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# Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

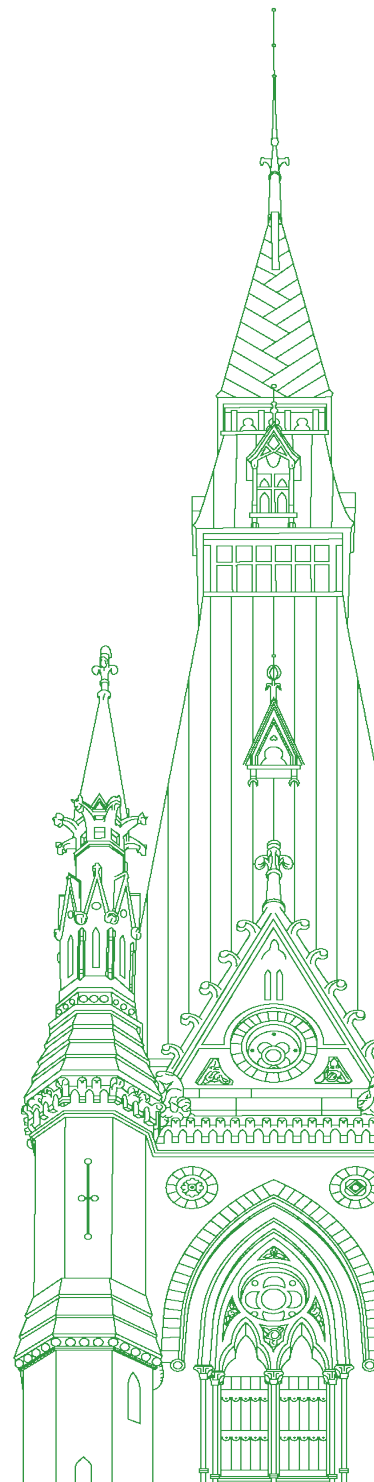
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Monday, June 8, 2026

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Chair: Fayçal El-Khoury





## Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

Monday, June 8, 2026

• (1615)

[*Translation*]

**The Chair (Fayçal El-Khoury (Laval—Les Îles, Lib.)):** I call this meeting to order.

Welcome to meeting number 21 of the House of Commons Subcommittee on International Human Rights of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development.

Pursuant to the motion adopted by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development on Tuesday, September 23, 2025, and the motion adopted by the Standing Subcommittee on International Human Rights on Monday, May 25, 2026, the subcommittee is meeting for a briefing on the situation of Tibetan children placed in schools administered by the People's Republic of China.

Today's meeting is taking place in a hybrid format, pursuant to the Standing Orders. Members are attending in person and remotely using the Zoom application.

[*English*]

I would like to make a few comments for the benefit of the witnesses and members.

Please wait until I recognize you by name before you speak. For those participating by video conference, click on the microphone icon to activate your mic. Please mute yourself when you are not speaking. For those on Zoom, at the bottom of your screen you can select the appropriate channel for interpretation—floor, English or French. For those in the room, you can use the earpiece and select the desired channel.

I will remind you that all comments should be addressed through the chair.

[*Translation*]

I would now like to welcome the witnesses.

[*English*]

We have Chemi Lhamo, Tibetan Canadian human rights activist, appearing as an individual.

From the International Campaign for Tibet in Washington, we have Tencho Gyatso, president, by video conference.

From the Tibet Action Institute, we have Dr. Gyal Lo, Tibet specialist and educational sociologist, and Lhadon Tethong, co-founder and director.

From Tibet Watch, we have Tenzin Choekyi, senior researcher, by video conference.

Welcome to you all. Each of you will have five minutes for an introduction.

[*Translation*]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe (Lac-Saint-Jean, BQ):** Mr. Chair, I have a couple of things to say.

First, are we going to be okay with the time because the votes took longer to complete? Do we still have all the time we wanted?

Second, I think Ms. Lhamo is going to speak last and not first. We had made a small change.

**The Chair:** Yes.

[*English*]

I would like to start with Madam Gyatso.

You have the floor for five minutes, please.

**Tencho Gyatso (President, International Campaign for Tibet (Washington)):** Thank you very much.

Mr. Chair, vice-chairs and esteemed committee members, I would like to begin by recognizing the leadership already shown by the Canadian Parliament and this committee in particular on the Tibetan cause. Thank you for using your voice to stand with the Dalai Lama, with Tibet and with Tibet's children. Thank you also for inviting me to speak on the alarming situation of Tibetan children placed in boarding schools and preschool institutions administered by the PRC government.

Both Canada and the United States have called for sanctions against Chinese officials responsible for the boarding school system in Tibet. Germany and numerous other governments and parliaments have also called for an end to this forced assimilation of Tibetan children. The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights called for an end to the boarding schools in its third periodic review of China, but China continues to accelerate its efforts.

On July 1, just days before His Holiness the Dalai Lama's 91st birthday, Beijing will bring into force the so-called ethnic unity and progress law. This new law makes the state's ambitions unmistakably clear, laying a stark blueprint for the erasure of Tibetan language, culture and identity. Several provisions in this outrageous law are deeply concerning.

Article 15 says the state shall promote written and spoken Chinese and, even if a non-Chinese language is to be used, the state should give priority to the national standard of spoken and written Chinese language and script. Thus, Tibetan is placed in a subordinate position. The law permits cultural expression only when it serves party ideology. It pushes faith, speech and identity to the margins whenever they diverge from the state's approved narrative.

