

ICT'S FIVE TIBET ACTION POINTS FOR THE GERMAN EU PRESIDENCY



WITH THE ADVENT OF THE GERMAN PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET (ICT) HAS URGED IT TO FOCUS ON THE SITUATION IN TIBET IN RELATIONS WITH CHINA AND TO ADDRESS THE SILENCE ABOUT THE DEVASTATING HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION ON THE TIBETAN PLATEAU.

Germany's six-month Presidency, which began at the start of July, comes at an unprecedented time for the European Union, engulfed in the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic and of its likely to be far-reaching impacts, including for EU-China relations. But it also takes place at a time of another crisis, which is the deterioration of the human rights situation in Tibet.

ICT proposed five concrete action points to the Presidency, the implementation of which will allow the European Union to contribute

actively to improving the situation in Tibet:

1. Publicly and vigorously demand the Chinese government respect the civil and political rights of Tibetans, who are subjected to a system of torture, arbitrary detention and restriction of freedom of expression, religion and assembly
2. Demand the respect of religious freedom for all Tibetan Buddhists, including those outside Tibet, and the



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TIBET BRIEF

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A REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

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right of Tibetan Buddhists to decide the succession of the Dalai Lama without interference from the Chinese government

3. Urge unfettered and reciprocal access to Tibet for UN experts as well as foreign diplomats, parliamentarians, journalists and non-governmental organizations.

4. Urge sustainable development and climate-related policies on the Tibetan Plateau that respect the rights of Tibetans and do not lead to mass forced settlement of Tibetan nomads, poverty and cultural uprooting.

5. Actively support the resumption of Tibetan-Chinese dialogue.

The five proposals were sent to German

Foreign Minister, Heiko Maas; they were also presented during a special edition of the Tibet Talks Europe on 30 June with Members of German Bundestag, Gyde Jensen, and Member of the European Parliament, Raphaël Glucksmann (see below).

[The briefing "Addressing the Muted Crisis in Tibet: Five Points of Action for the German EU Presidency" can be downloaded here.](#)

US BANS CHINESE OFFICIALS UNDER TIBET ACCESS LAW

IN A MOVE THAT DEMONSTRATES ITS INTENTION TO TAKE CHINA TO TASK UNDER THE RECIPROCAL ACCESS TO TIBET ACT (RATA), THE US STATE DEPARTMENT ANNOUNCED IN JULY THAT THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS RESPONSIBLE FOR KEEPING AMERICANS OUT OF TIBET WOULD BE DENIED ENTRY TO THE US.



US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. (© REUTERS/Jason Lee)

In a [statement](#) on 7 July, Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, said the department restricted visas for the officials under [RATA](#), which forbids entry to the US by Chinese authorities "substantially involved" in creating and enforcing policies that keep American citizens out of Tibet.

Pompeo, who noted that China continues to "systematically" prevent US journalists, diplomats and ordinary citizens from entering Tibet and that international access to Tibet is "increasingly vital to regional stability", did not share which officials the restrictions apply to. Immediately

afterwards, the Chinese government [vowed](#) to retaliate with restrictions of its own.

Despite China's anger, calls for reciprocal access to Tibet are growing. Last month, more than 50 parliamentarians from 19 European countries published an [op-ed](#) calling on their governments to pass their own versions of RATA. British Conservative Party MP, Tim Loughton, [introduced](#) a similar bill in the UK in early June. The op-ed followed an [opinion piece](#) from Josep Borrell, the EU high representative for foreign affairs and vice president of the EU Commission, who said the focus of the EU-China relationship should be "trust, transparency, and reciprocity."

Shortly after his 7 July statement, Pompeo also [announced](#) the United States' decision to bar Chen Quanguo - the Chinese Communist Party secretary of the Tibet Autonomous Region between 2011 and 2016, who now has the same role in Xinjiang where he has masterminded mass internment camps for Uyghurs - from entering the US because of his involvement in gross violations of human rights.

EU OPPOSES CHINESE INTERFERENCE IN THE DALAI LAMA'S SUCCESSION

WITH THE DALAI LAMA JUST HAVING TURNED 85 IN JULY, THE EUROPEAN UNION'S FOREIGN POLICY CHIEF EXPRESSED THE EU'S POSITION ON HIS SUCCESSION, STATING THAT IT OPPOSES ANY INTERFERENCE BY THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT.



