

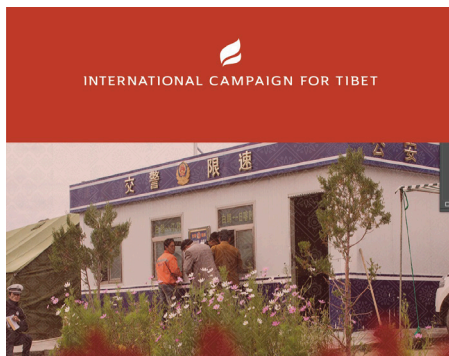
# TIBET BRIEF

JUNE 2020

A REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

## NEW ICT REPORT DOCUMENTS NEED FOR EU RECIPROCAL ACCESS TO TIBET

A NEW REPORT PUBLISHED BY THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET HIGHLIGHTS THE DANGERS POSED BY CHINA'S LACK OF RECIPROCITY WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION IN REGARD TO ACCESS TO TIBET.



### ACCESS DENIED:

NEW US LEGISLATION, THE QUEST FOR RECIPROCITY IN EUROPE AND THE LOCKDOWN IN TIBET

A report by the International Campaign for Tibet  
Washington, DC | Amsterdam | Berlin | Brussels  
[www.savetibet.org](http://www.savetibet.org)

The report, *"Access Denied: New U.S. legislation, the Quest for Reciprocity in Europe and the Lockdown in Tibet,"* gives an update on China's efforts to restrict access to Tibet in contravention of usual diplomatic practice between countries, that were first documented in [a previous report from ICT released in May 2018](#).

Building on the United States' adoption of the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act — which denies entry to the U.S. for Chinese officials directly responsible for keeping Americans out of Tibet — and on the increasing awareness in Europe of the dangers of an asymmetrical relationship with China, the report argues the need for reciprocal and unfettered access to Tibet for European citizens, diplomats,

parliamentarians and journalists.

The report reveals that government officials, journalists and tourists who seek to enter Tibetan areas are routinely denied. The few who do manage to get in are forced to stay on strictly controlled official tours, where they are shown Potemkin villages that hide the truth about China's horrific repression of the Tibetan people. Denying unfettered access to Tibet, or threatening to do so, is used by China as a means of shutting down criticism of its atrocious human rights record in Tibet, which China has brutally occupied since 1949. The opening-up of Tibet would allow for transparency and accountability and therefore help prevent human rights violations.

In recent months, calls for greater reciprocity with China have been mounting in Europe, including recently in an opinion piece published in several European newspapers by 57 Parliamentarians from 19 countries, who urged their governments to pass their own versions of the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act. The objective is to send Beijing a message that its unfair treatment of Europeans — as well as its isolation of the Tibetan people — is no longer acceptable.

[Download the report "Access Denied: New U.S. Legislation, the Quest for Reciprocity in Europe and the Lockdown in Tibet" here.](#)

[The opinion piece 'To expose China's secrecy, demand reciprocal access to Tibet' is available in English here.](#)



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## JOURNALISM ETHICS COUNCIL REBUKES BELGIAN NEWSPAPER FOR ETHICAL MISCONDUCT IN THE PUBLICATION OF CHINESE PROPAGANDA

THE BELGIAN COUNCIL OF JOURNALISTIC ETHICS (“CONSEIL DE DÉONTOLOGIE JOURNALISTE” OR CDJ) HAS NOTED THAT THE NEWSPAPER LE SOIR COMMITTED ETHICAL MISCONDUCT BY FAILING TO PROPERLY PRESENT PROMOTIONAL CONTENT FROM AN OFFICIAL CHINESE PRESS AGENCY.



ICT's EU Policy Director Vincent Metten shows inserts from Xinhua in Le Soir during a Belgium TV interview in 2019.

In an opinion published on 20 May, the CDJ said, “The measures taken by Le Soir to allow the public to perceive without effort an obvious and unquestionable visual distinction between

the journalistic content from the redaction and two promotional pages signed by the official press agency Xinhua were insufficient and contravened article 13 (confusion publicity/

information) of the Code of ethics.” The CDJ concluded that Le Soir therefore committed ethical misconduct and asked and asked the newspaper to inform its readers about it.

The CDJ acted in response to a complaint by the International Campaign for Tibet, who in November 2018 spotted two pages in Le Soir produced by Xinhua, an official Chinese news agency. ICT Brussels' EU policy director Vincent Metten, who introduced the complaint on behalf of ICT, said: “The decision of the CDJ is a step in the right direction, and sets a welcome precedent. But our ultimate goal is that Le Soir and all the other newspapers that publish such contents from official Chinese press agencies put a definitive end to this practice; these inserts are indeed tools of propaganda and political influence and threaten the independence of our media.”

