

## US RECIPROCAL ACCESS TO TIBET ACT ENACTED

FOLLOWING ITS RATIFICATION BY BOTH THE HOUSE AND THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES, PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP HAS SIGNED THE RECIPROCAL ACCESS TO TIBET ACT, MARKING A NEW ERA OF US SUPPORT FOR TIBETANS AND CHALLENGING CHINA'S DISCRIMINATORY POLICIES IN TIBET.



A surveillance camera monitors visitors to the Potala Palace in Lhasa. (Photo: Aritz Parra/Associated Press)



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The [Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act](#) is based on the diplomatic principle of reciprocity, which calls on countries to give equal rights to one another's citizens and is currently not respected by China. Although Chinese citizens can travel freely throughout the US, Chinese authorities indeed severely restrict Americans' ability to access Tibet. US citizens—including government officials, reporters and tourists—who seek to enter Tibetan areas are routinely rejected, and the few visitors allowed in are forced to stay on strictly controlled official tours, where the

true realities faced by Tibetans are hidden from them. The situation is worse for Tibetan-Americans, who are almost always denied the right to make a pilgrimage to their ancestral land and to meet family members there.

Signed by President Trump on 19 December, the law now requires the Secretary of State to assess Americans' level of access to Tibet within 90 days of its enactment and send a report to Congress every year afterwards identifying the Chinese officials responsible for keeping Americans out of Tibet. The

Secretary will then ban those officials from receiving visas to enter the US.

*"I'm glad that the President signed our bill, the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act, into law. For too long, China has covered up their human rights violations in Tibet by restricting travel. But actions have consequences, and today, we are one step closer to holding the Chinese officials who implement these restrictions accountable,"* said Rep. Jim McGovern (Democrat - Massachusetts), who introduced the bill.

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INTERNATIONAL  
CAMPAIGN  
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# TIBET BRIEF

JANUARY 2019

A REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

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For Tibetan-Americans and supporters of Tibet, the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act has been a long time coming. Earlier versions of the legislation were introduced as early as in 2014 and 2015, but never went up for a vote. In 2017, the legislation was reintroduced both in the House of Representatives and the Senate, which approved it respectively on 25 September and 11 December. Throughout that process, Tibetan-Americans and Tibet supporters worked tirelessly to inform their members of Congress about the lack of access to Tibet and called on them to support the bill. They wrote thousands of letters to their members of Congress and participated in Tibet Lobby Days in Washington, D.C., in 2017 and 2018 as well as in a nationwide [special Lobby Day](#) on 17 October.

As the bill was being approved, the Chinese government unsurprisingly began pushing out misleading propaganda, claiming the bill interferes in China's domestic affairs and that China-US ties and cooperation in major areas could suffer retaliation. ICT President Matteo Mecacci rebutted those claims in a [statement](#) that highlighted how the bill was about American interests and that China was the one interfering in the American legislative process.

Now that reciprocal access to Tibet has become law, ICT will work with the US State Department to make sure it is fully implemented. ICT is also already in discussion with political leaders in Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia and countries in Europe to encourage them to adopt similar legislation.



*An official update on the White House website after the President signed the bill into law.*

#### MORE ON THIS ISSUE:

- [Chinese response to Tibet reciprocity bill signals its fear of US support for Tibet](#)
- [China's claims about easing Tibet travel are an insufficient response to Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act](#)

## TEEN MONK BEATEN AND ARRESTED AS WAVE OF PROTESTS AND SELF-IMMOLATIONS CONTINUES IN TIBET

ON A MAJOR ANNIVERSARY IN TIBET LAST DECEMBER, A 17-YEAR-OLD MONK WAS BEATEN AND ARRESTED FOR CALLING OUT FOR TIBETAN FREEDOM, JUST A DAY AFTER REPORTS SAID TWO TEENAGERS SET THEMSELVES ON FIRE, PROTESTING CHINESE RULE.



*Protester Sanggye Gyatso is shown in an undated photo provided to RFA by Kanyak Tsering and Lobsang Yeshe.*

On 10 December, the anniversary of the Dalai Lama receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, 17-year-old Sanggye Gyatso of the Kirti monastery in Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) in northeastern Tibet carried out a solo protest, calling for 'Freedom for Tibet.' As he walked along the main street, he was immediately detained by police, who beat him as they took him away, according to two Kirti monks living in exile in Dharamsala, India. Sanggye Gyatso has now disappeared

in custody and there is no further information about his safety or whereabouts. According to the two monks in Dharamsala, he is from a family of pastoralists in Soruma village in the Choejema area of Ngaba county and joined Kirti monastery at a young age.

