanwhile, a third woman, a nun named Wanchen from Gedun Choeling nunnery, was beaten and sustained a broken arm after attempting to visit one of the victims in hospital. Meanwhile, in 2009, the Central Tibetan Administration reported that six Tibetan women had been shot during protests against the forced resettlement of families in Dawu County.⁵

¹ Lochung township, Derge County, Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (TAP), (Chinese: Luoxu township, Dege County, Ganzi TAP), Sichuan Province

² "Chinese police crack down on Tibetans over mining protest", Central Tibetan Administration, 2 July 2014, <http://tibet.net/2014/07/02/chinese-police-crack-down-on-tibetans-over-mining-protest/>

³ Martak village, Yamayultso township, Dechen County, Dechen TAP, (Chinese: Deqin County, Deqin TAP), Yunnan Province

⁴ Dawu County, Kardze TAP, (Chinese: Daofu County, Ganzi TAP), Sichuan Province

⁵ "TGIE reports six Tibetan women shot during protest in Tawu", Free Tibet, 26 May 2009, <http://freetibet.org/news-media/pr/2009-archive-1>

Self-Immolation Protests

In recent years, many of the people of Tibet have protested Chinese rule of their country via self-immolation. Many of these were women. Most recently, on 29 March 2014, a 31-year-old nun named Dolma self-immolated near Bhachoele Monastery in Bathang County⁶. Tibetans who witnessed the event extinguished the flames and took Dolma to hospital. Shortly afterwards Chinese security forces arrived and prevented any local people from entering the hospital. Consequently, her current condition remains unknown. Of the 129 Tibetans who have self-immolated to protest Chinese rule, 19 are women. The table below provides basic details of each case.

Date	Name	Occupation / Details	Age	Location (Tibetan)	Location (Chinese)	Notes
29 March 2014	Dolma	Nun	31	Bathang County, Kardze TAP, Sichuan	Batang County, Ganzi TAP, Sichuan	Condition unknown
11 June 2013	Wangchen Dolma	Nun	Unknown	Dawu town, Dawu County, Kardze TAP, Sichuan	Daofu County, Ganzi TAP, Sichuan	Died three days after protest – which took place at a local Buddhist festival
16 April 2013	Jugtso	Mother of one	20	Barma township, Dzamthang County, Ngaba TAP, Sichuan	Zhongrangtang township, Rangtang County, Aba TAP, Sichuan	Died at the scene –Dzamthang Jonang Monastery
24 March 2013	Kalkyi	Mother of four	33	Barma township, Dzamthang County, Ngaba TAP, Sichuan	Zhongrangtang township, Rangtang County, Aba TAP, Sichuan	Died – Dzamthang Jonang Monastery
13 March 2013	Kunchoek Wangmo	Mother of one	30	Dzoerge town, Dzoerge County, Ngaba TAP, Sichuan	Ruo'ergai County, Aba TAP, Sichuan	Her husband was subsequently charged with her murder and sentenced to death.
9 December 2012	Wanchen Kyi	School student	16	Dokarmo township, Tsekhog County, Malho TAP, Qinghai	Zeku County, Huangnan TAP, Qinghai	Died
25 November 2012	Sangye Dolma	Nun	17	Dokarmo township, Tsekhog County, Malho TAP, Qinghai	Zeku County, Huangnan TAP, Qinghai	Died at the scene
17 November 2012	Chakmo Kyi	Taxi driver and mother of two	20s	Rongwo town, Rebgong County, Malho TAP, Qinghai	Tongren County, Huangnan TAP, Qinghai	Died

⁶ Bathang County, Kardze TAP, (Chinese: Batang County, Ganzi TAP), Sichuan Province

