

# TIBET BRIEF

MARCH 2019

A REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

## TIBETANS AROUND THE WORLD COMMEMORATE THE 60<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE TIBETAN UPRISING DAY

ON 10 MARCH, TIBETANS AROUND THE WORLD MARKED THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE TIBETAN NATIONAL UPRISING OF 1959 IN LHASA.



The commemoration was particularly significant this year as 2019 marks the 60th year in exile – almost a lifetime – for the Dalai Lama and the many Tibetans who fled their homeland after China's brutal suppression of the uprising against its occupation.

Exiled Tibetans and Tibet activists mobilized in large numbers across the world to mark the event, including in the United States, Japan, Taiwan, Australia and India, as well

as in several European cities including Brussels (see below). To show solidarity and support, many cities also raised the Tibetan flag on their townhalls.

In Dharamsala, the Tibetan government in exile invited a number of foreign intellectuals, leaders and parliamentarians - including the former President of the Republic of Botswana Seretse Khama Ian Khama and President of the European Parliament's Tibet Interest

group Thomas Mann – for a special event, where President Dr. Lobsang Sangay pledged that Tibetans will continue their stance of resistance until the issue of Tibet is resolved.

In Tibet itself, tightened controls were implemented during the anniversary period, China clearly wanting to prevent a repetition of the situation in March 2008, when an unprecedented wave of protests on the

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Tibetan Plateau brought international attention. As a result, the Tibet Autonomous Region [was closed to tourists for an unusually long time this year](#), between 30 January and 1 April. Tibetans were also under intense scrutiny in the run up to 10 March; Radio Free Asia for example reported that local authorities [blocked travel by Tibetans living in a country in Sichuan's Kardze \(in Chinese, Ganzi\) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture](#) until after 10 March, ordering them to stay at home. Surveillance of Tibetan pilgrims from the eastern Tibetan areas of Kham and Amdo was [intensified](#) and all areas around the Barkor and the Potala Palace were guarded by both uniformed and plainclothed Chinese security officials. At a press conference in Beijing, Tibet Autonomous Region Party Secretary Wu Yingjie reasserted the Communist Party's hard line against the Dalai Lama, stating that he hadn't done "a single good thing" for the region since he escaped into exile 60 years ago.

ICT stood with Tibetans in exile commemorating the Uprising in a number of cities, and took the opportunity to honor the tenacity, courage and determination of the Tibetan people, who despite great challenges continue to peacefully resist China's oppression and make great efforts and sacrifices to preserve and promote their identity, culture, language and traditions.

#### MORE ON THIS ISSUE:

- [ICT statement on the 60th anniversary of the Tibetan Uprising Day](#)
- [Statement of the President of the Central Tibetan Administration on the 60th Anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising Day](#)



In an [interview](#) published in *TIME* magazine, the Dalai Lama reflected on a life spent away from his native Tibet. (Photo: Ruven Afanador for *TIME*).

## 4<sup>TH</sup> EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY RALLY FOR TIBET HELD IN BRUSSELS

ON 10 MARCH, AROUND 3,500 TIBETANS AND SUPPORTERS FROM ALL OVER EUROPE GATHERED IN BRUSSELS FOR A MASS RALLY TO MARK THE 60<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE TIBETAN NATIONAL UPRISING.



Participants braved strong winds as they marched through the streets of the European capital to raise awareness about the continuing plight of the Tibetan people and call for renewed support from Europe against China's human rights abuses in Tibet.

They then gathered at Le Mont des Arts for an intense programme including speeches from the Home Minister of the Central Tibetan Administration, supportive members of European and national parliaments and NGOs. Former political prisoner Dhondup Wangchen, currently in Europe for the first time, also participated and stressed the importance of international support, which contributed to his release and that of countless other political prisoners. Also attending were Tibetan children and a group of Tibetan women from the 'Drapchi Singing Nuns', who enthused the crowds with beautiful and emotional songs.

[Click on the picture to watch a short film of the rally](#)

A photo album is also available [here](#).

## CHINA'S RESPONSE TO UN RIGHTS REVIEW BLATANTLY IGNORES ITS PERSECUTION OF TIBETANS

**DURING ITS 40<sup>TH</sup> REGULAR SESSION IN GENEVA, THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL ADOPTED THE FINAL REPORT OF CHINA'S THIRD UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW (UPR), WHICH TOOK PLACE ON 6 NOVEMBER LAST YEAR. CHINA'S CONDUCT DURING THE PROTEST HAS BEEN A MOCKERY OF THE IMPORTANT MECHANISM THAT THE UPR IS, AND SHOWED THAT THE COUNTRY HAS NO INTENTION OF RESPECTING INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS.**

On 14 March, the UN Human Rights Council discussed China's response to the around 350 recommendations it had received from member and observer states at the UPR, ranging from calls for religious freedom and the respect of the rights of Tibetans and Uyghurs to the release of Human Rights Defenders.

It came as no surprise that China accepted the recommendations that applauded and whitewashed its policies and rejected those that called for improvements regarding the rule of law and freedoms of expression, assembly, association and religion. The Chinese government also flatly denied unfettered access for UN experts to the country, indicating its aggressive stance on access to regions such as Tibet and Xinjiang (known to Uyghurs as East Turkestan).