Meeting between His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Josep Borrell when he was President of the European Parliament. (© European Union 2006 – EP)

"The selection of religious leaders should happen without any government interference and in respect of religious norms," Josep Borrell said on 16 July, adding that, "In the framework of the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue, the European External Action Service has repeatedly expressed the position that China needed to respect the succession process of the Dalai Lama."

Borrell was responding to a [parliamentary question](#) tabled earlier this year by a group of five members of the European Parliament from four political factions:

Francisco Guerreiro (Greens/EFA) of Portugal, Petra De Sutter (Greens/EFA) of Belgium, Hannes Heide (S&D) of Austria, and Aušra Maldeikiene (EPP) and Petras Auštrevičius (Renew Europe) both from Lithuania.

In recent years, the Chinese government has made clear its intention to interfere in the Dalai Lama's succession. Reactions to this blatant assault on Tibetans' religious freedom have been mounting in recent months, most notably in the US, where the House of Representatives passed the Tibetan Policy and Support Act at the

beginning of the year. If signed into law, the TPSA will make it official US policy that only Tibetan Buddhists can decide on the Dalai Lama's succession and in future will sanction Chinese officials who attempt to nominate their own Dalai Lama. The governments of the [Netherlands](#), [Belgium](#) and [Germany](#) have also officially stated that it is up to the Tibetan religious community to select any future Dalai Lama.

Borrell's statement came days after the Dalai Lama's 85th birthday on 6 July, which was [celebrated](#) around the world by Tibetans, world leaders, artists and Tibet supporters. ICT also contributed to op-eds about the Dalai Lama in the United States and Europe – [one of them](#) [by ICT's EU Policy Director, Vincent Metten](#), warned that China's plan to interfere in the Dalai Lama's succession is likely to cause great unrest in Tibet with the potential to destabilize the surrounding region. Special online events were organized by ICT offices in [Washington, DC](#) and [Amsterdam](#), while ICT members shared more than 6,500 birthday greetings for His Holiness through the organization's website.

TIBETAN PRAYER FLAGS FORCED DOWN BY CHINESE AUTHORITIES

ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL SYMBOLS OF TIBETAN CULTURE AND RELIGION IS BEING FORCIBLY UNDERMINED AS PART OF CHINA'S EFFORTS TO DESTROY THE TRADITIONS AND WAY OF LIFE INSIDE TIBET.



Chinese policemen take down a pole with prayer flags in an unidentified region of Tibet. (Photo received by RFA).

county in Chamdo in the Tibet Autonomous Region. "Led by the police, local Tibetans are now taking down prayer flags in their villages and on the hilltops," a source from the area told RFA, adding that authorities have even ordered the destruction of the poles that hold the flags. According to the same source, officials claim the prayer flag removals are part of an "environmental cleanup" campaign and "movement of behavior reform."

Tibetan prayer flags are one of the most widespread and best-known manifestations of religious devotion in Tibet. Traditionally made from textile, Tibetans believe the prayers and mantras inscribed on them will be spread by the wind and bring goodwill and compassion to all beings. The clampdown on their display is another example of China's determination to suppress even the most harmless expression of Tibetan identity and religion.

According to a 17 June [report from Radio Free Asia](#), Chinese authorities began a campaign to remove Tibetan prayer flags.

The crackdown began in Golog (Chinese: Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai province and Tengchen (Dingqing)

UN EXPERTS CALL FOR DECISIVE MEASURES TO PROTECT FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN CHINA

ON 26 JUNE, A GROUP OF OVER 50 UN INDEPENDENT EXPERTS ISSUED AN UNPRECEDENTED JOINT STATEMENT CALLING ON THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY "TO ACT COLLECTIVELY AND DECISIVELY TO ENSURE CHINA RESPECTS HUMAN RIGHTS AND ABIDES BY ITS INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS."

The experts, who are special rapporteurs and members of working groups, said they believe "it is time for renewed attention on the human rights situation in the country, particularly in light of the moves against the people of the Hong Kong [Special Administrative Region], minorities of the Xinjiang Autonomous Region, the Tibet Autonomous Region, and human rights defenders across the country." In addition they recommended that the UN Human Rights Council conduct a special session on China and create an independent

mechanism to monitor human rights violations in the People's Republic of China.

