

TIBETAN UPRISING DAY 2022: RALLIES AND REMEMBRANCES

ON 10 MARCH, TIBETANS AND TIBET SUPPORTERS RALLIED ACROSS THE WORLD IN HONOR OF TIBETAN UPRISING DAY, REMEMBERING THOSE WHO HAVE PERISHED AS A RESULT OF THEIR NONVIOLENT RESISTANCE AND EXPRESSING THEIR SOLIDARITY WITH TIBETANS INSIDE TIBET.



Protesters in front of the Chinese Embassy in Brussels. (Photo: ICT)

This year marked the 63rd anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising of 1959, when thousands of Tibetans took to the streets of Lhasa, Tibet's capital, to protest China's invasion and occupation of their homeland.

The formal commemoration by the [Central Tibetan Administration](#) took place in [Dharamsala, India](#), with guests from the Czech Senate (including the Senate's Vice-President Jiri Oberfalzer), and Indian Parliamentarians.

Exiled Tibetans and Tibet activists also mobilized in large numbers [across the world to mark the event](#), including in the United States, Taiwan, as well as in several European cities including Brussels. To show solidarity and support, many cities also [raised the Tibetan flag](#) above their town halls.

In Tibet itself, [surveillance and controls were as usual tightened during the anniversary period](#), with military vehicles out in force in Lhasa, while many streets were blocked off.

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INTERNATIONAL
CAMPAIGN
FOR TIBET

ICT EUROPE

Funenpark 1D
1018 AK Amsterdam,
The Netherlands
Phone: +31 (0)20 3308265
Fax: +31 (0)20 3308266
icteurope@savetibet.nl

ICT BRUSSELS

15, rue de la linière
1060 Brussels
Belgium
Phone: +32 (0)2 609 44 10
Fax: +32 (0)2 609 44 32
info@savetibet.eu

ICT GERMANY

Schonhauser Allee 163
10435 Berlin
Germany
Tel.: +49 (0)30 27879086
Fax: +49 (0)30 27879087
info@savetibet.de

ICT

1825 Jefferson Place, NW
Washington, DC 20036
United States of America
Phone: +1 (1) 202-785-1515
Fax: (202) 785-434
info@savetibet.org

TIBET BRIEF

MARCH 2022

A REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

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This year's Tibetan Uprising Day commemorations saw the ongoing crisis in Ukraine being prominently highlighted by speakers. Many drew parallels with Ukraine and what happened in Tibet 73 years ago – when a large, powerful neighbor forcefully invaded a smaller country.

[Click here to read ICT's statement on the 63rd anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising Day.](#)

[Click here to read the statement of the Central Tibetan Administration on the 63rd anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising Day.](#)



A protestor showing his support for the Ukrainian people during the rally in Brussels. (Photo: ICT)

Belgian Member of Parliament Samuel Cogolati speaks at the rally in Brussels. (Photo: ICT)

ICT CALLS ON THE EU TO SANCTION HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATORS IN TIBET

TOGETHER WITH THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE WORLD UYGHUR CONGRESS, THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET HAS CALLED ON THE EU TO SANCTION ADDITIONAL CHINESE OFFICIALS FOR THEIR ROLE IN SYSTEMATIC HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS, INCLUDING IN TIBET.

In March 2021, for the first time since the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown, the EU sanctioned four Chinese officials and one entity involved in serious human rights violations in East Turkestan with asset freezes and travel bans under its Global Human Rights Sanction Regime.

In a joint letter to EU leaders and Member States on 31 January, the three organizations said that while this first round of sanctions was a step in the right direction, they remain insufficient as they fail to encompass the full scale of the human rights violations

committed by the Chinese government. They therefore urged the EU to extend the list of individuals under restrictive measures to incorporate perpetrators of human rights violations not only taking place against Uyghurs but also against Tibetans and other ethnic and religious groups across the whole country.

The organizations submitted to the EU the names of four Chinese officials who are involved in the designing and implementation of the Chinese government's repressive and assimilation policies against Uyghurs and Tibetans and who should be held accountable.