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Date	Name	Occupation / Details	Age	Location (Tibetan)	Location (Chinese)	Notes
15 November 2012	Tingzin Dolma	Unknown	23	Rebgong County, Malho TAP, Qinghai	Tongren County, Huangnan TAP, Qinghai	Died The protest took place at Goge Village temple
7 November 2012	Tamdin Tso	Mother of one	23	Rebgong County, Malho TAP, Qinghai	Tongren County, Huangnan TAP, Qinghai	Died at the scene – which was her family's winter pasture.
13 September 2012	Passang Lhamo	Unknown	62	Beijing	Beijing	Believed to have survived – current condition unknown.
8 August 2012	Dolkar Kyi	Mother of two	26	Tsoe City, Kanlho TAP, Gansu	Hezuo City, Gannan TAP, Gansu	Died at the scene – Tso Monastery
27 June 2012	Dekyi Choezom	Unknown	approx. 40	Jyekundo County, Yushu TAP, Qinghai	Yushu County, Yushu TAP, Qinghai	Believed to have survived – taken away by security forces.
30 May 2012	Rechok	Mother of three	mid-30s	Barma township, Dzamthang County, Ngaba TAP, Sichuan	Zhongrangtang township, Rangtang County, Aba TAP, Sichuan	Died at the scene – outside Jonang Dzamthang Monastery
24 March 2012	Rinchen	Mother of four	32	Ngaba Town, Ngaba County, Ngaba TAP, Sichuan	Aba County, Aba TAP, Sichuan	Died at the scene – in front of the police station by the main gate into Kirti Monastery
3 March 2012	Tsering Kyi	Student	20	Machu County, Kanlho TAP, Gansu	Maqu County, Gannan TAP, Gansu	Died at the scene
12 February 2012	Tenzin Choedon	Nun	18	Ngaba Town, Ngaba County, Ngaba TAP, Sichuan	Aba County, Aba TAP, Sichuan	Died
3 November 2011	Palden Choetso	Nun	35	Dawu town, Dawu County, Kardze TAP, Sichuan	Daofu County, Ganzi TAP, Sichuan	Died Protest took place at Chume Bridge in the centre of Dawu
17 October 2011	Tenzin Wangmo	Nun	20	Ngaba Town, Ngaba County, Ngaba TAP, Sichuan	Aba County, Aba TAP, Sichuan	Died Protest took place outside Dechen Chokorling nunnery

Convention Violations

Tibet Watch would like to bring the following violations of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women to the Committee's attention. Tibet is overwhelmingly closed to human rights groups and the media. The ability of the population to interact with the outside world is severely limited and can result in imprisonment for Tibetans who are caught disseminating news of a political nature. Information from Tibet is, therefore, extremely limited. Consequently, Tibet Watch believes that the human rights abuses – both under the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Violence Against Women (CEDAW) and under other conventions – that come to light represent only a small fraction of those that actually occur.

Article 7

In their submission to the Committee, the Chinese government states that enabling measures for the participation of women in government have been taken and these include the “training of women cadres”. This may be a welcome development in much of China but Tibetans generally do not consider themselves to be a part of the Chinese nation. Although there are some Tibetans participating in the local government of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), they are obliged to work within the constraints of the communist system and are unable to represent the local community in a meaningful way. In addition, the participation of individuals in Chinese local government should not be taken as an indication that the Tibetan people in any way endorse China's rule of Tibet.

The Central Tibetan Administration (the Tibetan government in exile) is based in Dharamsala, northern India, and has been there since the Chinese invasion took control of Tibet in 1959. Tibetans within Tibet are, therefore, denied the opportunity to participate in the government of their choice and this fundamental right cannot be replaced by being offered a place in the government of occupation.

The vast majority of Tibetan women have no interest in becoming part of the political apparatus that so brutally represses their country. Tibetans are arrested and imprisoned for the slightest expression of their ethnic or national identity. For this reason, Tibet Watch does not believe that the claims which China makes in its report apply to Tibet.

It should also be noted that the TAR does not enjoy the same autonomy as some other autonomous areas in China, namely, the Special Administrative Regions of Hong Kong and Macau. These areas are classed under the “One China, Two Systems” policy. This allows different laws and standards to be applied within these areas. Under this system, which was agreed with the former colonial powers of Great Britain and Portugal, citizens are afforded a far greater degree of freedom of expression and better human rights than those in Tibet or mainland China. For example, Hong Kong has the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance, which incorporates the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights into law. The autonomy granted to the two Special Administrative Regions extends to all the major areas of day-to-day government, with the exception of matters of foreign affairs and defence. The TAR, by contrast, is governed by the same laws as mainland China and even the most basic human rights are not respected.

