Envoy exposes roots of Tibetan anger

Written by Taipei Times
Sunday, 26 July 2009 21:02 -

Ethnic inequality, discrimination and cultural extinction fueled by the Chinese government — more than any other human rights issues — are at the root of Tibetans' and Uighurs' resentment toward Chinese rule, speakers said at a forum in Taipei on human rights conditions in Tibet and Xinjiang yesterday.

"People around the world often condemn the Chinese government for human rights abuses in Tibet, but we Tibetans do not care so much whether we live well in Tibet," envoy of the Tibetan government-in-exile Dawa Tsering told the forum, which was organized by the Taiwan New Century Foundation.

 "What we care most about is whether the Tibetan nation and culture will survive," he said.

 Throughout history, Tibetans were not a unified people and the concept of a sovereign state in the modern sense never existed in the minds of Tibetans before the People's Liberation Army invaded Tibet in the 1950s, he said.

 "The reason why most Tibetan civilians did not resist when the Chinese army entered Tibet in 1951 was because the concept that 'our country is being invaded,' did not exist for them," Dawa said.

 "However, Tibetans rose against Chinese rule in 1959 because the Chinese were touching on something that Tibetans felt closely attached to," he said.

 Beijing's official accounts and information provided by Tibet support groups around the world say that Chinese destroyed more than 6,000 temples, arrested monks and confiscated private property following the occupation.

 Aside from threatening Tibetan religion, Dawa accused Beijing of trying to destroy Tibetan culture.

 "Take me: I don't speak Tibetan very well, even though I grew up in Tibet and my parents speak only Tibetan. That's because I attended elementary school during the Cultural Revolution and the Tibetan language was not allowed in school," Dawa said, adding that although Tibetan language instruction was later permitted, it was more for "cosmetic" purposes.

 Today, 90 percent of school lessons in Tibet are still in Chinese. For the remainder, students can choose between Tibetan and English, he said.

 "A civilization that loses its language becomes one that is only good for display in a museum," he said. "So we're not asking for perfect human rights conditions in Tibet. We only have a humble wish that the Tibetan nation and culture be allowed to survive."

Envoy exposes roots of Tibetan anger

Written by Taipei Times
Sunday, 26 July 2009 21:02 -

Dawa said it is no secret that Tibetans and Chinese are treated unequally, even by government institutions.

"China calls Tibet an 'autonomous region,' but the great majority of government officials are Han Chinese," he said. "The few exceptions are those Tibetans whose father or mother is Han Chinese, or those who married Han Chinese."

If China would grant genial autonomy to Tibetans and allow Tibetan culture to develop freely, "Tibetans would not necessarily seek independence," Dawa said.

Political commentator Paul Lin said that a similar situation prevailed among Uighurs in Xinjiang.

"Encouraged by the Chinese government, Han Chinese settlers poured into Xinjiang, took control of local economic activity, threatened Uighur culture and openly discriminated against Uighurs," said Lin, a Chinese who was formerly a member of the Chinese Communist Party.

Official census data shows that Uighurs account for 45 percent of the population in Xinjiang, while Han Chinese make up 41 percent.

"Chinese officials discourage employers from hiring Uighurs, Uighurs are paid less [than Han Chinese] for the same work and they barred Uighur pilots from flying during the Beijing Olympics last year, for fear they would engage in terrorist activity," Lin said.

"It's understandable that the Uighurs would revolt. Even if, as Chinese media contend, more Han Chinese than Uighurs were killed during clashes in Urumqi earlier this month, it's the Chinese Communist Party — not the Uighurs — that should be held responsible," he said.

Source: [Taipei Times 2009/07/26](#)