More cynically, China bluntly stated that it would accept some of the recommendations, and that some of them, such as calls to protect religious freedom, were «already implemented.» For the victims of China's repression, it is utterly beyond belief to hear the Chinese government make such claims and assert that “all its citizens are equal in front of the law.”



*“People in Tibet enjoy [a] free and happy life,” stated the Chinese delegation during the UPR outcome discussion, blatantly denying the human rights crisis in Tibet. (Photo: UN Web TV)*

Tibetans in Tibet have not had the chance to contribute freely to this UPR. At the report's adoption on 14 March, China also paraded a number of its GoNGOs (for «governmental NGOs», ie fake NGOs that have the NGO status but in fact are dependent on the government) to deliver statements in praise of China's human rights record.

ICT's Kai Müller spoke on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights and set the record straight about the grim reality of human rights in Tibet. “We are concerned about the ongoing repressive policies Tibetans are being subjected to, and which, as apparent from the responses by the Chinese government, it is not willing to change,” he stated. “This is a threat not only to Tibetans, but also to international human rights principles and the credibility of the human rights protection system as a whole.” Some states and organizations, including the European Union, Germany and France, also used their item 4 statements

to call on China to uphold its national and international obligation.

The uncooperative attitude of the Chinese government was also made clear at a [side event](#) to this Human Rights Council session, when a Chinese diplomat tried to silence exiled Tibetans speakers, including former political prisoner and human rights defender Dhondup Wangchen. Only by consulting the UN Security Service could the Beijing's representative be stopped.

### MORE ON THIS ISSUE:

- [Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review](#)



## EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARIANS DEMAND UNFETTERED ACCESS TO TIBET

**IN AN OPINION PIECE PUBLISHED ON 14 MARCH, A GROUP OF CROSS-PARTY PARLIAMENTARIANS FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION AND EUROPEAN STATES HAVE CALLED FOR UNFETTERED ACCESS TO TIBET FOR EUROPEAN CITIZENS, BASED ON THE NEED FOR A MORE BALANCED RELATIONSHIP WITH CHINA BEYOND TRADE.**

In the article, published in EURACTIV and in the French newspaper l'Obs, the 35 signatories argue that the current isolation of the region from outside scrutiny does not only allow China to continue violating the rights of Tibetans without accountability but also represents a threat for our rights and values in Europe, which China takes advantage of.

Recalling progress on this issue in the United States, where a "Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act" was adopted at the end of

last year, they write: *"It is now up to us in Europe to consider concrete ways to rebalance our relationship with China – not only in terms of trade, but also in regard to respect for fundamental rights like freedom of movement and of the press. Demanding access to Tibet should be a concrete first step in this direction. If we fail to take that step, it will not only prevent justice for the Tibetan people, but will also give a green light to China to continue manipulating our societies and eventually restrict the*

*very rights and freedoms on which our democracies depend."*

ICT takes this opportunity to thank the signatories of the piece, which represents a timely initiative as the Tibet Autonomous Region has been closed to foreigners this year again around the anniversary of the Tibetan Uprising day.

Click [here](#) to read the full opinion piece. The French version is available [here](#).

## NEW TRAINING CAMP FOR PARTY CADRES IN TIBET

**IN A DISTURBING INDICATOR OF XI JINPING'S FOCUS ON TOTAL IDEOLOGICAL CONTROL AND DEEPENING SUPPRESSION IN TIBET, THE CHINESE STATE MEDIA HAS ANNOUNCED THE OPENING OF A NEW TRAINING CAMP IN TIBET AIMING TO "CORRECT" AND MOLD THE THINKING OF PARTY CADRES CARRYING OUT POLITICAL "EDUCATION" IN BROADER TIBETAN SOCIETY.**



This image from the Chinese state media shows an image of the completed 'Tibet Youth Palace' in Lhasa, geared towards the political 'education' of young Tibetans, scheduled to open in May. It includes a soccer field and what appear to be blocks with facilities for training and possibly residential stays. A podium and stage can also be seen.

The new "political education camp" in Shigatse is intended to provide ideological training to some of the thousands of Party cadres who have been deployed across Tibet in recent years in private homes, monasteries and schools and in line with Chinese leader

Xi Jinping's agenda of deepening control.

The Chinese state media report refers to the importance for Party cadres of changing their attitudes not just at the superficial level of reciting Party slogans, but in terms of achieving a complete ideological shift. It reflects the current approach of securitization combined with tougher attempts at rewiring Tibetan political thinking, with the stated official aim of "breaking lineage, breaking roots, breaking connections, and breaking origins" of Uyghurs and Tibetans.

Stating that daily activities will include raising the Party red flag and singing the national anthem, the ideological function of the training camp as a center of "anti-secession struggle" is underlined in the state media article. The repressive nature of the facility is clear with a reference to "paramilitary" discipline and management in order to ensure compliance, and the state

media report warns of the punitive element of "self-criticism" and the need to "correct people's thinking". The training does not only target individuals' political beliefs and the need for compliance to Party policy, but also their personal lives, consistent with the more pervasive and systematic imposition of "patriotic education" strategies across Tibet in recent years.

