

Ladies and Gentlemen:

My name is Enghebatu Togocho. I represent the Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center (SMHRIC), a New York based human rights organization dedicated to promoting and protecting the rights of the Mongolian people in China.

I would like to thank the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), and the Society for Threatened Peoples for organizing this event and providing us with a platform to talk about the problems and crisis we are facing as the government of China intensifies its policies of political repression, cultural eradication, economic exploitation, and environmental destruction in Southern Mongolia, East Turkistan and Tibet.

Home to six million indigenous Mongolian people, Southern Mongolia, widely known as “Inner” Mongolia, had been an integral part of the Mongolian nation up until 1947 when the Chinese Communist Party took control over the region. Since then, Southern Mongolia has experienced its darkest era ever in Mongolian history; during these six decades, the Chinese government has carried out state-sponsored ethnic-cleansing, heavy-handed political repression, large scale population transfer, forced cultural assimilation and near total destruction of the natural environment in Southern Mongolia.

Today, as a result of large scale Chinese population transfer, the Mongols constitute only 18% of the total population in the region. They have become an absolute minority in their own lands; the natural grasslands where the Mongols maintained their nomadic way of life for thousands of years have been destroyed by unscrupulous mining operations and the non-sustainable farming practices of millions of Chinese immigrants.

The systemic land grabbing started in as early as 1947 when the Chinese Communists took over Southern Mongolia. Tens of thousands of Mongolians were brutally killed and Mongolian land was effectively taken over by the Chinese settlers during the so-called “Land Reform Movement.” Since then, millions of Chinese peasants and army personnel poured into the Southern Mongolian grasslands to start setting up large scale farms and forestry.

To justify its systemic land grabbing and cover up their destruction of the natural environment, the Chinese government adopted the so-called “Ecological Migration” policy in Southern Mongolia. This policy was officially instituted in 2001 to forcibly relocate the entire indigenous Mongolian herding and semi-herding population from their ancestral grazing lands to the overwhelmingly Chinese populated agricultural and urban areas under the pretext of “protecting the grassland eco-system.” An equally egregious policy instituted shortly after was the “Total Ban over Livestock Grazing” (or “jin mu”). Under this policy, Mongolian herders grazing livestock in the grasslands were regarded as criminals and subject to large fines or total confiscation of their livestock. Thus, Mongolian people have been forced to abandon their traditional way of life and adopt an urban or agricultural lifestyle.

With the largest coal and natural gas source in China, including production of 95% of the world’s rare earth supplies, Southern Mongolia was recently advertised by the Chinese Government as “China’s Energy Base.”

Chinese mining giants including Shenhua Coal and Chang Qing Oil, as well as thousands of private miners, have rushed to Southern Mongolia chasing their fortune. Herders' grazing lands have been illegally occupied and opened up for mines. Herders have forcibly been removed from their land without adequate compensation or proper resettlement.

In response to this unprecedented level of destruction of their grazing lands, Mongolian herders are standing up to defend their right to pursue their livelihood and traditional way of life. Hundreds of herders have been beaten, arrested, and detained in clashes with the Chinese on an almost daily basis.

In 2011, the brutal killing of a Mongolian herder named Mergen by a Chinese mining truck sparked a large-scale, region-wide protest by Mongolian herders and students. Chinese authorities mobilized the People's Liberation Army and large number of police forces to crackdown on the protest.

Since 2010, at least six Mongolian herders have lost their lives during violent clashes with Chinese miners and settlers in order to defend their legal rights and grazing lands. In a recent case, just two weeks ago, a Mongolian herder named Ayungaa and his horse were brutally run over by a mining truck in western Southern Mongolia's Abag Banner.

Arbitrary arrest and extrajudicial detention of Mongolian dissidents, activists and herders have become commonplace in Southern Mongolia. Mr. Hada, founder of the Southern Mongolian Democratic Alliance, who initiated efforts to preserve Mongolian culture and tradition and demanded a "genuine" autonomy for the Mongols as guaranteed by the Chinese constitution and the Minority Region Autonomy Law is still being held in a "black jail" after completing his 15-year-long jail term in 2010.

His wife, Ms. Xinna, and their son, Uiles, were arrested and placed under extrajudicial detention for an extended period of time before they were placed under house arrest.

Ms. Huuchinhuu, a Mongolian dissident writer is still under house arrest and is suffering from breast cancer and nearly total loss of eyesight. Her request for medical parole is denied. Many other dissidents and human right activists have also been arrested, detained, sent to jail, or put under house arrest under similar circumstances.

Mr. Batzangaa, who was deported back to China from the independent country of Mongolia when he was seeking asylum with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Office at Ulaanbaatar, is still being imprisoned in Inner Mongolia Jail No. 4 in Ulaanhad City.

Mr. Tsengelt, a herders' leader of eastern Southern Mongolia's Zaruud Banner is still being held at a local detention center without any legal justification.

Hundreds other Mongolian herders have arbitrarily been arrested and placed under extrajudicial detention for defending their right to grazing land.

We urge the Chinese authorities to put an immediate halt to land grabbing, arbitrary arrest, and extrajudicial detention of the Mongolian people in Southern Mongolia. In addition, we urge the authorities to respect their basic human rights and fundamental freedoms as guaranteed by the Universal Human Rights Declaration and other international human rights conventions.

Thank you.