Sanggye Gyatso's peaceful protest follows three earlier demonstrations in September by three monks in the Tibetan region of Amdo who have now disappeared. They are the most recent occurrences of an act of remarkable courage that have become a trend in eastern Tibet -particularly in Ngaba, where the wave of self-immolations began in 2009— since around 2014. This trend seems linked to a wish by protestors who wish to make a strong statement about freedom and loyalty to the Dalai Lama without undertaking the more extreme act of self-immolation.

The protest took place a day after two 16-year-olds, Gendun Gyatso and Choekyi Gyatso, reportedly set themselves ablaze in Ngaba (on 9 December). Details could not be confirmed immediately, and exiled sources gave differing accounts as a result of the information restrictions in the area and the dangers faced by Tibetans speaking about such incidents to anyone outside Tibet.



## TIBETANS ORDERED TO PROSTRATE TO PICTURES OF CHINESE PRESIDENT

**AMID OTHER SIGNS OF AN INTENSIFIED CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE DALAI LAMA IN RECENT MONTHS, NEWS HAS EMERGED THAT TIBETANS IN EASTERN TIBET ARE BEING TOLD TO PROSTRATE AND MAKE OFFERINGS NOT TO BUDDHIST ICONS AND IMAGES, BUT IN FRONT OF PICTURES OF XI JINPING.**

Tibetans in the eastern Tibetan area of Serthar (Chinese: Seda) county in Sichuan who receive official “poverty alleviation” subsidies from the government have been ordered to remove images of the Dalai Lama from their homes and to destroy their altars, according to information from former political prisoner Golog Jigme. Some families are even being compelled to display images of China’s leader Xi Jinping in their homes, and to prostrate and make offerings to him.



*The notice regarding the “cleaning-up” of Dalai Lama pictures and posted on the official website of the Dzoeye township was accompanied by photographs of Tibetans displaying images of Xi and other leaders. The notice has since been taken offline.*

The development emerges just a few days after the Tibetan Autonomous Region Chairman Che Dalha announced in a report to the regional Party Congress that oppressive measures had been heightened, saying: “Tibet has firmly curbed and cracked down on secession, infiltration and sabotage activities by hostile forces [a political term encompassing the Dalai Lama and Tibet supporters] at home and abroad.” It also follows the publication in early December last year of a notice by local authorities in the Dzoeye (Chinese: Zuigedoma) township in Tsoe (Chinese: Hezuo) in Gansu requesting villagers to “clean-up” images of the Dalai Lama and display pictures of Xi and other leaders instead. The notice stated that “clean-up” work had been successfully completed in all herdsmen’s homes in the area, in four Buddhist temples and among “the

masses” in two monasteries. It added that the political campaign had also been completed in the residences of grassroots Party cadres—effectively acknowledging the Chinese authorities’ failure to eradicate loyalty to the religious leader in exile, even among Party members.

In another development, a massive image of Mao Zedong has been created in a Tibetan area in the form of a thanka (a Tibetan Buddhist religious painting). Some 12,000 people were involved in the project, costing more than four million yuan (\$580,000) in a move apparently designed to assert Tibetan subjugation to the image of Mao.

The creation of the Mao thanka and the campaign to “clean-up” images of the Dalai Lama are part of a so-far largely

failed effort to obliterate the influence of the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader and to replace it with loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party - an effort which has been revived recently in the build-up to this year’s important anniversaries, including the 60th anniversary of the Tibetan Uprising of 1959.

A source who has travelled widely in eastern Tibet told the International Campaign for Tibet that some poor families already display images of Chinese Party leaders in their homes out of fear of having their subsidies cut if they do not, but added that many monasteries and households do still display images of the Dalai Lama, despite the dangers.

## DEVELOPING TECHNOLOGICAL TOTALITARIANISM IN TIBET: HIKVISION

THE ARREST OF A TOP HUAWEI OFFICIAL OVER POTENTIAL VIOLATIONS OF US SANCTIONS AT THE END OF LAST YEAR HAS CREATED GROWING SCRUTINY OF ANOTHER TECH GIANT, HANGZHOU HIKVISION DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY. THE COMPANY - ONE OF THE WORLD'S LARGEST MAKERS OF SECURITY CAMERAS AND OTHER SPYING EQUIPMENT - IS ACCUSED OF PROVIDING EQUIPMENT FOR MASSIVE PRISON CAMPS IN XINJIANG, INCLUDING SURVEILLANCE TECHNOLOGIES FIRST TRIALED IN TIBET.



