



**Parlamentarische Gruppe Tibet**  
**Groupe Parlementaire pour le Tibet**  
**Parliamentary Group for Tibet**

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Berne, 16th May 2023

High Commissioner for Human Rights  
Mr. Volker Türk  
Palais Wilson, 52 rue des Pâquis  
1201 Geneva

### **"Appeal to the UN: Urge the People's Republic of China to stop the destruction of Tibetan culture."**

Honourable Mr. High Commissioner Türk

On the occasion of the visit of Venerable Zeekyab Rinpoche, Abbot of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, to Geneva, the Parliamentary Group (PG) Tibet calls on the United Nations to put pressure on the authorities of the People's Republic of China to end their systematic and extensive policy of destroying Tibetan culture and to allow freedom of religion, language, education and expression in the People's Republic of China. In particular, the PG Tibet draws attention to the disappeared Panchen Lama, the "re-education programmes" for Tibetans and the forced boarding schools for Tibetan school children.

#### **Remembrance of the disappeared 11th Panchen Lama**

Tashi Lhunpo Monastery is the headquarters of the Panchen Lamas. In Tibetan religious tradition, the Panchen Lama plays a crucial role in recognising the incarnation of the next Dalai Lama and is his spiritual teacher and tutor. The 11th incarnation of the Panchen Lama identified by the 14th Dalai Lama, the then 6-year-old Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, disappeared without trace in Tibet in May 1995, three days after his official recognition, along with his family. To this day, the PRC government refuses to provide any information about the whereabouts and well-being of him and his relatives. Instead, a boy compliant with the government was installed as Panchen Lama without any legitimacy. The PRC's calculation is clear: this is to one day recognise the incarnation of a Dalai Lama controlled by the PRC authorities.

#### **Forced retraining and resettlement of Tibetans**

A government programme that has been in operation since 2015 pursues the mass transfer of agricultural workers into "re-education programmes" with subsequent resettlement to other regions of the PRC. The programme involves large-scale, systematic and centrally supervised training of "redundant agricultural workers" with subsequent transfer to other regions of Tibet or Chinese provinces in low-skilled occupational sectors<sup>1</sup>. In militarily organised camps, those affected are also subjected to political and cultural indoctrination. So far, about 600,000 Tibetans - more than 15% of the population of the so-called "Tibet Autonomous Region" - have been affected. According to official statements, the aim of these trainings is to strengthen the "low work ethic", to prevent "backward thinking" and to weaken the "negative influence of religion" in order to "eliminate lazy people". UN human rights experts had recently expressed concern that this programme was deliberately uprooting and alienating traditional Tibetans.

#### **Forced boarding schools with Chinese education for Tibetan schoolchildren**

Since 2021, Tibetan children of kindergarten age and above have been forced into a boarding school system where they are taught exclusively in Chinese language and culture werden<sup>2</sup>. Nearly 1 million children, or almost 80% of Tibetan school children, aged 4 years and older are forced to live in these boarding schools. The education and life away from their homes radically alienate the children from their family, tradition and religion. This practice, too, was recently criticised by UN special rapporteurs as a policy of assimilation by the Chinese government that violates human rights.

#### **Not individual cases, but systematically planned destruction of Tibetan culture**

"It is becoming clear that the abduction of the recognised Panchen Lama and the installation of a candidate who is compliant with the government, as well as the system of "re-education programmes" and forced

<sup>1</sup> A. Zenz «Xinjiang's System of Militarized Vocational Training Comes to Tibet», *China Brief* 2020; Volume 20 Issue 17

<sup>2</sup> <https://tibetaction.net/2022/05/24/eyewitness-confirms-mandatory-boarding-preschools-operating-across-tibet/>



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boarding schools, are not arbitrary individual cases, but systematically planned steps towards the destruction of Tibetan culture and identity," says National Councillor Nicolas Walder, co-president of the PG Tibet.

**The Parliamentary Group for Tibet appeals to the UN to urge the People's Republic of China to immediately stop the destruction of Tibetan culture.**

On behalf of the Parliamentary Group for Tibet

with the utmost respect

MP Nik Gugger  
Co-President

MP Fabian Molina  
Co-President

MP Nicolas Walder  
Co-President

MP Maya Graf  
Vice-President

**Remark:**

The appeal will also be read out at the following events and sent out as a press release:

- Press conference with the Venerable Zeekyab Rinpoche on 16 May in Geneva, 16 May 2023, 11h00, Club de la presse de Genève
- Rally on 17 May 2023, 11h30 to 14h30, Broken Chair in front of the UN in Geneva