

GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Human Rights Council
Forty-Second Regular Session

September 11 September, 2019

Item 3: Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearance

Statement delivered by Kai Mueller on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights (HFHR)

Mr. President,

We wish to thank the Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearance for consistently taking action on behalf of disappeared Tibetans in the People's Republic of China. The Working Group's critical investigations ensure that Tibetans who have disappeared are not forgotten but remain on the agenda of the international community.

In the People's Republic of China, Tibetans are regularly subjected to enforced disappearance. Just recently, news of the disappearance and imprisonment of three monks, Lobsang Thapke, Lobsang Dorjee and Thubpa emerged from the Ngaba area, which has been subject to a crackdown by the Chinese government since the wave of self-immolations began there in 2009. The latter two monks are former political prisoners. No information about their whereabouts is available.

I would like to remind the Council of the disappearance of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, 24 years ago, when he was just six years old. Choekyi Nyima, the reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Lama recognised by the Dalai Lama, was taken into custody on 17 May 1995 and has not been seen since. We are deeply grateful to the UN Human Rights Mechanisms including the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearance, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Special Rapporteurs, as well as a number of governments who have consistently asked China for information about the whereabouts of Choekyi Nyima. They have also asked to visit him. Unfortunately China has not allowed anyone to meet the Panchen Lama, fuelling fears and speculation as to whether he is still alive.

For many Tibetans, Choekyi Nyima's disappearance has come to symbolise the Chinese government's efforts to interfere with and undermine Tibetan Buddhist culture. His enforced disappearance also constitutes a grave violation of international human rights standards.

We urge the Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearance and other relevant special procedures to continue to express concern and request for information about the disappeared Tibetans, in particular the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima.

Thank you, Mr. President.

ENDS