These measures arrive at a moment when Beijing is coercing nearly one million Tibetan children, roughly four out of every five Tibetan children between the ages of six and 18, into state-run boarding schools. For Tibetan children, childhood is spent not in the company of parents and grandparents but in institutions designed to reshape how they speak, what they believe and ultimately who they are.

Recently released images by the United Front Work Department from the southern Tibetan town of Tsona, close to the Indian border, reveal some disturbing scenes of indoctrination. Tibetan kindergarten children, likely under the age of six years old, are dressed in military camouflage uniforms marching under the Chinese flag and participating in simulated combat exercises. These children appear to be carrying imitation rifles as part of what is described as national defence- and ethnic unity-themed educational activities.

These state-run boarding schools are part of a much broader system that has also swept hundreds of thousands of adults into what UN experts have described as large-scale coercive labour programs. This system exists within a wider framework of fear and intimidation characterized by severe restrictions on freedom of expression, religion, movement and cultural practice.

I also find it deeply alarming that Tibetan children are barred from monasteries and other places of worship. Even traditional festivals and religious observations are curtailed.

• (1620)

This new law's reach extends even beyond China's borders, creating a legal framework through which criticism that is voiced in Ottawa, in Washington, D.C., Geneva or any other place, could be portrayed as and punished for undermining ethnic unity.

**The Chair:** Please try to finish in a few more seconds.

**Tencho Gyatso:** All right.

On July 1, this framework enters into force. On this, I want to add context.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama says Tibetan culture has much to contribute to the benefit of humanity, and this Dalai Lama is the embodiment of this culture. He works tirelessly, championing a framework for teaching compassion, ethical discernment and inner resilience. He calls it "inner disarmament". He says world peace must come from inner disarmament.

**The Chair:** Thank you. We've exceeded the time by 20 seconds.

I appeal to every one of you to respect the time, please, because we are short of time.

I would like to invite Dr. Gyal Lo or Lhadon Tethong to take the floor for two minutes, please.

**Lhadon Tethong (Co-Founder and Director, Tibet Action Institute):** Thank you, Chair.

Almost five years ago, we released our first report on residential boarding schools in Tibet, showing that schooling in Tibet today is mostly residential, with approximately one million Tibetan children—at least 78% of students—living separated from their parents and families in the state-run boarding system.

What we didn't know with any certainty, due to China's near-total information blackout on Tibet, were the actual conditions in the schools. Sadly, our second report reveals new evidence of children facing serious abuse and neglect and loss of language to the extent that one person describes Tibetan children in his area as "like kids raised in a foreign country". Parents unable to parent or protect their children are prevented from helping them when they're sick, are unable to intervene to stop abuse and are not even allowed to decide what they can do when they're home on vacation. As well, children are experiencing alienation that is leading to deep psychological and emotional harm.

Recently, we received an account from a former student that speaks to the extent of both routine abuse and extreme violence that children in the schools face. A monk until his parents were forced to send him to boarding school describes how difficult it was to be away from home, especially in grades 1 and 2, and constantly missing his parents' home and having to be responsible for everything on his own.

He said, "When it came to bullying and punishment, the environment was quite severe. Injuries such as broken hands, fractured fingers, and bruised backs were common. Over time students began to normalize this treatment and rarely told their parents. It was so widespread that no single incident stands out—there were simply too many."

Eventually this child and several others tried to escape from the boarding school and return to the monastery, but they were caught by police, taken to a police station, beaten and tortured with an electric device before being returned to the boarding school.

Our report highlights many other cases of abuse, including children being beaten for wearing Buddhist protection cords around their necks; for saying prayers; and children becoming deaf after being hit too many times on their ears and their heads. Also, we've documented multiple cases of suicide, attempted suicide and death because of abuse and neglect.

The Canadian former UN special rapporteur on minority issues called this system of schooling "an existential threat for Tibetans" and said that he is not afraid to use the words "cultural genocide".

He said, “I want to emphasize this is massive...massive [not just] in scale, but massive in terms of the grave violations of the human rights of children and their families, and the individuals involved, to a scale which is actually almost inconceivable....”

Canada should investigate sanctions and put visa restrictions on Chinese officials who are designing or implementing these policies that are intended to erase Tibetan identity and also on the authorities at the schools where physical abuse and negligence are known to be taking place. With China's upcoming review by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Canada needs to work with like-minded governments to increase pressure on Beijing to abolish the colonial boarding school system and to guarantee access to culturally and linguistically appropriate education for Tibetan children while they live at home.

Thank you.

• (1625)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

The time was very well respected.

I would like to invite Mr. Gyal Lo to take the floor for two minutes, please.

**Gyal Lo (Tibet Specialist and Educational Sociologist, Tibet Action Institute):** Thank you, Chair.

Today I plan to give follow-up testimony on what is happening to Tibetan children through China's colonial boarding schools in Tibet.

In 2016 my two grandnieces were sent to a colonial boarding preschool. After three months, they both became strangers at home. Let me share my personal experience with those two grandnieces.

One year before, when I was visiting my home, those two kids jumped on me without hesitation. But in late November 2016, after just three months, my brother asked me to come home and check on the cause of the change in my two grandnieces. I went to the school gate to pick them up. The first time they gave me eye contact, but then there was no more emotional exchange. When I took them home, they did not exchange any emotion with their grandparents or parents. During dinner time, they were silent. They kept their distance from family members. It seemed they had not already lost their ability to engage in conversation with their family members, but at the same time, they seemed uncomfortable. They were starting to feel uncomfortable sharing the same identity with their parents and family members.