[Click here to read the opinion of the CDJ \(in French\).](#)

## NEW MEASURES CRIMINALIZE DISCUSSION OF TIBETAN AUTONOMY

SHARING INFORMATION ABOUT THE DALAI LAMA'S PROPOSAL FOR TIBETAN AUTONOMY – KNOWN AS THE “MIDDLE WAY” – IS NOW A CRIME IN TIBET, UNDER NEW MEASURES AIMED AT TURNING TIBETANS AGAINST ONE ANOTHER AND CRIMINALIZING OPINIONS CONTRARY TO CHINESE STATE PROPAGANDA.

The “Measures to Collect and Reward Information in the Campaign to Eliminate Pornography and Illegal Content in the Tibet Autonomous Region” were adopted in September 2019, but not published in Chinese state media until late March this year. Authorities will offer rewards to those

who report on individuals advocating a “greater Tibetan area,” a “high degree of autonomy” or the “Middle Way,” by “publishing, making, printing, reproducing, distributing, disseminating, mailing, storing and transporting publications (including online publications).”

The new measures in the Tibet Autonomous Region, which follow those [adopted at the national level in 2018](#), now render illegal content in any form of publication found to be “endangering national unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity” as well as “attacking

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the central government's strategies for governing Tibet and the Party's ethnic and religious policies." The defamation of the Chinese Communist Party and state leaders, as well as any challenging of party leadership and China's socialist system are also now deemed criminal acts. As a result, it is in effect any legitimate criticism of the

Chinese leadership and government that is punishable.

The measures also reinforce the subversive tactics China employs to encourage individuals to report on one another. Depending on the kind of information reported, indicators will indeed receive

between 1,000 and 600,000 Yuan (approximately between 130 and 78,000 Euros), and their identity will be protected. It is feared this will further deepen and exacerbate tensions and distrust in Tibetan society, which are already extremely high due to the climate of oppression and total surveillance imposed by Beijing.

## CONCERNS ABOUT CONSTRUCTION AT UNESCO-PROTECTED JOKHANG TEMPLE

THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET IS CONCERNED ABOUT REPORTS OF CONSTRUCTION AT THE JOKHANG - TIBET'S MOST SACRED TEMPLE - IN LHASA.



Images of Chinese-style pavilions being constructed in front of the Jokhang Temple in Lhasa.  
(Photo: Woesser via RFA Chinese website)

According to a [report](#) by Beijing-based Tibetan writer Woesser on Radio Free Asia on 5 May, Chinese authorities have started constructing two steel pavilions at the Jokhang Temple. Although the temple is currently inaccessible to the public, construction became visible when the circumambulation path around it was reopened to the public on 28 April, after its closure due to coronavirus. Chinese state media [reported](#) on 7 May that an investment was to be made into the "protection" of the site, but did not provide any information

about the scope and extent of construction to be undertaken.

The Jokhang Temple is an ancient and uniquely Tibetan shrine of worship, for centuries attracting pilgrims from all over Tibet and the Tibetan Buddhist world. Built in the 7th century, it is a remarkable piece of Tibetan architecture, and in 2000, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee [approved](#) its inclusion as part of the World Heritage-protected "Historic Ensemble of the Potala Palace, Lhasa."

But the pavilions being constructed by Chinese authorities appear to adhere to a Chinese architectural style incompatible with traditional Tibetan architecture. In addition, eyewitness accounts and photographic evidence show that one of the new pavilions is being built over the stone pillar on which is inscribed the imperial Sino-Tibetan Treaty of 821/23 AD that delineated the frontiers of the Tibetan Empire and Tang Dynasty China. A former resident of Lhasa now living in exile told ICT that it is a possible move to give visitors the impression that Tibet has been a part of China since ancient times.

ICT believe that Tibetans have the right to enjoy their cultural heritage, which must be protected so it can be passed on to future generations to enjoy, and has requested that the UNESCO World Heritage Center in Paris make available the details about the construction site and whether it affects the UNESCO-protected "Outstanding Universal Value" of the Jokhang Temple. It further urged UNESCO to protect such significant Tibetan cultural heritage sites as the Jokhang Temple from unacceptable interference from Chinese authorities, particularly in view of the state media reports announcing investment in the site.



