

Senator the Hon Penny Wong
Minister for Foreign Affairs
PO Box 6237, Halifax Street
Adelaide, SA, 5000



20 December 2022

Dear Penny Wong,

It is with great disappointment that Australia Tibet Council (ATC) understands you are travelling to China to re-engage Australia / China trade relations this week.

Although we wish you well on your journey, our disappointment in the re-engagement comes from the Chinese Governments decades of human rights abuses in Tibet and the fact that ATC and our supporters around Australia believe that members of the Chinese Government should be facing Magnitsky sanctions for their human rights abuses in Tibet rather than be rewarded with trade deals.

While you are in China, we urge you to raise Tibet and press the Chinese Government on the following matters:

- 1) **The disappearance of the Panchen Lama**, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, who was disappeared by Chinese Authorities with his family in 1995 when he was only six years old. He is the 2nd highest-ranked Tibetan Lama, but he has not been seen by the world since this time. Around the world, Tibetans and Tibetan Buddhists are concerned for his safety and well-being. Australia should press China for transparency and seek to confirm if he is alive and well.
- 2) **Cultural Genocide: Tibetan children being removed from their parents.** Tibetan children are at risk of becoming a new 'stolen generation' as they are being removed from their families, separated from their language, their culture and their religion:
 - Nearly 80 % of all Tibetan Children between the ages of 6 and 18 have been systematically separated from their parents and housed in State-run boarding schools and preschools throughout jurisdictions designated by the PRC government as 'autonomous' for Tibetans.
 - The schools separate Tibetan children from their families and are "colonial" in design and practice, serving the Chinese Communist Party's goals of 'Sinicizing' Tibetans through immersion in Mandarin Chinese instruction and a "highly politicised curriculum." Which also does not allow children to practice Tibetan Buddhism.
 - These actions by Chinese authorities constitute a fundamental violation of the rights of Tibetan parents and children by interfering with their rights to preserve the integrity of their family units and stripping them of their right to choose the educational direction for their children.
 - The PRC government is violating its obligation under the Convention on the Rights of the Child "to respect the right of the children to preserve his or her identity,

including nationality, name and family relations as recognised by the law without unlawful interference" and to ensure the rights of 'ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities... to use their own language."

The US Congress via the bipartisan *Congressional-Executive Commission on China*, has already written to the UN demanding the removal of Tibetan children from their families into these CCP-run boarding schools are investigated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. The *Congressional-Executive Commission on China* further stated that "Our concern is driven not only by our interest in promoting human rights in the PRC as expressed by the Commission's mandate but as representatives of a government in North America who do not want to see history repeated. In the United States and Canada, authorities set policies that separated indigenous children from their families and forced them to live in residential boarding schools, erasing and changing identities as a form of cultural genocide. The international community should not let this happen in Tibet." In this area, due to Australia's own sad history that resulted in the Stolen Generations – ATC believes that Australia must also take responsibility to ensure that CCP policies that seek to break down the Tibetan family unit, and strip children of their language, culture, and religion should be declared human rights abuses.

I have attached an ATC report, "**Overcoming Obstacles: Protecting Tibetan Religious Identity**" which further details the human rights abuses of China in Tibet and the ways China is violating its own constitution as well as its UN rights concerning freedom of religion and the rights of the child. I have also attached the **2022 ATC briefer**, which details the concerns ATC has for human rights abuses in Tibet and concrete steps the Australian Government can take to make China accountable for their human rights violations in Tibet – this was discussed with your staffers in September 2022 during Tibet Lobby Day.

I have also attached the **US congressional letter to the United Nations High Commissioner** asking for an investigation into the cultural genocide of Tibetan children via the removal of children from their families. As well as the original report from Tibet Action Institute which exposed this policy to the world "**Separated from their families, hidden from the world**".

The concerns raised in this letter are only the tip of the iceberg. Tibet's brutal occupation by China has seen Tibetans bare the brunt of numerous human rights abuses, including Tibetan political prisoners, who are imprisoned for expressing loyalty to the Dalai Lama, for calling for a Free Tibet or any other expression of freedom that is counter to Chinese policy. Many Tibetans are disappeared – arrested, imprisoned and tortured by CCP authorities while their families are not told of their whereabouts.

CCP authorities control traditional and social media in Tibet even more strictly than in Han Chinese areas of the country. Individuals who use the internet, social media, or other means to share politically sensitive news content or commentary face arrest and heavy criminal penalties. Tibetan cultural expression, which the authorities associate with separatism, is subject to especially harsh restrictions; scores of Tibetan writers, intellectuals, and musicians have been incarcerated in recent years.

Deliberate internet blackouts occur periodically in Tibet, including in areas where public demonstrations have occurred. International broadcasts are jammed, and personal communication devices are confiscated and searched. The online censorship and monitoring systems in place across

China are applied more stringently in the TAR, while censorship of Tibet-related keywords on the popular messaging application WeChat has become more sophisticated.

The TAR is the only provincial-level region of China that requires foreigners to obtain a special permit to enter, and foreign journalists are regularly prevented from visiting. Journalists also face barriers in access to Tibetan areas of Sichuan and other provinces, though no permission is officially required to travel to those places. Tibetans who communicate with foreign media or other foreign contacts without permission face criminal prosecution and long prison sentences. Four Tibetan monks were tried in September 2020 and sentenced to prison terms ranging from five to 20 years for sending messages to colleagues outside Tibet regarding charitable aid to a monastery in Nepal that was damaged by an earthquake. Sharing local information online can also lead to punishment. In August 2021, a group of 110 Tibetans were detained for posting photos of the police presence ahead of a traditional annual horse-racing festival.

The Chinese Government's human rights abuses in Tibet are so numerous that they can not be contained in a single letter or briefer, but they have led to Tibet being declared the 'least free country in the world' by Freedom House in 2022. <https://freedomhouse.org/country/tibet/freedom-world/2022>

With the knowledge of the Chinese Government's brutal and oppressive occupation of Tibet and the extensive human rights violations in Tibet, I urge you not to ignore these issues while visiting China. As Australia's Foreign Minister, it is important to remember the values of the Australian people who are appalled by the Chinese Government's treatment of Tibetans and their violations of UN conventions on family and the rights of the child and rights to religious freedoms.

Australia's own colonialist history should make us more determined as a nation to take the lead against Chinese government actions to strip children of their families, language, culture and religion – we should be standing firm against the Chinese Government's attempts at cultural genocide via the colonisation of Tibetan children and creation of a new stolen generation in Tibet.

I urge you to raise the human rights abuses occurring in Tibet at the hands of the Chinese Government with your Chinese Government counterparts while in China and trust that you will respect Australian values above the resumption of trade deals with China.

Kind regards,



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Australia Tibet Council

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