That's where I see serious change. One, the lost language means the cultural genocide starts with them, from home. The second part is the racial genocide. I can see that it's not physical but cultural. They start rejecting or hesitating to share a common identity with family members.

After 10 years, the kids who have been in boarding schools in Tibet start criticizing their family members who are not able to speak Chinese Mandarin. That's a serious shift in a generation, because those boarding school policies are implemented across Tibet as part of a compulsory education.

**The Chair:** Is it possible to wrap it up, please? We've exceeded the time. You can go for a few more seconds.

**Gyal Lo:** Okay.

Since last year, schools have had preschoolers spying on their parents: Who emphasizes the mother tongue when you come home from boarding school? The kids report to the school, which then communicates with the local government. The local government then puts political pressure on their parents. That's how they circulate the pressure—by cutting off the language of the home between the children and their parents.

**The Chair:** Thank you very much.

I would now like to invite Ms. Tenzin Choekyi to take the floor for five minutes.

The floor is yours.

**Tenzin Choekyi (Senior Researcher, Tibet Watch):** Thank you to the committee for their renewed attention on Tibet.

Three years ago at this hearing, I described the suppression of Tibetan language worsening since 2021, with the ban on informal Tibetan language classes and closure of Tibetan-led schools, the replacement of Tibetan textbooks with Chinese, the detention of teachers and students, and the promotion of Putonghua, or standardized Mandarin Chinese, in preschool kindergartens.

Today, the situation has deteriorated significantly into accelerated legalized assimilation to create China's Tibetans in a Chinese nation, or *Zhonghua minzu*. As of March this year, these pre-existing practices are protected under the law on promoting ethnic unity and progress.

Since the last hearing, one of the most alarming precedents was the ban on even optional Tibetan language classes. In Kardze prefecture, a secret notification issued in September 2023 banned Tibetan language classes in all middle to high secondary schools. Teachers and students were warned that sharing this information would result in punishment.

This systemic erasure of language, or linguicide, now extends to universities.

Refugees reported to us at Tibet Watch that from 2023 onwards, plans were under way to abolish the separate status of Tibetan studies departments in several universities. The plan is to merge five ethnic groups—Han, Yi, Tibetan, Uyghurs and Mongolians—in a single department with all instruction conducted in Chinese, and students required to sit for exams and submit their theses in Chinese.

A refugee told us that both teachers and students must prepare for it.

Another one said that now it's over; all exams and final theses must now be written in Chinese, leaving no space whatsoever for the Tibetan language.

A third refugee told us that in late 2020, in Dzorge county, nearly 80 young monks were locked up for two months in an empty classroom for “thought transformation”, with no teaching or family contact. After that ordeal, many quit being monks. Some of them told that refugee that it was impossible to stay a monk.

In some areas of Tibet, children are barred from even entering religious institutions. Those who can are children recognized as *tulku*, or reincarnations of Tibetan Buddhist leaders, but they are also groomed with party ideology and education in the Chinese language for political indoctrination.

Some children have suffered more and are also the strongest: children of jailed protesters, children of those who burned alive in self-immolation protests, children of displaced farmers and nomads, child witnesses to police killings and a seven-year-old boy we interviewed who was slapped, beaten and jailed for over seven months for trying to escape to India.

Those are children whose innocence, whose need for love and compassion, was robbed by the Chinese state after the 2008 Tibetan uprising in Tibet. We cannot forget their childhood, even if they are now adults. The Tibet they have seen forcibly transformed leaves no space for their memory, not even for the language their names belong to.

In 2024, after one of the last remaining Tibetan-led schools was forcibly shut on graduation day, the school founder urged against despair and advised to pray for a better fortune for education in the next life. Geshe Jigme Gyaltzen wrote online that “Impermanence is indeed impermanence”, and requested everyone to continue shouldering their own responsibilities. That a school founder’s final words offered rebirth as the only path forward tells us what has been lost in this lifetime for an entire generation in Tibet.

In July this year, the ethnic unity law takes effect, but Canada can take action against it. This committee can honour the Tibetan language against China’s linguicide in its education system.

I urge all members of this committee to support a motion honouring April 30 as Tibetan language day. Government recognition now carries urgent significance for the Tibetan written language that unites Tibetans as a distinct people. It was originally initiated in Tibet in 2017 as Tibetan calligraphy day—a date chosen to reflect the four vowels and thirty letters in Tibetan.

Members of the Tibetan refugee community here in Canada call Canada their second home.

• (1630)

Recognizing the Tibetan language affirms its value as part of Canada’s cultural diversity.

**The Chair:** Can you wrap it up, please? The time is up.

**Tenzin Choekyi:** By honouring this day, Canada would stand with strength and dignity alongside the Tibetan people, even after over seven decades of Chinese colonization.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Now, I would like to invite Ms. Chemi Lhamo to take the floor for five minutes.

• (1635)

**Chemi Lhamo (Tibetan-Canadian Human Rights Activist, As an Individual):** Thank you, Chair.

Picture a six-year-old—a child in grade 1 or maybe even in kindergarten. Now imagine that very young child living in a boarding school, going through a shockingly rigorous 12-hour schedule day after day, separated from their parents and family, having to study in a completely foreign language and often facing extreme abuse.

This six-year-old may get to go home on the weekends, but cannot go to any houses of worship nor speak their own language—their own mother tongue—even to their parents. Any engagement in religious practice is not allowed, and when they return to school, they’re asked to tell the teachers if the parents are breaking the rules.

