

TIBET BRIEF

AUGUST 2021

A REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

CHINESE PRESIDENT MAKES SURPRISE VISIT TO TIBET

IN THE FIRST CHINESE PRESIDENTIAL VISIT TO TIBET IN 30 YEARS, XI JINPING PAID AN UNANNOUNCED VISIT TO THE TIBET AUTONOMOUS REGION FROM 20-22 JULY, DURING WHICH HE URGED TIBETANS TO "FOLLOW THE PARTY".



Chinese President Xi Jinping waves to villagers while visiting Galai village of Nyingtri in the Tibet Autonomous Region on 21 July. (Photo: Xinhua)

The Chinese President first landed in Nyingtri, in southeast Tibet, on 20 July, where he was welcomed by crowds wearing ethnic costumes and waving Chinese flags. After addressing Nyingtri residents, and inspecting ecological preservation work on the Yarlung Tsangpo River basin (upon which China is [building a controversial dam](#)) the following day, Xi then traveled on a section of the new high-altitude railway to Tibet's capital Lhasa. There he visited the Bharkor, the Drepung monastery, and "inspected ethnic religion work" and Tibetan cultural heritage protection, state media later reported. He was also seen addressing a gathering in front of the Potala Palace – the Dalai Lama's traditional winter residence – stating that only when the people "follow the party" can the "rejuvenation of the Chinese nation" be realised.

Xi's visit may have been linked to the 70th anniversary of the controversial 17 Point Agreement, which China falsely claims as its "peaceful liberation of Tibet," but which the Dalai Lama has continually renounced as an agreement made under duress.

People in Lhasa had reported unusual activities and monitoring of their movements ahead of his visit; and while heavy security is expected for any visit by Xi, it is unusual that even Chinese state media did not immediately report about the visit.

ICT believes that this complete absence of any immediate state media coverage of the visit indicates that Tibet continues to be a sensitive issue and that Chinese authorities do not have confidence in their legitimacy among the Tibetan people.



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US SECRETARY OF STATE ANTONY BLINKEN MEETS DALAI LAMA'S REPRESENTATIVE

IN A SIGN OF AMERICA'S ENDURING SUPPORT FOR TIBET, US SECRETARY OF STATE ANTONY BLINKEN MET WITH THE REPRESENTATIVE OF THE DALAI LAMA IN NEW DELHI DURING HIS VISIT TO INDIA IN LATE JULY.



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with Tibet House Director Geshe Dorji Damdul and other civil society leaders at a roundtable in New Delhi on 28 July.

According to the State Department, Blinken met with Ngodup Dongchung, the Dalai Lama's representative in New Delhi, on 28 July. A US official who briefed reporters on condition of

anonymity said: "The Dalai Lama obviously is a globally revered spiritual leader and so the gesture was gratefully received and appreciated." Media reports indicate that Dongchung presented Blinken with a ceremonial scarf from His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Chinese Foreign Affairs Ministry Zhao Lijian reacted to the meeting, saying his country "firmly opposes any form of contact between foreign officials and the Dalai Lama." Despite the hypocrisy of China complaining about foreign interference while meddling in US and Indian affairs, the spokesperson's comment ignores the fact that Tibet is an important interest of the American people.

Blinken's meetings with Dongchung and Geshe Dorji Damdul were only the latest signs of the State Department's commitment to Tibet under his leadership. Earlier in July, Blinken had [joined other world leaders in wishing the Dalai Lama a happy birthday](#) as he turned 86; he was also the [first secretary of state to speak at the State Department's annual reception for Tibetan New Year](#).

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S REPORT ON EU-CHINA STRATEGY RAISES CONCERNS ABOUT TIBETANS' PERSECUTION, REITERATES CALL FOR BEIJING OLYMPIC DIPLOMATIC BOYCOTT

THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ADOPTED ON 16 SEPTEMBER A REPORT ON A NEW EU-CHINA STRATEGY THAT CALLS ON CHINA TO COMPLY WITH ITS OBLIGATIONS UNDER NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LAW TO RESPECT HUMAN RIGHTS, INCLUDING IN TIBET.