Article 9

The women of Tibet are denied the right to their nationality. Chinese nationality is forced upon them, as illustrated recently in Driru County⁷ where security personnel attempted to compel Tibetans to fly Chinese flags from their homes. When the local population refused to participate in the enforced show of loyalty and protested, the security forces were sent in. The ensuing clash lasted around three hours and involved the use of gunfire by Chinese forces. A number of people were injured, mostly by beating, and 40 people were arrested.

⁷ Driru County, Nagchu Prefecture, (Chinese: Biru County, Naqu Prefecture), TAR

The claim (made on page 33 of China's submission) that all men, women and children are free to change their nationality is not born out by the experience of Tibetans. Tibetans have no automatic right to a passport and, indeed, the only passport for which they could apply is a Chinese one. Those who do need or want to travel internationally and take the step of applying for a Chinese passport often encounter difficulties. For example, Tsering Woeser, a Tibetan woman who writes about human rights and other Tibet related issues, is unable to travel outside of China as her application for a passport is continually denied.

"I cannot get a passport, just like many other Tibetans, it is almost unthinkable that this regime that controls us will ever grant us a passport, which should, in actual fact, be a fundamental right that every citizen enjoys. Last year, Lhasa gave out passports to anyone above 60 years of age, albeit only for the period of one week. As a result the office in charge of passports was full of the grey-haired, limping elderly; and it was clear that they were all heading for the foothills of the Himalayas to visit relatives, pay homage to the holy land of Buddhism, as well as to fulfil that dream that no one speaks of but everyone knows. I am sorrowfully thinking that I may have to wait until I am 60 years old until I get hold of a passport."⁸

Most recently, she was denied a passport in March 2013 when she wished to travel to the United States of America to collect an International Women of Courage Award. She has repeatedly applied for a passport over a number of years and been denied every time. Passport applications for Chinese people, however, are normally successful within a few weeks.

Even those Tibetans in possession of a passport are not able to travel freely, however, as their passports can be severely time limited (as noted in the quote above) or revoked at any given time. Therefore, Tibetans often fail to benefit from the advantages of Chinese nationality and are denied the opportunity to travel to other countries or to change this nationality.

Articles 10 and 11

As the key issue relating to both articles 10 and 11 is language, we will address these articles together.

Although the Chinese government states that education is free, universal and compulsory for nine years in China, Tibetan children are often prevented from learning in their mother tongue and are, therefore, disadvantaged compared to Chinese children. The issue of language carries through into employment, where Tibetans are required to attain fluency in the language of the occupier in order to access decent employment opportunities.

The freedom to use and develop minority languages is guaranteed under Article 53 of the People's Republic of China's Constitution and China's 1995 Education Act. These measures are strengthened by the Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law. In many areas, however, the Tibetan language is not taught at all in schools, or is retained only as a language subject. Almost all text books are in Chinese, especially for older students.

A Tibetan girl who went to school in Lithang County⁹ described how the teacher would treat the Tibetan students in the class differently from the Chinese students: "the teacher would say 'you Tibetans are very stupid and slow.' The Chinese students, especially those who were well connected with the Communist Party, would get praised and lots of encouragement from the teacher but it was easier for them because the classes were all in Chinese."¹⁰

⁸ "How I Met His Holiness the Dalai Lama Without a Passport", Tsering Woeser, originally published in Tibetan and Chinese on 10 January 2011, translated in English and published by High Peaks Pure Earth on 12 January 2011, <http://highpeakspureearth.com/2011/how-i-met-his-holiness-the-dalai-lama-without-a-passport-by-woeser/>

⁹ Lithang County, Kardze TAP, (Chinese: Litang County, Ganzi TAP), Sichuan Province

¹⁰ Tibet Watch interview, 2012.

The official Chinese explanation for forcing Tibetan students to be educated in Mandarin is that Tibetan is the “language of lamas” or the “language for religion”. Chinese officials also claim Tibetan vocabulary is too limited to be suitable for teaching sciences which must, therefore, be taught in Mandarin.¹¹

On 3 March 2012, Tsering Kyi, a 20-year-old student, set fire to herself at a vegetable market in Machu County¹². It is evident that one of the issues she cared passionately about was the curbing of Tibetan language teaching in schools in her area.