This is the reality of a six-year-old child inside Tibet. Tibetan parents have no choice but to send their children to these residential boarding schools. If they refuse, they will be harassed, threatened and face imprisonment.

Now, I’ll go to the reality here in Canada.

The Chinese government has passed a law that openly declares a war on anyone who is not Chinese and tries to maintain their distinct identity. At the same time, the Chinese government has stolen approximately one million Tibetan children from their families and placed them in these boarding schools, where they’re facing severe political indoctrination, and physical and psychological abuse and neglect.

Yet, the Government of Canada has back-seated the issue of human rights in the recent dealings with the PRC, namely with the Prime Minister’s visit to China and the Chinese foreign minister’s subsequent visit to Canada. It has to be said that this strategy seems short-sighted and flawed.

It is not megaphone diplomacy that we’re seeking. It’s really a reality check of Xi Jinping’s predominant interest, which is really to consolidate and expand control at all costs. That’s not a trustworthy trading partner for Canada.

Michael Kovrig explained this quite well in his Foreign Affairs article. By subordinating security and human rights to immediate commercial gain, these governments—Canada and our allies—are exposing their citizens to foreign interference, arbitrary detention and transnational repression with diminishing prospects for recourse. This subordination has very real consequences here in Canada for us, whether it is the experiences of attacks, such as the death threats and rape threats that I received when I was running for student leadership at the University of Toronto Scarborough campus, or threats to dissidents like Dr. Gyal Lo, who represents probably the single greatest threat to the CCP and its hidden policies of erasure, which are only now coming to light.

Tibetans know all too well that when we are dealing with the Chinese government, the road of accommodation leads only to further accommodations and further concessions that will be detrimental to our Canadian economy, our own citizens, our institutions, and the most vulnerable and marginalized people suffering under Xi Jinping's rule.

Despite that, Tibetans inside Tibet have defied all odds in their fight to protect all that they hold dear, especially their language, culture and Buddhist traditions. They face the real and devastating consequences for their resistance, yet they do not stop. All they need from us is our moral courage and support in action, now more than ever.

I truly do believe in Canada, which has the responsibility and also the opportunity to pursue a principled, realistic foreign policy approach to China that really balances economic and national security while upholding our own core values. This begins by drawing a red line when it comes to the abuse and incarceration of children in a residential school system designed to erase their language, culture and identity. It's far too similar to our own shameful Canadian residential school system.

The colonial boarding school system inside Tibet must be stopped. I ask this committee, Minister of Foreign Affairs Anand and Prime Minister Carney to use every available parliamentary and foreign policy mechanism available to condemn and oppose these schools. This could begin with the Prime Minister ensuring that China's colonial boarding schools and the new ethnic erasure law are condemned in the upcoming G7 leader statement this month. It could be ensuring that Canada is on record with a report, press release or statement from this very committee, ahead of China's rights of the child review at the UN, calling for the colonial boarding schools to be abolished and for Tibetan children to be able to go to school in their own language and live in their own homes. Otherwise, China won't stop.

That six-year-old child I described earlier, who is forced to sing Chinese nursery rhymes and then cries themselves to sleep very softly—

• (1640)

**The Chair:** Can you wrap it up please?

**Chemi Lhamo:** They cry themselves softly to sleep because they're afraid that someone will hear them. The children who miss their parents and have no one to explain to them the meaning of

their own name, where they were born or who they are as Tibetans, are counting on your action.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** Thank you for your introduction.

Now we will go to the round of questions and answers.

I would like to start by inviting Madam Kronis to take the floor for seven minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

**Tamara Kronis (Nanaimo—Ladysmith, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

Thank you so much to all of the witnesses who are here today, and those who have joined us virtually, for sharing your experiences, which have been incredibly traumatizing.

I just want to make sure that the people who are watching this here at home understand what we are dealing with.

Ms. Lhamo, are these schools optional?

**Chemi Lhamo:** No.

**Tamara Kronis:** At what age does the school start at?

**Chemi Lhamo:** Thanks to Tibet Action Institute's work, and the reports they have done, the first report reported that it was ages from six to 18 onwards. Then the new report, in which Dr. Gyal Lo has been instrumental in exposing the hidden policies, says children are as young as four and five years old. These are hidden from the international community.

**Tamara Kronis:** Dr. Lo, based on your research, what are the goals of these schools? Let me be very specific. Will there be any Tibetans if these schools are successful?

**Gyal Lo:** It's clear, with my almost nearly 30 years of experience with Tibetan education inside Tibet, that they want to completely erase the culture and the language capacity that possibly could empower the Tibetan people to resist in future the Chinese rule.

**Tamara Kronis:** What will the identity of a graduate of these schools be? Will it be Tibetan, or will it be Chinese?

**Gyal Lo:** China carried out three types of boarding schools inside Tibet. The previous boarding school is almost 47 years old, and the result of that type of school is they turn our young generation to fit neither Tibetan society nor Chinese society. They are situated now as cheap labourers who are working in many Chinese cities now.

The second type of boarding school we haven't reported yet.

The third type of boarding school is way more serious and dangerous. This is a colonial boarding preschool for four-to six-year-old kids that's completely, as I mentioned previously, rebuilding the Chinese culturally based psychological foundation.

The psychologists already did the research. Their finding is that ages four to six is the key period for informing the psychological foundation, so the Chinese intentionally target kids ages four to six, and they put them into the boarding preschools. That's very clear.