FRANCE MUST STAND UP FOR TIBETANS' HUMAN RIGHTS DURING ITS EU PRESIDENCY, ICT SAYS

WITH FRANCE TAKING ON THE PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET HAS CALLED ON THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT TO DO ITS UTMOST TO PROMOTE A STRONG AND UNITED POSITION OF THE EUROPEAN UNION TO ADVANCE HUMAN RIGHTS ON THE TIBETAN PLATEAU.

In a briefing paper released ahead of the French Presidency, which started on 1 January, and shared with the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ICT highlighted the dire human rights situation in Tibet, and presented five points of action through which the European Union could actively contribute to help improve the situation:

- 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;
- Demand the respect of religious freedom for all Tibetan Buddhists, including those outside Tibet, and the right of Tibetan Buddhists to decide the succession of the Dalai Lama without interference from the Chinese government;
- Urge unfettered and reciprocal access to Tibet for UN experts as well as foreign diplomats, parliamentarians, journalists and non-governmental organizations;
- 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;
- Actively support the resumption of Tibetan-Chinese dialogue.

[*ICT's briefing paper \(«Briser le silence sur la crise du Tibet: Cinq points d'action pour la Présidence française»\) is available in French here.*](#)

UN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSIONER URGED TO SPEAK UP ON TIBET

AT THE 49TH SESSION OF THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL, THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS MICHELLE BACHELET ANNOUNCED PLANS FOR A VISIT TO CHINA IN MAY 2022.

While the first session of the Human Rights Council for 2022 has been focused on Ukraine, in her regular [oral update](#) on the work of her office and human rights developments on 8 March, the high commissioner indicated that her office had "reached an agreement with the Government of China for a visit." ICT is calling on the UN high commissioner to clarify the terms of such a visit and to include Tibetan areas in the visit, which can only be meaningful if unfettered access is fully guaranteed.

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US APPOINTS NEW SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR TIBETAN ISSUES

THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET HAS WELCOMED THE APPOINTMENT OF UZRA ZEYA AS THE NEW SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR TIBETAN ISSUES IN THE US STATE DEPARTMENT.



The appointment of Zeya - the undersecretary of state for civilian security, democracy and human rights - was announced by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on 20 December last year.

Zeya, who has decades of high-level experience in US foreign policy - including on the issue of Tibet - now serves as the Biden administration's point person on efforts to help resolve the Tibetan issue, promote Tibetan identity, protect Tibetan culture and heritage and support the human rights of the Tibetan people. She will also coordinate US efforts to address the humanitarian needs of Tibetan refugees and promote sustainable economic development and environmental conservation on the Tibetan Plateau.

ICT encourages governments – including in the European Union – to actively seek ground for cooperation with her and joint initiatives to improve the rights of Tibetans.

TIBET BRIEF

MARCH 2022

A REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

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ICT's Vincent Metten delivering a statement on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights.

During the interactive dialogue with the High Commissioner, Vincent Metten from ICT Europe, on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, expressed "disappointment about the High Commissioner's silence on the worsening human rights situation inside Tibet". He also called for "prompt, unfettered and independent access to all parts of the People's Republic of China, in particular Tibetan areas, by independent international human rights experts."

The statement was notably interrupted by a point of order by the Chinese delegation, complaining that it was "attacking the Communist Party" and "violating relevant rules and regulations." The intervention was, however, unsuccessful, as the chairing Vice-President of the Human Rights Council allowed the statement to continue. Another statement raising the situation in Tibet, delivered by the Society for Threatened Peoples, was also interrupted by a point of order from the Chinese delegation. ICT remains concerned about renewed attempts by the Chinese government to curtail freedom of speech and space for civil society at the Human Rights Council.

ICT was able to deliver three other oral statements at the session – one about torture, another on human rights defenders and one under the Item 4 General Debate ("Human Rights situations that require the Council's attention").

During the General Debate, 14 countries and

the European Union also highlighted China as a human rights situation of concern. Seven countries brought up the situation in Tibet: Denmark, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. The European Union raised Tibet in a [written statement](#), and notably called for the immediate and unconditional release of human rights activists, including Dorjee Tashi, Go Sherab Gyatso and Rinchen Tsultrim.