“Her political activism began in 2008, when an uprising that broke out in the Tibetan capital, Lhasa, spread into Sichuan, Qinghai and Gansu provinces. Public schools began to restrict the teaching of Tibetan.”¹³

“According to family members, she was a thoughtful student whose hard work earned her a place on the school’s honor roll. But in 2010, she joined classmates who took to the streets of this dusty county seat to protest the new Chinese-language textbooks and the decision to limit Tibetan to a single class.”¹⁴

Such disadvantages feed through into adult life. For example, Chinese is the working language in hospitals, government offices and the banking industry. Anyone applying for employment in these or similar fields who is not fluent in Chinese is placed at a severe disadvantage.

Article 13

Tibetan women’s access to loans and other financial assistance can be limited by sanctions imposed on the families and communities of those who protest Chinese rule by self-immolation – despite the fact that this amounts to collective punishment.

For example, in Dzoerge County¹⁵ the authorities have made public their intention to punish both the families and the communities of those who protest by self-immolation. The authorities issued a notice, dated 28 April 2013, threatening the local community with dire consequences should any further self-immolations take place. The document was entitled Notification on the Provisional Regulation of the Work Against Self-immolation and issued by Dzoerge County People’s Government. The notice was published in both Chinese and Tibetan.

For the families of self-immolators, the threatened measures included (but were not limited to):

- Restrictions on access to certain jobs;
- Disqualification from policies “benefitting the people” for three years;
- Refusal of loans for three years and the calling in of any outstanding loans; and
- Loss of the right to cultivate land.

Since the majority of those carrying out self-immolation are male, these measures disproportionately affect the female family members they leave behind.

A similar notice was issued in Malho TAP following a number of self-immolations in Rebong County¹⁶. The notice outlined the range of punitive measures which should be taken in relation to self-immolation protests. The first instruction set out in the notice was: “Every region, every department, and every unit

¹¹ “Forked tongue: Tibetan language under attack”, Free Tibet, published 2008

¹² Machu County, Kanlho TAP, (Chinese: Maqu County, Gannan TAP), Gansu Province

¹³ “Self-immolations in Tibet Show No Sign of Slowing”, Los Angeles Times, 10 March 2012

¹⁴ “Tibetan Self-Immolations Rise as China Tightens Grip”, New York Times, 22 March 2012

¹⁵ Dzoerge County, Ngaba TAP, (Chinese: Ruo'ergai County, Aba TAP), Sichuan Province

¹⁶ Rebong County, Malho TAP, (Chinese: Tongren County, Huangnan TAP), Qinghai Province

should instantly adopt measure to cancel the basic living allowances, relief and all other policy benefit for the people enjoying by the relatives of the person 'self-immolated'."¹⁷ The notice was issued by Malho Prefecture Committee Office of Communist Party and dated 14 November 2012.

The right to a cultural life is severely restricted for Tibetan women. Any woman expressing her Tibetan identity in a cultural manner risks being arrested, imprisoned and tortured. For example, Kalsang, a single mother of three, was arrested in Driru County¹⁸ on 13 October 2013 for allegedly having pictures of the Dalai Lama and Tibetan songs on her mobile phone. The local police told her family they could not provide any information regarding the reason for her arrest, her whereabouts or her condition. Tibet Watch later confirmed that Kalsang has now been released from detention. However, the situation of many other political prisoners from Driru County, including several women, remains unknown.

Tibetan women who actively participate in cultural life are forced to curb their activities. Kunsang Lhamo, a 30-year-old Tibetan nun and bard singer of the traditional Tibetan epic "Gesar", was arrested on 26 August 2014. Following the arrest authorities searched her house and confiscated her mobile phone and other belongings.¹⁹ Her whereabouts remain unknown at the time of writing.

Events expressing Tibetan culture are suppressed. In February 2014, a Tibetan language competition, designed to promote the use of 'pure' Tibetan, was forcibly cancelled by the Chinese authorities in Muge Norwa town, Zungchu County²⁰. The event was intended to celebrate International Mother Language Day, established by the United Nations in 2000. The event organisers were instructed to cancel the event on the grounds that it had "political implications" and that "the Tibetan language had words that could be used to express opposition to Chinese rule".²¹

Tibetan female writers are subject to surveillance and often detained for their views. On 23 August 2014, a female student and blogger Dawa Tsomo was arrested by authorities in Dzatoe County²². Dawa Tsomo was accused of violating internet regulations by blogging about politically sensitive issues. She had been writing Chinese language essays on websites and social media sites and was arrested soon after posting an article titled "The living condition of local Tibetans in Kyegundo²³ and how local Chinese officials have failed to look after the welfare of local Tibetans". Dawa Tsomo's whereabouts and condition remain unknown at the time of writing.