**Tamara Kronis:** Is the intention that when these children grow up they will no longer identify as Tibetan?

**Gyal Lo:** Yes.

**Tamara Kronis:** Then there will be no Tibet. If these schools are successful, if China is successful with these schools, will there be a Tibet?

**Gyal Lo:** As I mentioned, in the future, if we let them continue this policy, then within 15 or 20 years those kids who've been in the colonial boarding preschool, who were socialized, won't be able to practise the language and culture. Even worse, the children won't want to practise the language and culture. That is a clear indication that there won't be any Tibetan identity with them.

**Tamara Kronis:** Ms. Tethong, will there be a Tibet at the end of this journey?

**Lhadon Tethong:** There will be. It will be in spite of the Chinese authorities. The foundation of Buddhist culture and the mindset of Tibetans are what I think you understand as embodied in the Dalai Lama and Buddhism of non-violence, compassion, inner work, meditation, mindfulness and all of these incredible discoveries now coming from Tibetan culture. These kids won't have that foundation.

They'll still be Tibetan, though. In the end, I think they won't have those features. They will have command of the Chinese language and culture to some degree, but, no matter what, in China you're still an outsider. All these people who aren't Han are absolutely outsiders.

In terms of what will happen, I think the future we're looking at is one where these Tibetans, Uyghurs, southern Mongolians and you name it are going to have an intense idea of nationalism as a blueprint from the Chinese state. They won't be accepted into mainstream Chinese society. They will have to search for their Tibetan identity, and there will probably be an intense amount of resistance in the not-too-distant future.

Tibet, as we know it, faces damage but not beyond repair. I absolutely do not believe that. Tibetans are strong. People are strong. We've seen this in other places.

• (1645)

**Tamara Kronis:** My question was about China's goals. What does China want to do with these folks?

**Lhadon Tethong:** Ultimately, with Tibetans and with everyone, it is to eliminate Tibetan identity, to eliminate the Uyghur problem and to eliminate the southern Mongolian problem so that there is nothing left. It is genocide.

**Tamara Kronis:** To what degree are these children now being indoctrinated and being made to deny their identity and their history? What is the forced labour situation? Are the things they produce finding their way to places like Canada, and what can we do about it?

**Lhadon Tethong:** To the schools question, the political indoctrination is intense, even for the youngest children. Beyond that, I think life for the kids in the schools is to the point where children.... We've had so many people describe this to us. The schools are more like a prison. It's not about education; it is about indoctrination.

For all the border regions of the People's Republic of China, this is a threat for the rest of the world. This is a geostrategic question as well. This is not just about Tibetan culture and language, though, of course, that's of core importance to us.

**Tamara Kronis:** That's what I'm trying to get at.

**Chemi Lhamo:** I just want to quickly add to that.

**The Chair:** Please do so in a few seconds. The time is up.

**Chemi Lhamo:** When their children are being taken away, young parents face depression. We've seen cases. Parents are even moving near the school to be able to see their children. Mind you, when there's forced labour added to this, what are the parents supposed to do to make a living? They're being shipped off to places where we haven't even started tracking the numbers. I hope we get to come back to tell you about the reality of that as well.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

Mr. Zuberi, please take the floor for seven minutes.

**Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds—Dollard, Lib.):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*Translation*]

Thank you to all the witnesses for joining us.

[*English*]

We saw a photo earlier from Ms. Gyatso. It showed very young children in uniform with mock weapons.

Ms. Tethong, you also reminded us about Tibetan values of non-violence and compassion. This photo of such young children is such an affront. It could be in any society. What message is being sent through this type of imagery, and why is it going out there? Is it deliberate to intimidate the Tibetan people? What do you take out of this?

**The Chair:** I'm sorry. I would like to remind all of the witnesses that showing a photo is not allowed in the subcommittee.

Thank you.

**Lhadon Tethong:** I think it's state power. It's a show of force for Tibetans, even with these tiny children, but it's a show for the world, really. Fundamentally, I think the Chinese Communist Party and Xi Jinping are showing us who they are time and time again, and we should believe them when they are treating these tiny little children to think in this hyper nationalistic way and hyper violent way.

Some of the curriculum materials we've seen—and we haven't seen many because it's so tightly controlled—show unbelievable hatred targeting certain populations, including Japan.

They're showing us who they are in the way that they treat these youngest, most vulnerable members of society. These are the ways that we are not the same in terms of our government and our open and free society versus the Chinese Communist Party ruling the PRC.

• (1650)

**Sameer Zuberi:** I often think of the advocacy that happens in the west, how it's clear it focuses on individual liberties and individual freedoms, and how that contrasts with the Government of China's approach, which is much more collective. How do we plead our case in a way that can convince the Chinese government and deciders to respect the freedoms and wills of people and show that it's not an affront to the collective the Chinese government cares so much about.

Do you have any thoughts on that?

**Chemi Lhamo:** First and foremost, we should be reminded that the Chinese government has to comply with international law, because it continues to be a player in the international community. If you do not want to play in the playground of democracies and free societies, then you can step out. China has consistently blurred the lines when it comes to being able to play while being determined that it wants to play by its own rules in the international community.

We've seen this time and time again in the United Nations. Right now, as we mentioned in the recommendations, China is actually a signatory of the child rights committee as well. They're due for a review. Here is a perfect opportunity for them. This is not us entering China and talking about their internal matters. We're talking about occupied nations like Tibet and talking about the rights of a child. We're talking about preventing a genocide from happening.