In the comprehensive report, which proposes a strategy based on six main pillars – including one entitled 'Enhanced engagement on universal values, international norms and human rights' - Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) state their extreme concern about reports of coercive labor programs in Tibet and call for free access to Tibetan areas for diplomats and journalists.

In addition, the MEPs urge the European Commission to express to the Chinese authorities its concern over China's Measures for the Administration of Religious Clergy (Order No. 15), which [further increase the State control of the selection of religious leaders](#). In recent years, the Chinese government has been using such measures and regulations to legitimate and legalize [its claim of authority](#) to

appoint the next Dalai Lama in contravention of Buddhist religious tradition and the fundamental right of Tibetan Buddhist communities to follow their own spiritual process without government interference.

The report also contains a number of recommendations aiming to make the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue more result-oriented – including the creation of a complementary "shadow dialogue" including alternative voices. This is a welcome move as the dialogue has gradually been downgraded by the Chinese side over the years and has so far failed to deliver concrete improvements on the human rights situation in China.

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MEPs furthermore reiterated their position that consideration and ratification of the EU-China Comprehensive Agreement on Investment (CAI) [cannot resume](#) until the

Chinese sanctions against MEPs and EU institutions have been lifted. They also repeated their call for EU and EU Member State leaders to [decline invitations to the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics](#) if the human

rights situation in China and Hong Kong does not improve.

[Click here to read the European Parliament's report on a new EU-China Strategy.](#)

NEPALI GOVERNMENT DENIES RIGHTS OF TIBETAN REFUGEES IN UN REVIEW

THE NEPALI GOVERNMENT HAS FAILED IN ITS COMMITMENT TO RESPECT AND PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF TIBETAN REFUGEES DURING THE ADOPTION OF ITS UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW (UPR) REPORT.

The government “noted” (i.e. did not accept) important recommendations it received from UN member states regarding Tibetan refugees in January, as part of the country's third UPR cycle. Amongst others, it failed to accept a key recommendation that called for the registration and verification of all Tibetan refugees; another recommendation that called on Kathmandu to step up efforts in the fight against segregation and discrimination of ethnic minorities, including Tibetans; as

well as two other recommendations that called for the respect of the principle of non-refoulement.

The adoption of the UPR report of Nepal took place on 8 July as part of the 47th session of the UN Human Rights Council. During the session, ICT also delivered two oral statements on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights – one [urging China to respect the cultural rights of Tibetans](#)

[with regard to language and education](#), and the other [raising concerns about the awarding of the 2022 Winter Olympic Games to China](#) in light of Beijing's widespread and systematic human rights violations.

[Click here to read ICT and FIDH joint press release on the adoption of Nepal UPR report.](#)

[Click here to read the joint submission made by ICT and FIDH's ahead of the UPR of Nepal.](#)

DALAI LAMA'S BIRTHDAY CELEBRATED IN TIBET, SEVERAL ARRESTED

DESPITE THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT'S BRUTAL CRACKDOWN ON DALAI LAMA SUPPORTERS INSIDE TIBET, BRAVE TIBETANS CELEBRATED THE RELIGIOUS LEADER'S BIRTHDAY IN JULY, WITH SEVERAL ARRESTED AS A RESULT.



Tsering Woesser, a Tibetan writer and activist based in Beijing, shared several photos on social media of Tibetans celebrating the Dalai Lama's birthday.

The Dalai Lama turned 86 on 6 July, but while the special day was met with [outpourings of support from enthusiastic followers and world leaders around the globe](#), it was a different story inside Tibet.