The statement from the UN experts came a few days before the start of the 44th session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, to which ICT participated. On 10 July, ICT Europe's Director of Advocacy and Communication, Christa Meindersma, delivered two oral statements on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights – one focusing on freedom of [expression](#) and the other on [freedom of peaceful](#)

[assembly and association](#). On 14 July, Christa Meindersma also participated in an [online side-event to the session](#) about the human rights situation in Tibet organized by the Office of Tibet in Geneva, where she highlighted in particular the increasing restrictions on the freedom of expression of Tibetans.

[Click here to read the full statement of the UN experts.](#)

ICT-FIDH JOINT REPORT IN VIEW OF NEPAL'S UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW

AS NEPAL'S HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD WILL BE ASSESSED AS PART OF ITS THIRD UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW (UPR) - SCHEDULED TO TAKE PLACE IN EARLY 2021 IN GENEVA - FIDH (INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS) AND ICT HAVE CALLED UPON THE NEPALI GOVERNMENT TO RESPECT AND FULFIL THE RIGHTS OF TIBETANS IN NEPAL, WHO HAVE BECOME MORE VULNERABLE AS A RESULT OF CHINA'S MOUNTING INFLUENCE IN THE COUNTRY.



In March 2018, a Tibetan activist in Nepal was [detained](#) for nearly 10 days and threatened with deportation after he posted a picture of himself with a Tibetan flag on Facebook and wrote to international embassies in Kathmandu about human rights concerns in Tibet.

The joint FIDH-ICT report, released on 16 June, identifies three main human rights issues concerning Tibetans in Nepal:

- Tibetans do not have legal status in Nepal and are vulnerable to arbitrary restrictions of their rights. The 20,000-plus Tibetans currently living in Nepal do not enjoy their rights to equal treatment before the law, education, land ownership, freedom of movement, and employment;
- The Nepali government's failure to apply the principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits the return of individuals to a jurisdiction where they are at risk of being subjected to persecution or torture;
- The shrinking public space for freedom of expression, including freedom of the press, in matters related to China and Tibet, as a result of Beijing's growing influence on the Nepali government.

The report documents how stronger cooperation between the governments of Nepal and China, particularly with regard to the two countries' policies toward Tibetan refugees and national security, has resulted in increased vulnerability for Tibetans in Nepal. [Recently adopted agreements between Nepal and China](#), such as the 'Boundary Management System' and the 'Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance on Criminal Matters,' indicate the Nepali government's apparent efforts to restrict and monitor Tibetans in Nepal and to deport them to China.

The report also reveals that the space for freedom of expression, including freedom of the press, in particular regarding issues related to China and Tibet, is increasingly shrinking in Nepal, not only for Tibetan residents, but also for Nepali citizens, such as members of civil society and journalists.

Read the report [here](#).

POLITICAL PRISONER FOCUS

KHADRO TSETEN AND TSEGO

TWO TIBETANS FACE MULTIPLE YEARS IN A CHINESE PRISON ON CHARGES OF "SUBVERSION" AND "LEAKING STATE SECRETS" AFTER THEY COMPOSED AND CIRCULATED A SONG IN PRAISE OF THE DALAI LAMA.



Khadro Tseten. (© Voice of Tibet)

A Tibetan source who wished to remain anonymous said the lyricist, Khadro Tseten, was sentenced to seven years, while the singer, Tsego, was sentenced to three years. A Chinese court in northeastern Tibet handed down the sentences in early July.

The source added that Chinese police detained Khadro Tseten, Tsego and an unnamed Tibetan woman on 26 April 2019, after a song in praise of the Dalai Lama circulated on Chinese social media. ICT has not yet been able to verify the details, but in general China maintains strict surveillance of content on social media, and censors and deletes any material that goes against the Communist Party's political interests. According to Tibetan language media, the woman was reported to have been released after approximately a year's detention.

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Khadro and Tsego are believed to be in their mid to late twenties and from Dokarmo township, Tsekhog (Chinese: Zeku) County, Malho (Chinese: Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai Province.

Over the years, there have been a number of cases in which the Chinese authorities have sentenced Tibetans praising the Dalai Lama in song. One example is that of Pema Trinley and Chakdor, [imprisoned](#) in 2013 for two years each following their release of a music DVD that included songs about self-immolations and the Dalai Lama.