The Tibetan writer and blogger Tsering Woesser, mentioned above, has been repeatedly placed under house arrest to prevent her from taking part in cultural or other events. Most recently she was placed under house arrest in her home in July 2014 to prevent her from taking up an invitation to the Embassy of the United States in Beijing. She had previously been placed under house arrest in June 2013 to prevent her taking part in any events commemorating the 24th anniversary of the massacre in Tiananmen Square.

¹⁷ Translation by Tibet Watch staff

¹⁸ Driru County, Nagchu Prefecture, (Chinese: Biru County, Naqu Prefecture), TAR

¹⁹ "China Arrests Tibetan Nun from Amdo Golog", Voice of America, 29 August 2014.

²⁰ Muge Norwa town, Zungchu County, Ngaba TAP, (Chinese: Songpan County, Aba TAP), Sichuan Province

²¹ "Tibet language promotion event blocked by China", Radio Free Tibet, 22 April 2014

²² Dzatoe County, Yushu TAP, (Chinese: Zaduo County, Yushu TAP), Qinghai Province

²³ Also known as Jyekundo, in Yushu TAP, Qinghai Province

Article 14

The rights of rural women in Tibet are not respected. Consultations are rare and, when carried out, meaningless. Disputes are not addressed by the authorities and agreements are not honoured.

For example, sixteen Tibetan women in their 80s staged a sit-in protest at a construction site in Ngaba County²⁴ from 17 September to 20 October 2013. The sit-in ended when the protestors were threatened with arrest by the police and the women's grievances remain unaddressed by the authorities.

The dispute originated in June 1986 when the local government seized farmlands belonging to 16 families and used the land for construction of a meat factory, promising that in return a member of each family would get a job in the plant. However, the jobs did not materialise and the families were given a meagre sum of just over 10,000 Yuan (USD 1,625) in compensation. The 16 families appealed to the local government to solve the issue in 1988 and again in 1990, but to no avail. The government of the county has now sold the meat factory for commercial re-development.

On 13 September 2012, a 62-year-old Tibetan woman named Passang Lhamo set herself alight in Beijing in protest against illegal land-grabbing in her area of Jyekundo²⁵. Following the earthquake of 2010, authorities had taken her ancestral land and she had received no help or compensation. Despite repeated appeals to the central authorities in Beijing, no resolution was forthcoming and she travelled to Beijing to carry out her protest.²⁶

Women in nomadic communities are particularly at risk of having their rights under CEDAW violated. In recent years, the Chinese government has implemented a policy of mass resettlement of nomadic communities, regardless of the will or best interests of the communities concerned. Nomadic resettlement adversely affects women as their traditional role and the traditional family structure is affected. The new uniform sized houses that nomads are coerced into building for their sedentarisation are often too small for the traditionally large nomad families and their livestock. This impacts on future personal choices affecting women, such as the size of their family and what work they will do as they are shifted from an agricultural sector to a commercial or service sector with limited opportunities.

Raising yaks and other livestock has been a way of life in Tibet for centuries. Nomadic herders used to range across the Tibetan plateau, using their intimate knowledge of the landscape to find the best grazing for their animals and support their families and communities. This sustainable way of life has been destroyed by China's resettlement policy, with hundreds of thousands of nomads being forced off the land and moved into urban settlements where they face poverty, unemployment and social exclusion.

According to a recent Human Rights Watch report, "The scale and speed at which the Tibetan rural population is being remodeled by these policies is unprecedented in the post-Mao era."²⁷ The report goes on to quote official figures from the 'Comfortable Housing' policy which state that two million people, more than two-thirds of the entire population of the TAR, were moved into new houses or required to rebuild their own houses between 2006 and 2012. Some were relocated a considerable distance from their original homes. The Chinese government further notes that it intends to rehouse 180,000 more by 2015.