Golog Jigme, a former Tibetan political prisoner now living in exile, told [Radio Free Asia](#) that Chinese police arrested two Tibetans in their 40s — a man named Kunchok Tashi and a woman named Dzapo — on “suspicion of being part of a group on social media that shared images and documents, and encouraged the reciting of Tibetan prayers on the birthday of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.” The arrests occurred in Kardze (Chinese: Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture's Kyaglung town, in

the Chinese province of Sichuan. Jigme said another 20 to 30 Tibetans were arrested, but due to strict restrictions on communications in the region, nothing more is known about their names or where the arrests took place.

This year is hardly the first time Chinese authorities have punished Tibetans for celebrating the Dalai Lama's birthday. In 2013, authorities [shot two Tibetan monks in the head](#) and seriously injured several others after opening fire on a peaceful crowd that had gathered to celebrate in eastern Tibet. Two years later, authorities arrested nine Tibetans who organized a small picnic in honor of the Dalai Lama's birthday; they later [received harsh prison sentences](#).

CHINA SHUTS DOWN HISTORIC MONASTERY, EVICTS MONKS AND NUNS

LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN CHINA'S GANSU PROVINCE HAVE SHUT DOWN A TIBETAN BUDDHIST MONASTERY, FORCIBLY EVICTING THE MONASTICS AND ORDERING THEM TO DISROBE.



Officials in plain clothes forcibly remove nuns while others exit from the monastery's assembly hall.

[Video clips](#) from the incident at Kharmar (Chinese: Hongcheng) Monastery, showed officials carrying out forced evictions, monastics staging a sit-in protest about being compelled to leave their monastic lives, nuns crying and a monk threatening to jump off a roof.

Although some local government officials feigned ignorance of the

eviction, one employee of the Yongjing County (where Kharmar Monastery is located)'s ethnic minority and religious affairs bureau gave a tacit confirmation, telling [Radio Free Asia](#): “Director Cui of the monastery management committee was responsible for resettling the monks and nuns.” Chinese officials typically frame forced eviction as “resettlement” and arbitrary detention as receiving “political and legal education.”

Although the motive for shutting down the monastery is unclear, reports say it could be linked to a donation the monastery allegedly made to help combat the COVID-19 pandemic in China. Local Chinese authorities in Yongjing County may have seized the donation as a pretext to harass and shut down the monastery. Chinese authorities view Tibetan Buddhism as a threat to China's national security, and any activity involving mass mobilization, like raising funds in this instance, is also potentially a threat to national security and the political security of the Chinese Communist Party.

In recent years, Chinese President Xi Jinping has called for the prevention of Tibetan Buddhism spreading eastward into mainland China, and a Tibetan Buddhist institution outside of the areas with Tibetan autonomous status may have put Kharmar Monastery in greater danger.

CODE OF CONDUCT FORBIDS RELIGIOSITY BY TIBETAN CCP MEMBERS

A NEW CODE OF CONDUCT FOR MEMBERS OF THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY IN THE TIBET AUTONOMOUS REGION EXPLICITLY FORBIDS PARTY MEMBERS FROM ANY FORM OF RELIGIOSITY IN BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE LIFE.

The six-point “Code of Conduct for Communist Party Members in the Tibet Autonomous Region for Not Believing in Religion”, currently in trial, is significant because it is perhaps the first party regulation that clearly and comprehensively details the specific types of religiosity forbidden for party members in the TAR. Examples of explicitly forbidden conduct include wearing rosary beads or religious imagery, forwarding or liking religious materials online and circumambulating mountains and lakes.

Party members are also required to take an active role in propagating the party's anti-religion stance, by advising relatives to downplay their religious consciousness, not to set up altars or hang religious imagery in homes, and to seek party approval before inviting religious personnel to conduct rituals for customary occasions such as weddings and funerals.

The contradiction between faith and party idealism is an ongoing challenge for the

party leadership in cultivating loyal Tibetan party members for the party's effective governance of Tibet. With no real progress in eliminating the Tibetan party members' belief in their faith and identity, the Code of Conduct appears to be the latest attempt at strengthening the party through a region-specific party regulation comprehensively forbidding Tibetan religiosity.

