

GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
**Human Rights Council**  
Fifty-Sixth Regular Session  
June 26, 2024

### **Item 3: ID With the Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression**

*Statement delivered by Kai Mueller on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights*

Mr. President,

We welcome the report by the Special Rapporteur on journalists in exile (A/HRC/56/53).

Two examples illustrate the Chinese authorities' disregard of freedom of opinion and expression.

First, last February authorities detained hundreds of Tibetans peacefully expressing their opposition to the hydropower project in the Derge (Dege) county which will destroy several ancient and culturally important Tibetan monasteries, as well as submerge entire villages. This will displace thousands of Tibetans whose lives are deeply connected to the area.<sup>1</sup>

Most detainees were eventually released. However, information regarding several community leaders believed still incarcerated is unavailable. These leaders appear to have been detained solely for peacefully raising concerns, constituting a clear violation of their right to freedom of expression, assembly, association.

Second, the detention of Tibetan singer Gyegjom Dorjee. Dorjee was arrested due to a song in which he lamented the absence of the Dalai Lama and likened Tibetans to "birds in a cage".<sup>2</sup> His case is emblematic of China's routine use of vague laws to punish Tibetan artists and activists who use their voices to express criticism of China's policies.

The international community must demand that the Chinese government uphold the right to freedom of expression, assembly and association, and ensure that all Tibetans can peacefully raise concerns, whether that be a specific so-called development projects or broader criticism, without fear of reprisals.

Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> *Tibetans in Eastern Tibet Protest Hydropower Station and their relocation*, International Campaign for Tibet, 16 February 2024, <https://savetibet.org/tibetans-in-eastern-tibet-protest-hydropower-station-and-their-relocation/>.

<sup>2</sup> *China must release Tibetan singer Gegjom from unjust detention*, Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy, 25 March 2024, <https://tchrd.org/china-must-release-tibetan-singer-gegjom-from-unjust-detention/>.