

# Statement of the Indian Government on Tibet XX<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the United Nations

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As representatives are aware, for the past fifteen years the question of Tibet has been, from time to time, under the consideration of the United Nations. It was first raised here in 1950 at the fifth session of the General Assembly, but it could not be placed on the agenda. In fact, my country opposed its inclusion at that time because we were assured by China that it was anxious to settle the problem by peaceful means. However, instead of improving, the situation in Tibet began to worsen, and since then the question has come up several times before the General Assembly of the United Nations. Our delegation participated in the discussion at the fourteenth session, in 1959, and although we abstained from voting we made it clear that, because of our close historical, cultural and religious ties with the Tibetans, we could not but be deeply moved and affected by what was happening in that region. We hoped against hope that wiser counsel would prevail among the Chinese and that there would be an end to the sufferings of the people of Tibet.

However, the passage of time has completely belied our hopes. As the days pass, the situation becomes worse and cries out for the attention of all mankind. As we know, ever since Tibet came under the strangle-hold of China, the Tibetans have been subjected to a continuous and increasing ruthlessness which has few parallels in the annals of the world. In the name of introducing „democratic reforms“ and fighting a „counter-revolution“, the Chinese have indulged in the worst kind of genocide and the suppression of a minority race.

To begin with, we in India were hopeful that, as contacts between the Chinese and the Tibetans under the changed set-up became closer and more intimate, more harmonious relationship would emerge. In fact, in 1956, as a result of the long talks with Mr. Chou En-lai, the Chinese Premier, my late Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, felt confident that a mutually agreeable adjustment between the two peoples would be established. Even the Dalai Lama expressed a similar hope to our late Prime Minister, but, as subsequent events have proved, the Chinese never believed in living up to their assurances. They promised autonomy to Tibet and the safeguarding of its cultural and religious heritage and traditions but, as the International Commission of Jurists in its June 1959 report on Tibet has emphasized, they attempted on the contrary, „to destroy the national, ethnical, racial and religious group of Tibetans as such by killing members of the group and by causing serious bodily and mental harm to members of the group.<sup>1</sup>

The world is aware that it was in protest against oppression and enslavement of Tibet that the Dalai Lama, who is held in the highest esteem by all Tibetans and, indeed, respected as a spiritual leader by all Indians, fled from Lhasa and took asylum in India. Today, there are thousands of Tibetan refugees in my country - approximately 50,000 - who have left their hearths and homes and fled from their country to join their leader and seek refuge in India. The flight of these refugees still continues, for the Chinese have transformed Tibet into a vast military camp, where the indigenous Tibetans are made to live like hewers of wood and drawers of water.

Although the relationship between Tibet and India is centuries old and has flourished all through the ages in all its manifestations, whether religious, cultural or economic, we have always taken care not to make that relationship a political problem. In recent years, despite the fact the Dalai Lama and thousands of his Tibetan followers have come to our land, and despite the fact that China has turned Tibet itself into a base for aggression against our northern borders, we have not exploited the situation. Undoubtedly, our national sentiments are now and again aroused as a result of the atrocities and cruelties committed by the Chinese against Tibetans, but we have exercised the greatest caution, for we believe that what should concern all of us is the much larger human problem, namely, the plight of these good and innocent people who are being victimized merely because they are different, ethnically and culturally, from the Chinese.

Here I feel that it would not be out of place to put before this Assembly the following facts which stand out stubbornly and irrefutably in connection with Chinese policy in Tibet:

1. The autonomy guaranteed in the Sino-Tibetan Agreement of 1951 has from the beginning remained a dead letter;
2. Through increasing application of military force, the Chinese have in fact obliterated the autonomous character of Tibet;
3. There has been arbitrary confiscation of properties belonging to monasteries and individuals and Tibetan Government institutions;
4. Freedom of religion is denied to the Tibetans, and Buddhism is being suppressed, together with the system of priests, monasteries, shrines and monuments;
5. The Tibetans are allowed no freedom of information or expression;
6. There has also been carried out a systematic policy of killing, imprisonment and deportation of those Tibetans who have been active in their opposition to Chinese rule;
7. The Chinese have forcibly transferred large numbers of Tibetan children to China in order to denationalize them, to indoctrinate them in Chinese ideology and to make them forget their own Tibetan religion, culture and way of life; and
8. There has also been a large-scale attempt to bring Han Chinese into Tibet, and thereby make Tibet Chinese and overwhelm the indigenous people with a more numerous Chinese population.