This Canadian government has already recognized the genocide against Uyghur people. We have known that the situations of the Uyghurs and the Tibetans are very similar. If that's the case, we actually, not even as Canadians but as humans and a part of this global society, have a responsibility to ensure that that is prevented.

**Sameer Zuberi:** You raised a very important point about the rights of the child and how China is a signatory and part of the international community and therefore must be respecting them.

If anybody would like to add to my question, feel free; otherwise, I'll continue on.

**Chemi Lhamo:** You can go ahead. I'll translate, if that's okay.

**Sameer Zuberi:** Could we pause the time for a moment while they're translating?

**Gyal Lo:** In terms of the argument between the individual and the collective, China is intentionally making no future for a collective of Tibet, but at the same time, they selectively provide good conditions for those who can follow them. This is not in the national interest of Tibet. It's about trying to fully part from Tibet. Several individuals are following them. Of course, I'm not denying this.

Concerning the collective future of Tibet, the majority of people are hoping and striving for the future of Tibet, not for the few individuals' future. For example, in the monastery, the Chinese government is offering a certificate for a lama. It's from a sociological term. It's called monastic agent. Any lama who accepts the Chinese government's certificate of the lama loses people's support on the ground. A lama who rejected the Chinese government's certificate of the lama gained support from the ground.

That struggle is already dividing the monastery. I call this the multi-functional institution in Tibetan society. They divide those. It's a live example. I can see it. Our people on the ground still wanted to maintain the Tibetan future, not the assimilated future.

• (1655)

**Chemi Lhamo:** I would add that it's who the collective is that we're referring to. Who does the collective include? It's only one Chinese supremacy identity above anyone and everyone. That's the collective that they supposedly represent. Then also, the impact and the influence would be all of Asia if we talk about it from a global perspective.

**Lhadon Tethong:** The Chinese people themselves.... We've seen it time and time again, most recently in the white paper revolution after the COVID lockdown—the zero-COVID measures—if you follow at all what is happening and what people are saying. It's this idea that the Chinese government has the collective best interests of the wider society at heart. I think what you see now, although it's difficult to get the information out of China in any way because they shut it down right away, is that more and more we hear that people can see very much that the government is so focused on all the outward-facing things that it's not taking care of the people themselves, and there's unrest.

**Sameer Zuberi:** Certainly. I would argue that the responsibility of every government is to ensure the well-being of one's people. That includes Tibetan people and every other minority that you mentioned. If there are psychological and also physical impacts leading potentially to suicide due to these forced residential schools, that is not taking care of the well-being of one's citizens and one's countrymen. It's counterproductive.

**The Chair:** Thank you, Mr. Zuberi.

I would like to invite Mr. Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe to take the floor for seven minutes, please.

[*Translation*]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you to the witnesses for joining us today for this important study.

Mr. Lo, what do you think are the main new findings in the 2025 report compared to what came out of the 2021 research? What major differences do you see between the two reports?

[English]

**Gyal Lo:** The major difference between the first report and the second report is that in the first report we were able to expose the boarding school as a colonial school, which we defined as having a great impact on the Tibetan civilization. In the second report, we were able to take it inside the boarding school to see what's happening, as my colleague Lhadon had mentioned. The curriculum excludes Tibetan culture and language in an extreme way. At the same time, it cuts off the two levels of the Tibetan knowledge system from the student. In the curriculum, in the textbook, it mentions history as a subject, but there's no part that's consistent with the Tibetan philosophy of education. As Tibetans, we emphasize the combination of wisdom and compassion. That's the fundamental approach of Tibetan education. What's happening in the school is they're educating and nurturing our children to have hatred.

For example, in the preschool reading material, we can see clearly there's a Chinese soldier fighting a Japanese soldier. It's nurturing in them hatred, not compassion. There's no concept of compassion in the classroom. There is no wisdom in the classroom. It's all about patriarchal ways of the CCP and Chinese culture. It's also anti-religious.

[Translation]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** There's something we haven't talked about enough yet today, which is how language is the basis for forming thought. This means that when a child loses their language, they automatically lose their identity. Tibetan thought comes first and foremost from the Tibetan language. We've seen it even here in Canada, where Ontario and Manitoba have banned French language teaching from schools. It led to a rapid assimilation of francophone populations in those provinces.

Isn't that exactly what you just told us? How can Canada not see that?

• (1700)

[English]

**Gyal Lo:** The language itself is a way to inform the way of thinking. If you lose language, then you're going to lose the way of thinking. The way of thinking that produces the culture and the knowledge system is where we can clearly see China completely shifting the deviating civilization or part of it. We can see it.

[Translation]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Ms. Lhamo, for some time now, you've been talking about the Carney government's new vision for Canada's relationship with China.

Canada had the residential schools system and, as I said, French language teaching in school was banned in some provinces. However, Canada has officially recognized Tibetan self-determination through a motion that I had the honour of sponsoring.

Despite all that, despite the reports we received from your teams, among others, we see Canada making diplomatic and trade rapprochements with China. How can this paradox be explained, given Canada's history? How can we explain that, knowing Canada's history in defending international human rights?

[English]

**Chemi Lhamo:** I want to re-emphasize that we live in a very complex world.

As Tibetan Buddhists, we were often told about interdependency and how everything comes from millions of causes and conditions. Even this moment that we get to share with you comes together because we were able to make our flight, because you all went to a vote and so forth.

Similarly, I think that, right now, the condition that we see and the steps we see the Canadian government taking... We're really trying to give you a warning. We know China really well. Time and time again, it has failed to deliver on any of the promises when it comes to human rights and improving their situation. We saw that in 2008, when it wanted the Beijing Olympics. The world turned a blind eye when it wanted to join the World Trade Organization.

