



28 September 2019

Twelfth Session of the Forum on Minority Issues

Education, Language and the Human Rights of Minorities

Item 3: Public policy objectives for education in and the teaching of, minority rights

Statement delivered by Ms. Thinlay Chukki on behalf of Society for Threatened Peoples.

Thank you Chair. One of the greatest challenges faced by minority groups in preserving their culture is the imposition of monolingualism.

Tibetans who are considered “ethnic minorities” by China are facing the imposition of mandarin.

Firstly, Tibetan Schools have been banned from teaching in Tibetan. Instead Mandarin has been imposed as the medium of instruction. Secondly, monasteries have now been banned from offering Tibetan language classes, depriving Tibetans from learning the language from other sources. Thirdly, Tibetans who learn Tibetan language are deprived of economic benefits and social mobility. Tibetan students graduating in Tibetan language do not have any job prospects. Even the UN Committee on Elimination of Racial Discrimination in its report has cited many discriminative practices to the detriment of Tibetans.

Finally, there is retribution against language rights advocates. The incarceration of language rights advocate Tashi Wangchuk and the recent arrest of a monk named Sonam Palden from Kirti monastery for highlighting the deplorable state of Tibetan language on social media raises questions on Chinese claims to preservation of Tibetan language. The large scale demolitions of Buddhist academies like Larung Gar and Yachen Gar has rendered thousands of monks, nuns and laypersons homeless with no access to learn Buddhism in Tibetan language.

Till date 153 Tibetans have set themselves on fire, some of them lamenting on the inaccessibility to learn Tibetan language and calling for the preservation of Tibetan language.

The systemic deprivations of Tibetans to learn their own language is a gross violation of human rights of Tibetans to preserve their culture and distinct identity.

In view of this we call upon the states, and China in this case, to adopt effective policies to preserve and promote Tibetan language, policies which will lead to increase of economic benefits and social currency of Tibetan language and to stop adopting retributive policies against the language advocates and immediately release Tashi Wangchuk, Ven. Sonam Palden and all those language advocates languishing in prison and detention centres.