*This image shows the capability of facial recognition technology by Hikvision CCTV to recognize 'ethnic minorities'. Hikvision demonstrated their AI cloud system of 'minority analytics' at a company summit on 30 March, 2018, in Hangzhou, China.*

Hikvision, a company controlled by the Chinese government, has installed surveillance systems in mosques and re-education camps in Xinjiang (East Turkestan). It has also been directly involved in a large-scale integrated

surveillance program in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region that is terrifying in its scope and scale.

The surveillance technology supplied by Hikvision was first tried in Tibet, where the former Chinese Communist Party chief of the Tibet Autonomous Region, Chen Quanguo -who is now in charge in Xinjiang- used them as part of the development of one of the most dystopian and intrusive police and security states in the world—a system of technological totalitarianism. Chen developed the “iron grid”

system that was first focused on profiling and targeting individuals regarded as potentially problematic to the state, such as Tibetans returning from India, those who had attended teachings by the Dalai Lama in exile and former political prisoners.

Today, the system has expanded in scope and potentially targets all Tibetans and Uyghurs—entire “ethnic” populations—assisted by new technology using facial recognition supplied by Hikvision that can distinguish “ethnic minorities” from Han Chinese. A video released by Hikvision showed an individual captured on camera identified as an “ethnic minority” and referred to a case study trial of Hikvision surveillance cameras at Wutai Shan, a sacred pilgrimage mountain for Buddhists with strong religious associations for Tibetans.

The US is now considering Magnitsky Act sanctions on Chinese officials and “entities assisting [Xinjiang] officials in mass detentions and surveillance of ethnic minorities” such as Hikvision and Dahua, which have won over \$1.2 billion in large-scale surveillance projects in Xinjiang, including in prison camps, since 2016. If passed, these sanctions would freeze all of Hikvision's and Dahua's US assets and ban US entities from doing business with them, effectively ending their US operations.

## NEW ICT ANALYSIS: THE ORIGIN OF THE 'XINJIANG MODEL' IN TIBET UNDER CHEN QUANGUO

RECENT ANALYSIS PUBLISHED BY ICT HIGHLIGHTS HOW A SYSTEM OF INTENSE SECURITY AND FORCED ASSIMILATION THAT CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY (CCP) OFFICIAL CHEN QUANGUO FIRST DEVELOPED IN TIBET IS NOW BEING USED IN XINJIANG, WHERE AT LEAST ONE MILLION PEOPLE HAVE BEEN LOCKED UP IN PRISON CAMPS BECAUSE OF THEIR ETHNICITY, CULTURE AND RELIGION.

Over the last few months, the situation in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) of China, where reports describe a climate of expansive surveillance and control and the mass detention of at least a million Uyghurs and Kazakhs in re-education camps, has increasingly attracted international concern. But to best understand what is unfolding in the XUAR and the motivation driving Chen Quango – XUAR's party secretary in the region – and the CCP's policies, observers should look to Tibet, where Chen previously served as the party secretary for the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) between August 2011 and August 2016.

Tibet and Xinjiang indeed share many similarities. Both are expansive regions with a harsh terrain inhabited by predominantly non-Han ethnic populations with distinct cultural and religious practices. As border regions, their stability and security are of interest to the Chinese leadership. Potential threats to social cohesion and stability, such as a separate identity, can be treated as national security threats that require extraordinary — sometimes military — responses.

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# TIBET BRIEF

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A REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

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First in Tibet, and later in Xinjiang, Chen and the Chinese state adopted a new guiding principle for managing its restive border

populations. This assumes that all Tibetans and Uyghurs—because of their distinct and separate sense of ethnic identity and culture—pose an existential threat to social stability and

national security. Guided by this assumption of guilt and a desire to take proactive action to secure control of Tibet (and later Xinjiang), Chen pursued a two-pronged approach to manage the threat, launching a campaign to reduce ethnic difference by accelerating assimilation. He also built a dense security architecture to reinforce this process.

ICT's analysis begins with an introduction to Chen and a timeline of his tenure in Tibet and Xinjiang. This is followed by examination of the underlying principle guiding Chen's policy approach to managing Tibet and Xinjiang and provides detailed examples of his two-pronged policy of accelerated assimilation and mass surveillance and control.