These atrocities, carried out ruthlessly, with utter disregard for Tibetan sentiments and aspirations, and in complete violation of universally recognized human rights, add up to a frightful programme of the suppression of a whole people. It surpasses anything that colonialists have done in the past to the peoples whom they ruled and enslaved. That is why the United Nations General Assembly took note of the situation in Tibet and passed two resolutions, one in 1959 and the other in 1961, deploring the denial of these human rights to the people of Tibet by the Chinese Government and appealing to it to restore those rights to the Tibetan people. But all such pleas have fallen on deaf ears.

Is this situation not a challenge to human conscience? Can we - dedicated as we are here to the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights - remain mute spectators to the ghastly tragedy that is being enacted by a ruthless and oppressive régime in Tibet? In a recent appeal to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and to the Member States<sup>2</sup>, the Dalai Lama, who has been a model of restraint, serenity and, indeed, of humanity, has

warned the Organization that the Chinese, if unchecked, would „resort to still more brutal means of exterminating the Tibetan race“. There is no limit to the hardships that the Tibetan people are suffering. Even their supply of food is restricted and controlled by the Chinese, who first feed their military forces in Tibet, and then whatever remains is given to the indigenous Tibetans. My delegation naturally feels concerned about the terrible deterioration in the situation in Tibet. On 17 December 1964, for instance, the Dalai Lama was formally deprived of his position as Chairman of the Preparatory Committee for the Autonomous Region of Tibet and denounced as „an incorrigible running dog of imperialism and foreign reactionaries“; this was immediately followed by the deposition on 30 December 1964 of the Panchen Lama, whom the Chinese tried assiduously to take under their wing, and by his condemnation as a leader of the „clique of reactionary serf owners“.

Thus the Chinese have severed the remaining political links between Tibet and its two politico-religious structures, and have given a final blow to what they fondly used to call, in the past, „the special status of Tibet“.

Moreover, the campaign to dispossess Tibetan peasants of their land and to distribute their properties is also being accelerated with the definition of what precisely constitutes feudal elements being expanded, from time to time, to cover a wider and wider range of peasants. In fact, those so-called land reforms are being used by the Chinese Government to advance its own political purpose and to turn the Tibetan peasants into slaves of its system. The naked truth - which all of us must face - is that the Chinese Government is determined to obliterate the Tibetan people; but surely no people can remain for long suppressed. I have faith in the world community. I believe it will be able to help restore to the Tibetans all the freedoms which we have enshrined, with such dedication, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

For our part, we assure the United Nations that - as in the past - we shall continue to give all facilities to the Tibetan refugees, and do our best to alleviate their sufferings and hardships. The Dalai Lama has been living in India for some years now, and is carrying on his religious and humanitarian activities without any restrictions from us. We shall continue to give the Dalai Lama and his simple and peace-loving people these facilities and all our hospitality.

It is for these reasons that we support, fully and wholeheartedly, the cause of the people of Tibet. Our hearts go out to them in their miserable plight and in the terrible suppression that they are suffering at the hands of the Government of the People's Republic of China. Although that régime has given us, and continues to give us, provocations, we have refused to use the Tibetan refugees as pawns in our conflict with China. We do not believe that the sufferings of one people should be made a weapon in the armoury of another.

Finally, may I express the fervent hope, on behalf of the United Nations, that there will soon be an end to the reign of misery and oppression in Tibet, and that the people of Tibet will be able to share with us all those human rights that all of us, in different lands, are so fortunate to possess and enjoy.

My delegation will, therefore, vote in favour of the draft resolution contained in document A/L.473, and I commend the same to this Assembly.

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<sup>1</sup> The Question of Tibet and the Rule of Law, Geneva, International Commission of Jurists, 1959

<sup>2</sup> see A/6081