In a further example of the institutionalization of the process of political "re-education", Chinese state media announced the establishment of a large 'Tibet Youth Palace' in Lhasa, to be opened this May. An article in the official press said that it would be *"an important place for carrying out extracurricular activities, inheriting traditional culture and strengthening patriotism education, which provides scientific, cultural, artistic space with ethnic characteristics for youth in the whole southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region."*

## CONFERENCE ON CHINA'S RE-EDUCATION CAMPS HELD IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

ON 19 MARCH, A CONFERENCE ON CHINA'S RE-EDUCATION CAMPS AND THE PERSECUTION OF ETHNIC AND RELIGIOUS GROUPS LIKE UYGHURS AND TIBETANS WAS HELD IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT.



Hosted by Member of the European Parliament Thomas Mann, the event was aimed at discussing developments in China's Xinjiang Autonomous Region, where millions of Muslim Uyghurs are currently detained in so-called "re-education camps," and to explore ways the European Union can address this human rights crisis.

First panel speakers - including President of the World Uyghur Congress Dolkun Isa, academic Vanessa Frangville, journalist Ursula Gauthier, and Board member of International Society for Human Rights Man-Yan Ng - gave their assessment of the current situation. They recalled China's long history of control and persecution of its citizens, and argued that the situation in Xinjiang (also known to Uyghurs as East Turkestan) amounted to cultural genocide. Vincent Metten, EU Policy Director of the International Campaign for Tibet, also drew

parallels with the situation in Tibet, where Party Secretary in Xinjiang's Chen Quanguo was previously posted and first developed his control and surveillance tools, and where many Tibetans are also subjected to "political re-education" campaigns.

The second panel, composed of Member of the European Parliament Bas Belder, former President of the European Economic and Social Committee Henri Malosse, Sinologist Marie Holzman and Deputy Director of the NGO Human Rights Without Frontiers Lea Perekrests, made a number of recommendations for the European Union and its Member States to answer on the plight of Uyghurs, including by protecting Uyghurs refugees in Europe from forced deportation back to China and making clear to China that the strong partnership it seeks with the EU is tied to the respect of the rights of its people.

## POLITICAL PRISONER FOCUS LODOE GYATSO



According to information received by the Tibetan Center for Democracy and Human Rights (TCHRD), Lodee Gyatso - a former political prisoner who

was detained again last year - and his wife Gyaki were secretly sentenced in 2018 to 18 years and two years in prison respectively in Sog (Ch: Suo) County, Nagchu (Ch: Naqu) Prefecture, Tibet Autonomous Region, the Tibetan province of Kham.

As reported earlier by ICT, (see Tibet Brief [edition 63— March 2018](#)), Lodee Gyatso, 57, was detained on 28 January last year after carrying out a solo demonstration outside the Potala Palace in Lhasa. Prior to his protest, he had announced in a video filmed by his wife of his intent to stage a protest calling for world peace. He described his actions as part of a long campaign of non-violent Tibetan protest.

The [report](#) of TCHRD states that information about the couple's sentencing became available to sources inside Tibet in November 2018, although the exact date and charges remain unknown. There is no information about their condition and whereabouts, but based on available information, TCHRD confirmed that Gyatso had been held in secret detention since January 2018. The exact date for Gakyi's detention cannot be immediately confirmed although she too was detained incommunicado and subsequently imprisoned for two years.

*"The blanket of secrecy surrounding this case is shocking and deeply distressing when a peaceful activist is given such a heavy sentence simply for expressing his opinion,"* said executive director of TCHRD Tsering Tsomo.



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### • 9 APRIL

EU-China Summit in Brussels and protest in front of the EU institutions headquarters at Schuman roundabout (more info at <https://www.facebook.com/events/2016946441691957>)

### • 11-13 APRIL

Summit of China and Central and Eastern European Countries (16+1) in Dubrovnik, Croatia

### • 23-26 MAY

European Elections



## READING SUGGESTION

### THE HANDSOME MONK AND OTHER STORIES, BY TSERING DÖNDRUP

Editor: Columbia University Press

Publication date: January 2019

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

With a love for the sparse yet vivid language of traditional Tibetan life, Tsering Döndrup tells tales of hypocritical lamas, crooked officials, violent conflicts, and loyal yaks.

His nomad characters find themselves in scenarios that are at once strange and familiar, satirical yet poignant. The stories are set in the fictional county of Tsezhung, where his characters live their lives against the striking backdrop of Tibet's natural landscape and go about their daily business to the ever-present rhythms of Tibetan religious life. Tsering Döndrup confronts pressing issues: the corruption of religious institutions; the indignities and injustices of Chinese rule; poverty and social ills such as gambling and alcoholism; and the hardships of a minority group struggling to maintain its identity in the face of overwhelming odds. Ranging in style from playful updates of traditional storytelling techniques to narrative experimentation, Tsering Döndrup's tales pay tribute to the resilience of Tibetan culture.