I want to emphasize that we are very appreciative of Canada's leadership when it comes to this specific committee. Three years ago when we came, you delivered a report. We saw your recommendations, which echoed the United Nations' recommendations. That, again, encouraged us to continue to fight and continue to find the truth about the abuse and the neglect inside of these schools. That led to us finding out about the four- and five-year-olds. When we first came here in 2023, it was six- to 18-year-olds. Time and time again, I think that you folks have both the responsibility and an opportunity to act. It is disappointing to see the direction in which the Canadian government is heading.

It is not too late. There is so much time for recourse and to take the right direction that is balanced with our priorities, our national security and a rights value alignment with the Canadian government.

Thank you.

[Translation]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you.

I'll continue on this subject in the next round, because I won't have enough of the 15 seconds I have left.

**The Chair:** Okay.

Ms. Vandenberg, you have the floor for five minutes.

[English]

**Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West—Nepean, Lib.):** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I know that you have testified here before. Three years ago, I was here. It is heartbreaking that three years later, you are reporting not only that this is still continuing, but that it is getting worse. I certainly hope that, by having this hearing, we might be able to make some difference.

My first question is for Tenzin Choekyi.

You mentioned very briefly in your opening remarks that there was an additional change since the last time; they're using the legal system. Could you elaborate on the kinds of laws that have been passed since you were last here?

**Tenzin Choekyi:** Yes. The key legal change is what was announced in March of this year, which my co-panellist emphasized. It's the ethnic unity law. This will take effect in July of this year. The ethnic unity law encapsulates everything—all of the assimilationist policies—that has been under way for many decades, especially in the last two decades.

On this ethnic unity law, the members of the European Parliament already passed a resolution in April of this year. They've called on the Chinese government to repeal the law. They have also warned of the severe consequences on EU-China relations if this law comes into effect. They have also called on the member states of the European Union to suspend their extradition treaties with China and called on the European Council to impose sanctions on the Chinese officials responsible for this ethnic unity law.

In Tibet, even before this law was codified, the Chinese government used a Tibetan staple food, tsampa—barley flour—which Tibetans identify with as being distinctive of Tibet. It's barley flour that grows at high altitude in Tibet. The Chinese government used tsampa as an example to say that, like all ethnic minorities integrating and becoming united, Tibetans too should be rounded up like barley flour and moulded together. This is the level of horrific disrespect that the Chinese government has displayed with signboards in the capital city of Lhasa in Tibet, using this staple food we've identified ourselves with since our ancestors to say that we are all one nationality. Now this has been codified into the ethnic unity law.

There has been one major change, especially in kindergarten, that is a pilot program. In Nagqu, in Tibet's so-called autonomous region, the Chinese government has put into place a pilot program of deploying 13 veterans in schools, and it includes kindergartens as well. These veterans are reported in Chinese state media for teaching discipline, motivation and air drills if there is an earthquake or a natural disaster, but what this pilot program is hiding underneath is showing young children that veterans are their examples.

Even beyond this new pilot program, to children from preschool and everywhere in the society, and ever since the Chinese Communist Party celebrated its 100th anniversary, they are propagandizing red education. They are propagandizing national defence awareness and drills, and all of that in the Chinese language.

These are major changes.

• (1705)

**Anita Vandenbeld:** Thank you. It sounds like there's a codification, almost. Where it may have been subtle and hidden, it's now quite overt that the end goal really is to eliminate the different cultures.

I see you nodding, and I wonder if that is because I see that the Uyghurs, Tibetans and other minorities are all being treated the same way in this sense.

We spoke last time about the fact that you're learning.... Like what happens with the Tibetan children, they learn from that and then use that with other groups. I wonder if you could talk to me a bit about how that is happening.

I'll go to Ms. Tethong first.

**The Chair:** You have just a few seconds to answer, please, because we have already gone over time.

**Lhadon Tethong:** I'm sorry; what was the question?

**The Chair:** It's for the next round.

Excuse me, Anita. You'll probably give her a chance later.

Now I would like to invite Mr. Davies to take the floor for five minutes.

**Fred Davies (Niagara South, CPC):** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you so much to all the witnesses who gave presentations today.

I've said this before in this committee: This was not my natural interest when I became an elected member of Parliament. My background was in finance. My party put me on this committee, and I'm really grateful to have had the opportunity to learn from my colleagues and everyone who has presented. I've learned so much from everybody around this table, and I really hope that Canadians get a chance to listen to and watch the presentations here today.

One of the things that bothers me, as I have learned through this process over the last year—particularly when it comes to China—is that it seems we've hit a tipping point. In my view, it seems to me now that we are willing to sacrifice human rights and the challenges that you face—the challenges faced by Tibetans, Mongolians, Uyghurs—for economic prosperity.

Our traditional adherence to human rights and the values that we Canadians have espoused for years at the United Nations and around the world mean that nations play well in the sandbox. I'm not sure which one of you said earlier that we play by the rules, but we're not playing by the rules. We are now going to be allowing goods from China that have been made by slave labour and are highly subsidized by China. Where do we draw the line? At what point do you stand up and say, "We're sorry, Canada. You're not actually doing what you promised to do"?

I'm going to ask Ms. Gyatso for a response on that, because I continually see that we're always trying, but we're willing to sacrifice for economic gain, and that bothers me.

