pen
INTERNATIONAL

RESOLUTION ON FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN THE AUTONOMOUS REGION OF TIBET

For more than 50 year, the authorities of People's Republic of China have continued to crackdown on writers and activists in the Autonomous Region of Tibet, casting the net ever wider to include writers from Tibetan areas outside of the autonomous region.[1] The Chinese authorities continued to fail to hold a dialogue with the Dalai Lama in 2015;[2] indeed the authorities are reported to have once again denounced the 'middle way approach' of the Dalai Lama in September 2015.[3] In 2015, PEN International recorded the persecution of 16 Tibetan writers on its annual Case List, accounting for some 18 per cent of all cases in the People's Republic of China.[4] They include Kunchok Tsephel GOPEY TSANG and Gartse JIGME, both Honorary Members of the Independent Chinese PEN Centre who are imprisoned for their peaceful writings.

PEN is also deeply concerned by the direct threats to the Tibetan language in recent years, specifically in Tibet, as well as Tibetan areas in Qinghai, Sichuan, Yunnan, and Gansu Provinces, where the primary language of instruction in schools is Mandarin. Language plays a vital role in relation to identity, communication, social integration, education and development. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) stipulates that ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities within a state 'shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language.'[5] In August 2015, the Tibetan-language website Chomei – one of the longest-running Tibetan language platforms for news, cultural writings and literature, created by Gopey Tsang and poet Kyab-chen De-drol in 2005 – was shut down.[6] Tibetan businessman and language rights campaigner, Tashi Wangchuk, who has regularly written on Tibetan language education and expressed concern that many Tibetan children are unable to become fluent in their native language, has been in detention since January 2016, charged with separatism.

As the Chinese authorities' repressive activities deepen through the implementation of its 'stability maintenance' programme,[7] concerns grow among the Tibetan community that its culture is on the verge of extinction.

As a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, China is obliged to 'refrain from acts that would defeat or undermine the treaty's objective and purpose,' including by arbitrarily detaining writers or by denying ethnic Tibetans access to their own culture and to use their own language.

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[1] https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2016/tibet
[2] https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2016/tibet
[3] https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/asia-and-the-pacific/china/report-china/
[4] http://www.pen-international.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/CASE-LIST-January-December-2015.pdf#page=140
[5] http://www.pen-international.org/newsitems/spotlight-on-the-upr-17th-session-china-crackdown-on-freedom-of-expression-ahead-of-the-un-upr/#sthash.O3L0PllA.dpuf
[6] https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2016/tibet
[7] https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/05/22/relentless-detention-and-prosecution-tibetans-under-chinas-stability-maintenance

The Assembly of Delegates of PEN International, meeting at its 82nd World Congress in Ourense, Galicia (Spain), 26th September to 2nd October 2016, urges the government of the People's Republic of China to:

- Release all Tibetan writers and others imprisoned solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression;
- Cease the use of torture and other ill-treatment against detained writers;
- Protect the right of all in Tibet to freely express their views;
- Lift restrictions on the use of the Tibetan language for communication and education;
- Lift the ban on publication of books written by Tibetan writers in Tibetan;
- Take appropriate measures to ensure the protection and development of the unique Tibetan culture;
- Ratify the ICCPR without further delay and without reservation.