

## Facts and Figures

During the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976, China fully or partially destroyed 6,000 Tibetan temples and monasteries.

As the first city of Tibet, Lhasa was particularly affected by destruction. In the early months of 1990 alone, China demolished more than ten percent of central Lhasa's then remaining Tibetan housing.

In 1990, China displaced 3500 Tibetans by eradicating 50 traditional Tibetan residential compounds in the heart of Lhasa. From 1989 through 1993, more than one-half of the older stone homes in the Barkhor, the central area of Lhasa, were demolished.

## Pretexts

Communist China's founders considered religion to be "the opium of the people." In China, this belief informs the policy of controlling religious activities. In Tibet, this control is manifest in religious property destruction. To ensure the irreversibility and complete control of the process, reconstruction of monasteries requires permission from the Chinese authorities.

Property destruction has often fallen under the rubric of "development." In the period of 1980–2000, the "Lhasa Development Plan" facilitated widespread destruction of Tibetan structures, and the complete obliteration of entire sections of the city.

## Other State Tools

Discrimination against Tibetans is organized and pervasive. While Tibetan leaders are granted roles in the administration, they are, in fact, subordinated to Beijing and its representatives. The concept of autonomy espoused in the TAR, and the Tibetan regions not under Chinese jurisdiction, is stripped of its meaning. Everywhere, the Chinese civil and military authorities limit Tibetans' freedom of movement, restrict their right to choose where to live and deprive them of meaningful participation in planning and development decisions. Similar to Israel, a system of residence permits is employed to control the Tibetan population and limit their mobility. For Tibetans wishing to move to Lhasa and other towns, the task of acquiring the documents necessary to do so is made extremely difficult.

Discrimination in Tibet also has a cultural dimension; targeting traditional Tibetan culture per se and "Sinicising" the Tibetan landscape. The "development" of Lhasa held no regard for traditional Tibetan architecture, and used a Chinese style in most of the new quarters. These new quarters are predominately populated by settlers and enjoy a much larger range of public facilities. The discriminatory distribution of housing funds has caused massive discrepancies in the standard of living between Tibetan and Chinese inhabitants of the same city. In new dwellings built in redeveloped areas following demolitions, families in China obtain an average size of 59m<sup>2</sup>, whereas rehoused Tibetan families in Lhasa obtain under 29m<sup>2</sup>.

## Tibetan Government-in-exile

In 1959, His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama left, with hundreds of Tibetans, to escape Chinese repression, and is living in exile in Dharamsala, northern India. Since then, he has worked to support the education of Tibetan refugees, and has developed all the attributes of a State and a political regime. The Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) was established as the continuation of Independent Tibet's Government. The Tibetan community in exile has a Head of State (His Holiness the Dalai Lama), a Supreme Justice Commission (judiciary), the Kashag or Cabinet (executive) and the Tibetan Parliament-in-exile (legislative), as well as a Constitution.

This society in exile represents hope for many Tibetans, and allows them to nourish their culture and traditions. The Tibetans in exile also represent a threat for China, which remains very reluctant to negotiate with any of their representatives. The CTA has representation in many countries and informs the international community about the situation in Tibet. For the Chinese authorities, the Dalai Lama and his so-called "clique" are "splittists," despite their claims for autonomy, rather than external independence.

Tibetans inside Tibet who publicly support autonomy or independence face persecution and the repression of their basic human rights.

## The Right to Adequate Housing in International Law

The UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing defines it as “the right of every woman, man, youth and child to gain and sustain a secure home and community in which to live in peace and dignity”. General Comment No 4 of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has recognized that the right to housing should not be interpreted in a narrow, as merely having a roof over one’s head for example. Rather, it includes: security of tenure; availability of services, materials, facilities and infrastructure; affordability; habitability; accessibility; location; and cultural adequacy.

HLRN has deepened this definition and added the following entitlements: access to environmental goods; freedom from dispossession; information and capacity building; participation and self-expression; return, rehabilitation, compensation, restitution and resettlement; safe environment; security and privacy; land; and water.

Most recently, the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court recognized extensive destruction carried out unlawfully and wantonly as a war crime.