• (1710)

**Tencho Gyatso:** I think that is one area where the small Tibetan exile community has been working across countries and nations. There are 7.5 million Tibetans inside Tibet, but outside of Tibet, we are 150,000 spread across 27 countries. People are surprised to hear that, because they think it's such a small community, plus one Dalai Lama.

What we're trying to do is build coalitions. When western countries speak of their values in a coordinated fashion, it puts China on the defensive. Otherwise, China gets very emboldened, especially in its UN status and other fields. When China is up for review on children's rights, that is a time when, with the leadership of the Canadians, we can bring together many host countries to speak in one voice.

Again, the new ethnic unity and progress law that some of my colleagues have spoken about is a space where it will be good to show a united front. I know the Germans are putting out a report, and the European Parliament is, and many others, so I think those—

**Fred Davies:** I'm sorry to interrupt you, but I have limited time. I'm really interested to know what your recommendation is. Perhaps, Ms. Tethong, you can give me your view on what the trade-off is.

To me, it's like we're trying to push rope uphill. It's an impossible task. We want to defend human rights. We want to be your advocate. We have talked a lot about transnational repression, and Ms. Lhamo, you've been subjected to it here in Canada. As one of my colleagues would say, is the juice worth the squeeze? Are we not doing the right thing by allowing our trade to continue to expand while turning a blind eye to human rights violations?

**Lhadon Tethong:** Having done this work now for 30 years, I think what we are clear about from the Tibetan side is that it's not either-or. This idea that you could pursue only the trade and not talk human rights or that you don't pursue the trade and then you can... The key is that it's both. Especially in this moment when the world is realigning and is in this difficult position and all the countries together are in difficult positions when it comes to trade and tariffs and whatnot, this is the time to, I believe, push for both, because China needs the world too. China is the target of all these economic challenges that the world is facing. China's facing them too. There's an opportunity for like-minded nations to work together and not give up all this ground.

One of the things the Chinese government makes people, nations and governments believe is that either you say nothing or you say everything, and then we're not going to be friends. It's just not true. We must push for human rights. We must push for real action. We have to hold fast to these values while engaging with China, perhaps more now than ever before, because we can see how intent this regime is, especially under Xi Jinping's rule, to change the world order.

• (1715)

**The Chair:** Thank you.

[Translation]

Mr. Brunelle-Duceppe, you have the floor for five minutes.

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Lhamo, you appeared before the committee in February 2023. One of the things you said at that time was that after the 2021 report came out, a lot of people asked you why the world didn't know about residential schools. People asked you how it could have gone unnoticed.

Do you feel the same thing's happening with the new report, or do you feel it's attracting more attention than the last one?

[English]

**Chemi Lhamo:** First and foremost, the international community was not aware, but when these were exposed, I believe that the international community continued to stay silent. That's why the abuse and the neglect continues to worsen. The Chinese government feels so emboldened to not only do this inside of Tibet and occupied borders but also extend their repression here on Tibetan Canadians.

What has changed? From the international community's response, it has been positive. We've seen UN special rapporteurs, more than eight of them, speaking out. When Canada leads a side event at the UN, more than 17 countries show up to show solidarity. This is a response to the Chinese government. We want to see that leadership continue from Canada to be able to continue to show that Canada will stand on the right grounds of history.

[Translation]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** I have a question for Mr. Lo or Ms. Tethong.

Internationally, people may be aware of the situation, but they remain silent about it. The average person isn't necessarily aware of this.

Are the Chinese living in Beijing or Shanghai aware of what's happening in Tibet? Do they have that information? That's a question we often ask ourselves when it comes to the actions of their own government.

[English]

**Gyal Lo:** Understand that not all of them know the situation in Tibet, what their government has done in Tibet. People are aware about the Tibet issue. We see their nationalist idea. Some of them say, "Oh, we shouldn't act this way." In 2017, before Xi Jinping took the second term of the position, during a dinner with Chinese scholars, some of the scholars said, "Oh, we can give general autonomy to TAR but if you give the entire Tibet general autonomy, it's going to be too big." They can talk about that kind of topic.

In October 2018, when we were together, throughout our conversation, they could also say, "Hey, Gyal, if the Dalai Lama came to Beijing, would you like to go to Beijing to pay homage to him?" I said yes. If he were able to come to Beijing, that would mean that the political issue is being solved. Why not? One hundred per cent of the people would go there. We can talk about that kind of stuff. Other people, when you mention His Holiness, just immediately politicize and say, "You're a separatist." That's the change. We think Chinese people are different.

[*Translation*]

**Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe:** It was also said early on that these actions weren't just about Tibet and China, but also about the region itself, and even the world. To what extent is Tibet being used as a lab to see what could happen to Uyghurs and other cultural minorities on China's current official territory? To what extent is Tibet still the starting point for these experiences, pardon the expression?

• (1720)

[*English*]

**The Chair:** Give a quick answer, please.

**Gyal Lo:** Since 2018, Xi Jinping has stabilized his second term. He made a radical change. The first change was that, previously, they promoted cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity in China as a multi-flower garden. Since 2018, they say, "Now we have shifted to the monolingual, monocultural, mono-ethnic country." They're clear that they start philosophically against cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity. Under that framework, China has produced multiple levels of the policy on the ground regarding that framework.

**The Chair:** Thank you.

In the name of the chair, the subcommittee members, staff and interpreters, I would like to thank all our witnesses for their testimony at this meeting today about Tibetan children placed in schools administered by the People's Republic of China.

Thanks again for being with us.

We will suspend the meeting while we move in camera.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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