Human Rights Watch also report that, in Qinghai Province, on the eastern side of the Tibetan plateau, China has "relocated and settled 300,000 nomadic herders since the early 2000s under "Environmental Migration" schemes, and has said it intends to sedentarize 113,000 more by the end of 2013. By then, 90 percent of the herder population of the province will have been sedentarized."

²⁴ Ngaba County, Ngaba TAP, (Chinese: Aba County, Aba TAP), Sichuan Province

²⁵ Jyekundo County, Yushu TAP, (Chinese: Yushu County, Yushu TAP), Qinghai Province

²⁶ Tibet Watch interview, September 2012

²⁷ "They Say We Should Be Grateful": Mass Relocating and Relocation Programs in Tibetan Areas of China, Human Rights Watch, June 2013

Article 16

China has recently embarked on a policy of encouraging – via various incentives – Tibetans to marry Chinese.²⁸ The policy is clearly discriminatory since it denies Tibetans who marry their fellow Tibetans the same advantages offered by the state. It is also deeply disturbing that the Chinese government is utilising marriage as a political tool and a means of diluting Tibetan nationality and culture.

In June, China's highest official in the TAR, Chen Quanguo, staged a photo opportunity with 19 mixed race families. Chen was quoted as stating that the government must "actively promote" mixed race marriages. He then went on to praise mixed race marriages as a way of celebrating "the great motherland, Chinese as a people [and] Chinese culture".²⁹

A report by the Communist Party's research office in Tibet was quoted in the media as finding that mixed marriages have increased annually for the past five years, from 666 couples in 2008 to 4,795 couples in 2013.³⁰ While avoiding specifics, the report attributed the growth to favourable policies in areas such as social security, reproductive rights, vacations, prizes and special treatment for children born from such marriages, including education, employment and Communist Party membership. One of the policy's requirements, however, is that mixed race couples must determine early on whether their children should be designated as Tibetan or Chinese in official registers.

Many Tibetans are deeply concerned about the impact this policy will have on Tibetan culture and identity. Furthermore, some Tibetan women now feel pressure to make decisions about marriage and family based on economic considerations.

²⁸ First reported in official Chinese state media Tibet Daily: http://epaper.chinatibetnews.com/xzrb/html/2014-08/05/content_559917.htm

²⁹ "China promotes mixed race marriages in Tibet as way to achieve 'unity'", The Washington Post, 16 August 2014

³⁰ Ibid.

Recommendations

In light of the evidence presented here, Tibet Watch requests the Committee to use the opportunity provided by the review of China's seventh and eighth period reports to:

- Encourage China to invite the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its causes and consequences, to visit the TAR and Tibetan areas of the People's Republic of China (PRC);
- Call on China to conduct full investigations into the circumstances surrounding the self-immolations of Tibetan women and publish the findings; further, to provide information on the conditions and whereabouts of the women who have reportedly survived self-immolation but since disappeared i.e. Dolma, Passang Lhamo and Dekyi Choezom;
- Call on China to ensure that no ethnic discrimination is taking place relating to the issuing of passports to Tibetan women;
- Ask China to explain the repeated refusal of a passport to Tibetan writer Tsering Woesser;
- Call on China to provide adequate educational and economic opportunities to sedentarised nomadic women;
- Acknowledge that ethnic discrimination exists in the failure to provide Tibetan girls with education in their mother tongue;
- Encourage China to provide education to Tibetan girls in their mother tongue and to afford the Tibetan language equal status to Chinese in the TAR;
- Encourage China to promote the use of the Tibetan language by companies doing business in the TAR and, specifically, in workplaces in the TAR;
- Call on China to cease all use of collective punishment; investigate the incidences of collective punishment in Dzoeg County in 2013 and Malho TAP in 2012, specifically with regard to the impact these measures have on women; and ensure that those responsible for collective punishment are held to account;
- Call on China to allow peaceful cultural expressions by Tibetan women and to provide information on the whereabouts of Kunsang Lhamo and Dawa Tsomo; further, to release these women if they have not been charged with a recognisable criminal offence;
- Call on China to cease the policy of nomad resettlement, carry out consultation with nomadic communities and, where the communities so desire, facilitate a return to their traditional lands and way of life for nomadic women and their families; and
- Recognise the harmful effects of Chinese government policies, such as encouraging ethnic inter-marriage, on Tibetan women and their private lives.