UN EXPERTS WRITE TO CHINA ON PANCHEN LAMA, REINCARNATION RULES

FIVE UN HUMAN RIGHTS EXPERTS AND EXPERT BODIES HAVE RAISED CONCERNS WITH THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT ABOUT TIBET'S "DISAPPEARED" PANCHEN LAMA AND BEIJING'S REINCARNATION RULES, CITING FEARS ABOUT CHINESE INTERFERENCE IN THE SUCCESSION OF THE DALAI LAMA.

In a statement to the Chinese government made public on 1 August, the experts expressed "grave concern at the continued refusal by the Government of China to disclose precisely the whereabouts of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima," the 11th Panchen Lama, and call for an independent monitor to visit him. They also appealed to the Chinese government "to ensure that Tibetan Buddhists are able to freely practice their religion, traditions and cultures without interference," as freedom of religion includes the right of Tibetan Buddhists "to determine their clergy and religious leaders in accordance with their own religious traditions and practices."

The Panchen Lama is one of the most important figures in Tibetan Buddhism. He has been missing since the Chinese government kidnapped him and his family in 1995 just days after the Dalai Lama identified him as the reincarnation of the previous Panchen Lama. Gedhun Choekyi Nyima was only six years old at the time.

[Click here to read the full communication of the UN experts.](#)



UPCOMING EVENTS

- **2 SEPTEMBER:** Tibetan Democracy Day
- **SEPTEMBER (DATE TBC):** Tibet Talks Europe #6 – Conversation with Barbara Demick, author of *Eat the Buddha: The Story of Modern Tibet Through the People of One Town*
- **14 SEPTEMBER:** Virtual Summit of EU leaders and Chinese President Xi Jinping (tbc)
- **14 SEPTEMBER – 6 OCTOBER:** 45th Session of the UN Human Rights Council

READING SUGGESTION

HIDDEN HAND: EXPOSING HOW THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY IS RESHAPING THE WORLD



With its enormous economic power, China is now a global political and military force engaged in an ideological struggle with the West. Combining a mass of evidence with unique insights, Clive Hamilton and Mareike Ohlberg lay bare the nature and extent of the Chinese Communist Party's influence operations across the Western world – in politics, business, universities, think tanks and international institutions such as the UN. This new authoritarian power is using democracy to undermine democracy in pursuit of its global ambitions.

Combining meticulous research with compelling prose, *Hidden Hand* brings to light the Chinese Communist Party's threats to democratic freedoms and national sovereignty across Europe and North America – and shows how we might push back against its autocratic influence.

[Click here](#) to buy this book.

TIBET TALKS EUROPE

'EU-CHINA RELATIONS AND TIBET: HOW MUCH SPACE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS DURING THE GERMAN EU-PRESIDENCY?'



As the Coronavirus pandemic has disrupted many face-to-face events and meetings over the last few months, the International Campaign for Tibet has started a new initiative: 'Tibet Talks', a series of online discussions about Tibet with thinkers, leaders, activists and artists.

On the eve of Germany's taking over the rotating EU Presidency on

1 July, an edition of the Tibet Talks Europe was organized on the topic of EU-China relations. Guest speakers Gyde Jensen, Member of the German Bundestag, and Raphaël Glucksmann, Member of the European Parliament, discussed how the EU should react to the CCP's worsening human rights record, and examined ways in which it could support a much more pro-active policy on Tibet. ICT's EU Policy Director, Vincent Metten, also presented ICT's five points of action on Tibet which have been submitted to the German government.

[Click here to watch Tibet Talks Europe #3 - EU-China relations and Tibet](#)

You can also watch previous editions of Tibet Talks Europe:

- [Tibet Talks Europe #1 – China's place in the Covid-19 world and its consequences for Tibet](#)
- [Tibet Talks Europe #2 – Dutch policy on Tibet \(in Dutch\)](#)
- [Tibet Talks Europe #4 – Celebrating the Dalai Lama's 85th birthday \(in Dutch\)](#)
- [Tibet Talks Europe #5 – Dutch MPs insist on unhindered access to Tibet \(in Dutch, with English subtitles\)](#)