[Click here to read ICT's translation of the Code of Conduct.](#)

POLITICAL PRISONER FOCUS

DORJEE TASHI

A NEWLY REVEALED TESTIMONY FROM DORJEE TASHI, A JAILED TIBETAN BUSINESSMAN AND PHILANTHROPIST WHO IS IN CRITICAL HEALTH, DOCUMENTS THE HORRIFYING ABUSE AND TORTURE HE RECEIVED IN PRE-TRIAL DETENTION.



Dorjee Tashi (多吉扎西), considered one of the wealthiest people in Tibet, received a life sentence in 2010 in the wake of the Chinese government's crackdown on mass Tibetan protests two years earlier. He is currently detained in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) Prison No 1, colloquially known as Drapchi Prison, where Tibetan prisoners are known to be tortured. His wife Sonam Choedon (索朗曲珍) has not been allowed to see him since December 2019.

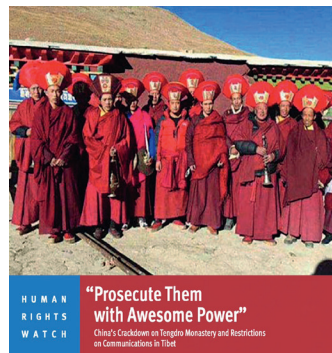
Dorjee was a successful businessman who owned a luxury hotel chain and real estate companies in Tibet when he was arrested in July 2008. He was framed as a "secessionist" by spiteful and vindictive political and party leaders taking advantage of the political situation in the wake of the mass Tibetan protests. While political charges were later dropped later, he was declared guilty of "loan fraud" and sentenced to life imprisonment by the Lhasa Intermediate People's Court on 17 May 2010. A second court, the TAR People's Higher Court, upheld the verdict on 26 July 2010. Dorjee was then 36 years old.

The International Campaign for Tibet has obtained [Dorjee Tashi's testimony](#) detailing the torture and ill treatment he experienced during his four-month pre-trial detention. This included being beaten with electric batons, being cuffed to an iron bar then hung in the air, simulations of suffocation, having hot chili fluid poured through his nostrils, and sleep deprivation.

The International Campaign for Tibet calls for Dorjee Tashi's immediate release and an independent and impartial investigation into these credible reports of his torture and ill treatment. Those responsible must be brought to justice to end the culture of impunity in the Chinese Communist Party's rule in Tibet. While in detention, Dorjee Tashi must also receive medical treatment, and his wife and other family members, as well as his lawyer, must be granted access to him.

READING SUGGESTION

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH REPORT: "PROSECUTE THEM WITH AWESOME POWER": CHINA'S CRACKDOWN ON TENG DRO MONASTERY AND RESTRICTIONS ON COMMUNICATIONS IN TIBET"



A new report by Human Rights Watch reveals how Chinese authorities are applying the principle of preemptive security to control all aspects of Tibetan life with the apparent aim of deterring Tibetans from displaying loyalty to the Dalai Lama and from following their religious traditions.

The report, published in early July, presents a detailed account of how Chinese authorities raided the Tengdro monastery and adjoining village of Dranak in Tingri county in the Tibet Autonomous Region. Police secretly imprisoned monks affiliated with the monastery after examination of the contents of a lost phone found at a café in Lhasa. The phone contained images of the Dalai Lama and messages about financial contributions the monks had made to a monastery of the same lineage in Nepal in response to the 2015 earthquake.

After secret trials, four monks - Choegyal Wangpo, Lobsang Jinpa, Norbu Dondrub and Ngawang Yeshe – each received prison sentences ranging between five and 20 years. Human Rights Watch said the Tengdro Monastery case appears to be an example of preventive control in the Tibetan context, given the severity of the sentences coupled with the absence of any information demonstrating serious criminal or political activity by the monks.

[Click here to read the report.](#)

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **13 SEPTEMBER- 8 OCTOBER:**
48th session of the UN Human Rights Council
- **11-15 OCTOBER:**
UN Biodiversity Conference (COP 15) in Kunming, China (Part 1)