## CONCERNS ABOUT CHINA'S APPOINTMENT TO IMPORTANT UN HUMAN RIGHTS PANEL

ON 1 APRIL, CHINA WAS APPOINTED TO A KEY UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL PANEL, GIVING IT SIGNIFICANT LEVERAGE OVER THE SELECTION OF UN INDEPENDENT HUMAN RIGHTS EXPERTS. ICT VIEWS THIS MOVE AS A BLOW FOR GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS.



Jiang Duan, Minister at China's mission to the UN in Geneva. (Photo: UN Watch)

Jiang Duan, minister at the Chinese Mission in Geneva, was appointed to the UN Human Rights Council's Consultative Group, a body that plays an important role in selecting UN human rights investigators, where he will serve as the representative of the Asia-Pacific states. This means China will now be able to influence the selection of at least 17 UN human rights mandate-holders over the next year, who investigate, monitor and publicly report on issues such as freedom of speech, enforced disappearances and arbitrary detention. Although Jiang Duan joined the group in his personal capacity, there is little doubt that he will promote the interests of the Chinese government.

The International Campaign for Tibet is concerned about this appointment, which represents a severe blow to the

credibility of the international human rights system. In recent years, China has demonstrated a hostile attitude towards the international human rights system, including by challenging the universality and interdependence of human rights, obstructing civil society participation to the UN Human Rights Council, or making a mockery of established human rights mechanisms such as the Universal Periodic Review. The Chinese government has also repeatedly denied access to Tibet for the very same UN experts it now will decide upon.

The international community should therefore apply particular vigilance with regard to the appointment of candidates for human rights mandates in the coming year. It needs to monitor closely any possible efforts from China to weaken these key human rights tools.

## NEW STUDY SAYS CHINA LIMITED RIVER FLOW FROM TIBET TO SOUTHEAST ASIA

THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT USED ITS DAMS ON A MAJOR RIVER IN TIBET TO PREVENT THE FLOW OF WATER DOWNSTREAM LAST YEAR, ACCORDING TO A NEW STUDY. THIS CONTRIBUTED TO A DEVASTATING DROUGHT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA.

The report, published on 10 April by US-based organization Eyes on Earth Inc., focuses on the Dzachu river (better known in English as the Mekong). Looking at data from a 28-year period, starting in 1992, it shows the amount of water expected to flow naturally from the Upper Mekong was usually close to the amount that actually reached a water gauge at Chiang Saen in Thailand. However, the study says the "relationship between gauge height and natural flow deteriorated after 2012, when a couple of major dams and reservoirs were built. This greatly restricted the amount and timing of water released upstream."

The situation worsened in 2019, when recorded river levels in the Lower Mekong were some of its lowest ever. According to the study, there was "above-average" natural flow in the Upper Mekong at that time, but the water simply never made it past China's dams to reach downstream countries. While the Chinese government was holding back water, Southeast Asian countries were facing a severe drought that robbed farmers and fishers of their livelihoods and dried up parts of the river completely. *"The dams greatly expand institutional capacity to regulate the river flow," the study notes, "with corresponding impacts downstream that need to be addressed through holistic solutions."*

The report confirms what the International Campaign for Tibet and other groups have stressed for many years — that China's uncontrolled exploitation of Tibet's water represents too great a danger for the people of Southeast Asia and beyond, not to mention for Tibetans themselves.

[\*The study from Eyes on Earth is available here.\*](#)

## POLITICAL PRISONER FOCUS

### DEATH OF TIBETAN MONK CHOEKYI

TIBETAN MONK AND FORMER POLITICAL PRISONER CHOEKYI [DIED LATE IN THE AFTERNOON OF 7 MAY](#) AFTER YEARS OF TORTURE AND ILL TREATMENT IN PRISON. HE WAS JAILED FOR WEARING A T-SHIRT CELEBRATING THE DALAI LAMA'S BIRTHDAY.



Choekyi was arrested in 2015 and sentenced to four years imprisonment on charges of conducting “separatist activities,” for wearing a t-shirt celebrating the Dalai Lama’s 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday and sending his good wishes on social media. Due to his poor health, which deteriorated due to torture and ill treatment in detention, he was let out of prison in January 2019, five months before the end of his sentence. Since then he was living in his hometown in Serthar township in Eastern Tibet, kept under surveillance and harassed by the authorities.

In January 2018, the European Parliament [passed an emergency resolution](#) raising Choekyi’s case when he was known to be in serious ill health in prison. The resolution urged “the Chinese Government to allow his relatives and the lawyers of his choice to visit him and, in particular, to provide him with adequate medical care.” Not only was he denied healthcare in custody; he was also not allowed to seek medical treatment even after his release.