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



Chen Quanguo presenting security forces with khatags (blessing scarves) in Tibet, prior to his transfer as Xinjiang Party chief. (Photo: Tibet Daily)

## POLITICAL PRISONER FOCUS

### A-NYA SENGDRÄ

**THE TIBETAN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY (TCHRD) REPORTS THAT A TIBETAN ACTIVIST KNOWN FOR HIS WORK PROMOTING GOOD GOVERNANCE, ANTI-CORRUPTION AND SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN HIS HOMETOWN OF KYANGCHE (CH: JIANGQIAN), IN THE TIBETAN AREA OF AMDO, HAS BEEN ARBITRARILY DETAINED BY CHINESE AUTHORITIES SINCE EARLY SEPTEMBER LAST YEAR.**

arrest a reprisal for his activities in defending the rights of local Tibetan nomads. A-nya Sengdra had been a staunch campaigner against government corruption since at least 2014, when he and other nomads founded the voluntary organisation *Mand Dhon Ling* (Public Affairs Forum), aimed at fighting corruption and abuse of power by local authorities. In February 2014, the association had petitioned for an investigation into the mismanagement of public funds meant for the local nomads.

A notice issued by the Gade County Public Security Bureau on 11 December revealed that A-nya Sengdra was charged with 'picking quarrels and provoking trouble' and that his detention period had been extended. As rightly pointed out by TCHRD, vague charges like 'provoking troubles' have been increasingly

used under Xi Jinping's presidency to retaliate against and silence human rights defenders and other critics of government policies.

A-nya Sengdra's health has been deteriorating in detention, as an apparent consequence of the decision to imprison him in the distant town of Drotsang (rather than in Gade County). Drotsang is a low altitude area with poor water quality and weather conditions alien to Mr. Sengdra. "It could be a ploy to torture me. I did not commit any crime; I simply appealed to the higher authorities on the wellbeing of the local people," Sengdra reportedly told his lawyer.

ICT joins TCHRD's condemnation of the clearly politically motivated detention of A-nya Sengdra and calls for his immediate and unconditional release.



"Mr. A-nya Sengdra, 47, was beaten up and detained on 4 September from the highway intersection in Golok TAP by Gade County Public Security Bureau (PSB) officers and taken to the PSB detention centre in Drotsang (Ch: Ledu) County, Tsoshar (Ch: Haidong) Prefecture, where he remains to this day," the [report](#) states. His relatives have not been allowed to visit him, despite repeated attempts, and requests from his lawyer Mr. Lin Qilei.

In a petition dated 8 September, Mrs. Yangkyi, the wife of the popular activist, called the



## LAWYER DENIED ACCESS TO TASHI WANGCHUK ON EVE OF ARREST ANNIVERSARY

The lawyer of Tibetan language advocate Tashi Wangchuk, who marked three years in a Chinese prison on 27 January, was recently denied access to him, despite Tashi Wangchuk's request to meet him. According to a posting by the NGO Chinese Human Rights Defenders, Mr. Lin Qilei, who travelled to Dongchuan Prison (in Xining City, Qinghai Province) on 15 January in order to ascertain Wangchuk's current situation and his wish to file a new petition for his release, was told that the case was 'sensitive' and that approval was needed at a higher provincial level.

Wangchuk was sentenced to five years in prison in a sham of a trial on May 22 last year for 'separatism,' after appearing in a New York Times video speaking about the importance of protecting Tibetans' mother tongue. His first, unsuccessful appeal against his sentence was heard in August 2018.

Read the full update [here](#).

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- **1 JANUARY – 30 JUNE:**  
EU Romanian Presidency
- **25 FEBRUARY – 22 MARCH:**  
40<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Human Rights Council and adoption of China's Universal Periodic Review report

- **10 MARCH:**  
60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Tibetan Uprising of 1959 and demonstration of European Tibetan communities and Tibet supporters in Brussels (*More information at <https://www.facebook.com/EuropeanSolidarityRallyForTibet/>*)
- **23-26 MAY:**  
European Elections

## VIDEO SUGGESTION



### THE WORLD ACCORDING TO XI JINPING, ARTE DOCUMENTARY BY SOPHIE LEPAULT AND ROMAIN FRANKLIN, 2018

*"He was once on the fringes of Chinese society, and banished to seven years of back-breaking labour in the countryside when he was still just a child. But now, Xi Jinping is China's president for life. His central mission is to make China the next superpower. Discover Xi's 'Chinese dream'."* In this well-documented portrait of the Chinese leader, Sophie Lepault and Romain Franklin give an unprecedented glimpse into Xi Jinping's policy and show how his life has shaped his decisions. From Beijing to Djibouti - the former French colony and since 2017 the first Chinese military base abroad - through the South China Sea and Australia, the filmmakers examine the projects and influence strategies of the world's new strong man. Sustained with archive images and testimonies, their investigation shows how Xi Jinping gave a spectacular scale to the nationalist reconquest of Chinese imperial grandeur, a project supported from the beginning by the People's Republic.

You can watch the documentary on Arte TV until 16 February 2019 at <https://www.arte.tv/en/videos/078193-000-A/the-world-according-to-xi-jinping/>