

International Campaign for Tibet

Ladies and gentlemen. We wish to draw attention of the Forum to the profound structural barriers that block peaceful coexistence between the Tibetan people and the Chinese people. These barriers are the result of deliberate state policies that seek to marginalize, disempower, and erase the Tibetan civilization. Today, the Tibetan people are experiencing intensifying policies targeting their core identity, from state-run boarding schools separating children from their families and language, differences in Tibetan Buddhism, including the Dalai Lama's succession, and the dismantling of traditional ways of life. Daily, they witness the P.R.C.'s attempts to strip away their rich cultural heritage and reduce it to state-approved folklore. The Tibetan people do not have a say over policies that directly affect their lives. Leadership positions are overwhelmingly held by Han Chinese officials. Decisions, concerning their land, such as hydropower projects that displace communities and damage fragile ecosystems, proceed without a semblance of free, prior, and informed consent. Tibetans are also subjected to systematic discrimination in all aspects of their lives, including religious and cultural expression, employment, and travel. Surveillance and systematic repression of those who advocate for their culture and rights instill a pervasive climate of fear that leaves Tibetans feeling like birds in a cage. We are particularly concerned about the recently proposed draft law on promoting ethnic unity and progress, which further corrodes cultural diversity and institutionalizes repression on the pretext of national unity. The Tibet Autonomous Region has been made the testing ground for this new legislation. Genuine peace and unity cannot be imposed through erasure, fear or control. It can only emerge from equality, respect for fundamental rights, and dialogue. The Tibetan people's dedication to maintaining non-violence is embedded in the moral leadership of the Dalai Lama, who has dedicated decades calling for a peaceful resolution to the China-Tibet conflict through dialogue without precondition, rather than manipulating his succession for political purposes, the Chinese [cut off by Chair].