The case of Choekyi is part of a pattern of the endemic use of torture by Chinese authorities in Tibet. It also reveals the pernicious habit of prison authorities releasing prisoners in a near-death condition because of torture, in order to avoid responsibility for their deaths in custody.

His passing follows the deaths of two other former political prisoners earlier this spring: [Tashi Phuntsok](#), who was sentenced to jail alongside the revered activist Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, and [Tsering Bagdro](#), who served eight years in prison for protesting against Chinese policies towards the Dalai Lama and Tibet.

### UN HUMAN RIGHTS EXPERTS ASK CHINA TO LIFT CHARGES AGAINST ANYA SENG DRA

A group of UN human rights experts have [urged](#) the Chinese government to drop charges against Tibetan environmental activist and human rights defender Anya Sengdra, who was [sentenced to seven years](#) last December for “provoking agitation” and gathering people “to disrupt public order.” ICT welcome this important call, as Anya Sengdra was condemned solely for his legitimate work as part of the systematic suppression of social engagement, religious or cultural expression in Tibet against abuses by the authorities. Anya Sengdra had appealed against his sentence, but his lawyer announced on 17 June that [his appeal was rejected](#). ICT continues to call for his immediate release.

## VIDEO SUGGESTION

### ONLINE PANEL DISCUSSION ON THE OCCASION OF THE PANCHEN LAMA’S BIRTHDAY



On 25 April, the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery – the traditional seat of Panchen Lamas, which has been re-established in India following China’s annexation of Tibet –

hosted a panel discussion to mark the 31<sup>st</sup> birthday of the 11<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama of Tibet Gedhun Choekyi Nyima.

The event, held virtually due to COVID-19 restrictions, brought together the President of the Central Tibetan Administration, Lobsang Sangay; the Abbot of the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, Zeekyab Rinpoche; Human Rights Watch’ China Director, Sophie Richardson; Canadian MP, Arif Virani; Member of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, Tenzin Dorjee; and ICT President Matteo Meccaci. They exchanged views on the current situation of religious freedom in Tibet and possible ways to renew the global campaign for the Panchen Lama’s release.

The 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the disappearance of the Panchen Lama fell on 17 May this year. One of the most important figures in Tibetan Buddhism, he was kidnapped by China in 1995 when he was only six years old. He has not been seen since and the Chinese government continually refuses to disclose his whereabouts and give access to him to independent experts to verify his wellbeing. In recent weeks, several political figures around the world have joined the call for his release, including in [Belgium](#), [Scotland](#), the [Czech Republic](#), [Switzerland](#), [Germany](#), [Italy](#), [the UK](#), and in the [European Parliament](#).

[Watch the video recording of the online panel discussion on the Panchen Lama’s birthday here.](#)



# TIBET BRIEF

JUNE 2020

A REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET



## UPCOMING EVENTS

- **30 JUNE:**  
Tibet Talks Europe: Online panel discussion on EU-China relations and Tibet and the EU German Presidency (more information on the flyer below)
- **30 JUNE – 20 JULY:**  
44<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Human Rights Council
- **1 JULY:**  
Start of the German EU Presidency
- **6 JULY:**  
His Holiness the Dalai Lama's 85<sup>th</sup> birthday



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET  
*presents*

**TIBET TALKS EUROPE**

*Conversations about Tibet with  
engaging thinkers, leaders, activists and artists*

**Live panel on EU-China relations and Tibet:  
How much space for human rights during the  
German EU presidency ?**

From July 1 on, Germany will hold the EU Presidency for the following six months. What should Berlin and the EU aim to achieve in terms of the situation in Tibet? How should the EU react to the CCP's worsening human rights record? How should a more assertive, united and ambitious EU policy look like? The participants will discuss these issues from European and German perspectives. ICT will present its five points of action on Tibet which have been submitted to the German government.

**Tuesday, June 30<sup>th</sup>, at 15:00**  
(Central European Timezone)

**Watch live & send in your questions:**

 [www.savetibet.nl/live](https://www.savetibet.nl/live)

 International Campaign for Tibet Deutschland e.V.

**GUEST SPEAKERS :**



**Gyde Jensen**  
Chairwoman of the Human Rights Committee, German Bundestag



**Raphael Glucksmann**  
Vice-Chair of the Sub-committee on Human Rights, European Parliament



**Vincent Metten**  
EU Policy Director, International Campaign for Tibet (EU Brussels office)

**MODERATOR:**



**Kai Müller**  
Executive Director, International Campaign for Tibet (Germany office)