

CURRENT SITUATION

China’s increasing engagement with the international community in recent years has been accompanied by rapid domestic social and economic changes. Although the People’s Republic of China (PRC) is now an active participant in multilateral forums, its policies continue to undermine human rights, especially that of marginalized and vulnerable populations such as ethnic minority groups.

FACTS AT A GLANCE

The **Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR)** has the country’s **highest illiteracy rate** of 44.03 per cent. The national average is 10.3 per cent.

The **198-membered 16th Communist Party** of China’s (CPC) Central Committee only has **one minority woman** out of its 17 minority representatives.

Virtually all **outward expression of religious belief is banned** in schools.

LIMITED & INEFFECTUAL POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Minorities lack genuine decision-making powers over policies affecting their communities:

- Due to limited CPC representation, ethnic minorities do not participate in real decision-making at the central level.
- Restrictions on growth of domestic civil society limit opportunities for ethnic minorities to form advocacy organizations.
- The government’s violations of individuals’ civil and political rights means that ethnic minorities live under conditions of heightened repression, limiting their ability to participate in the political arena.

In October 2006, XUAR Communist Party Secretary Wang Lequan defended the government’s crackdown on Uyghur activists by stating that Uyghurs were using religion to foment separatist sentiments and that “separatists always use religion as an excuse to pursue damaging activities.”

INEQUITABLE & DISCRIMINATORY DEVELOPMENT

- The costs of inequitable development are high for the rural minority populations, leading to sharp inequalities in education and health.
- Ethnic minorities lag behind the national average, and the Han Chinese population, in income and employment rates.
- The **Western Development Strategy (WDS)** aims to ‘modernize’ China’s interior, but functions as a political and nationalist tool to extract resources, assimilate ethnic minorities and increase militarization in minority areas.

“I have hope, but the future looks very uncertain...We’ve worked for so many years just to get a little bit of freedom, a few more rights.”

– Tibetan interviewee

INADEQUATE PROTECTION OF CULTURAL IDENTITY

- Han Chinese settlers now dominate the urban public sphere in autonomous regions, making it difficult for minorities to maintain their distinct cultural identities.
- Decreased use of local languages and the imposition of Mandarin undermines native language learning and cultural education for minority children.
- The declining viability of ethnic language or cultural education is compounded by an aggressive campaign of Chinese nationalist ‘patriotic education’.

<p>RECENT INCIDENTS</p> <p>⇒ <u>March 5, 2007</u>: Chinese President Hu Jintao said that the <i>key to a 'harmonious' and 'stable' society in the TAR is development</i>. In practice, Tibetans have limited input into development policymaking in their regions, including large infrastructure projects such as the Qinghai-Tibet railway.</p> <p>⇒ <u>February 2007</u>: NGO and media reports have documented that <i>up to 1,000 Uyghurs have been arrested in the last three years for a poster posted on June 19, 2003, in Terem Village of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR)</i>.</p> <p>⇒ <u>February 2007</u>: A Tibetan was sentenced to <i>3 years for possessing banned CDs of the exiled Dalai Lama's teachings</i>.</p> <p>⇒ <u>January 2007</u>: Heightened surveillance and <i>an increase of Chinese troops in the XUAR</i> follow a reported anti-terrorist police raid. Details remain unclear to date.</p> <p>⇒ <u>December 2006</u>: Police <i>raided the homes of house church leaders</i> in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (IMAR) and the XUAR, preventing them from holding worship services to celebrate Christmas.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">LEGAL FRAMEWORK: INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS & PRC LAW</p> <p>The PRC is not adequately protecting the legal rights of ethnic minorities under its domestic framework and its obligations to <i>respect, promote and fulfill</i> international human rights. China is a State Party to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), ratified in 1981.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PRC ethnic autonomy arrangements are marked by <u>severe gaps between law and practice</u>. • Implementation must also address the obstacles facing the overall development of a <u>rule of law</u> in China, including the lack of <u>accountability</u> and <u>transparency</u>, and <u>independence</u> from the Communist Party of China (CPC). <div style="border: 1px solid black; background-color: #e0e0e0; padding: 5px; margin-top: 10px;"> <p>Non-discrimination and equality without distinctions are fundamental principles of international human rights law and apply to ethnic minorities and others.</p> </div>
	<p>RECOMMENDATIONS</p> <p><i>To the international community</i></p> <p>⇒ Continue to engage the Chinese government in substantive dialogue on human rights and political reforms to increase China's transparency and accountability</p> <p><i>To the PRC government</i></p> <p>Implement recommendations made by the ICERD Committee and other international bodies regarding China's compliance with its human rights obligations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⇒ Ensure effective protection against discrimination by adopting a <i>definition of discrimination</i> in Chinese law. ⇒ Promote greater transparency and access to information by <i>reforming the state secrets system</i>. ⇒ Advance genuine and inclusive <i>political participation</i>. ⇒ Promote equitable and non-discriminatory <i>development</i>. ⇒ Facilitate the preservation of and respect for <i>cultural identity</i>.
FOR MORE INFORMATION	
<p><i>For the full HRIC/MRG report, contact:</i> Human Rights in China, www.hrchina.org Minority Rights Group International, www.minorityrights.org</p>	
<p>IMAR</p> <p>⇒ Southern Mongolian Information Center, www.smhric.org.</p> <p>⇒ Mongol-American Cultural Association, www.maca-usa.org.</p> <p>TAR</p> <p>⇒ Students for a Free Tibet, www.studentsforafreetibet.org.</p> <p>⇒ Gu-Chu-Sum, www.guchusum.org.</p> <p>⇒ Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, www.tchrd.org.</p> <p>⇒ Tibetan Youth Congress, www.tibetanyouthcongress.org.</p> <p>⇒ Tibetan Women's Association www.tibetanwomen.org.</p>	<p>XUAR</p> <p>⇒ Uyghur Human Rights Project, www.uhrp.org.</p> <p>⇒ Uyghur American Association</p> <p>⇒ International Uyghur Human Rights and Democracy Foundation, www.iuhrdf.org.</p> <p>PRC government web-sites</p> <p>⇒ State Ethnic Affairs Commission, www.seac.gov.cn.</p> <p>⇒ State Administration for Religious Affairs, www.sara.gov.cn/GB.</p> <p>⇒ Government of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, www.xinjiang.gov.cn.</p> <p>⇒ Nationalities Unity and Progress Association of China, www.seac.gov.cn.</p>