The Chinese delegate. (Photo: Screenshot from UN Web TV)

POPULAR TIBETAN SINGER SELF-IMMOLATES IN LHASA

YOUNG TIBETAN SINGER TSEWANG NORBU SELF-IMMOLATED IN LHASA ON 25 FEBRUARY, LEADING TO HIS DEATH, RELIABLE SOURCES HAVE INFORMED THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET.



Tsewang Norbu

Some sources in the Tibetan capital, citing indirect eyewitness accounts, told ICT that Tsewang Norbu attempted his self-immolation at the Barpokaling stupa, at the right corner in front of the iconic Potala Palace, the historical winter palace of the Dalai Lamas. One source confirmed that the singer was severely burned and died in the People's Hospital of Tibet Autonomous Region in the first weekend of March.

Complicating the absence of accurate information, ICT has noted a disinformation campaign, most likely waged by Chinese state actors, to convolute information on the reported self-immolation by Tsewang. Apparently to ensure that Tsewang's death is not leaked to the outside world, security was also beefed up in the hospital as well as throughout Lhasa.

Tsewang Norbu, who was born in 1996 in Nagchu (Chinese: Naqu), Tibet Autonomous Region, was well known all over Tibet for his music, and had participated in reality television singing competitions akin to "[The Voice](#)". Besides the Tibetan imagery, the lyrics of his songs have high artistic expressions of Tibetan identity, belongingness and subtle nationalism. Born to artist parents, Tsewang however also has a maternal uncle [Sogkhar Lodoe Gyatso](#), who is a long-serving Tibetan political prisoner.

Tsewang becomes the 158th Tibetan to have self-immolated in Tibet since 2009, and the first since Ngaba (Aba) native [Yonten's self-immolation in November 2019](#).

CHINA DEMOLISHES IMPORTANT BUDDHA STATUES, DETAINS TIBETANS

IN A NEW ATTACK AGAINST TIBETAN CULTURE AND RELIGION, CHINESE AUTHORITIES DEMOLISHED BUDDHA STATUES AROUND A PROMINENT MONASTERY IN EASTERN TIBET.



Photo of the previously intact Buddha statue in Drango county in Kardze.
(Photo: Tibet Watch)

Reports say that beginning on 12 December 2021, a 99-foot-tall Buddha statue in Drango (Chinese: Luhuo) county in the Kardze (Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan province was demolished. In the following days, another three-storey Jampa (Maitreya or future Buddha) statue as well as 45 Buddhist prayer wheels, were also destroyed. The Drango county authorities claimed that construction documents were not approved and that the height of the statue violated local building codes. On 28 February, Radio Free Asia further [reported](#) that a third statue had also been demolished.

The authorities also arbitrarily [detained a number of Tibetan monks](#) on suspicion that they informed the outside world about the demolitions. Statues of the Buddha are of particular significance to Tibetan Buddhists and are an important part of Buddhist beliefs.

ICT calls on the Chinese authorities to respect the religious freedom and cultural rights of the Tibetan people, including those of Drango. Those detained should be immediately released, as they have been detained solely for spreading information about the incidents.

ICT ANALYSIS: SINICIZING TIBETANS IN A CHINESE NATION-STATE

FOR IMPLEMENTING THE TOP-LEVEL DESIGN OF THE “SINICIZATION” OF TIBETANS, THE CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY CONVENED AN “ETHNIC WORK CONFERENCE” IN LHASA, IN EARLY FEBRUARY.

The meeting was attended by provincial leaders of the Tibet Autonomous Region’s Communist Party, government, political body, judiciary, military and armed police.

Following the 10th Tibetan Autonomous Region party congress in late November 2021, at which TAR Party Secretary Wang Junzheng extolled the party’s success in Sinicizing Tibetans in the past five years, the party convened the latest Tibet ethnic

conference to further entrench Beijing’s agenda of “forging a sense of community of the Chinese nation.”

With the Tibetan resistance firmly repressed through various preemptive “stability maintenance” mechanisms, the Chinese Communist Party appears to be ready to roll out more governance measures while also being vigilant to “look for and prevent major risks and hidden dangers in the ethnic

field.” ICT has highlighted two areas of major concern in its analysis of the latest Tibet party ethnic work conference and the 10th party congress: The party appears to be bringing changes to the governance system in terms of “capacity for ethnic affairs in Tibet”, and is also stepping up bidirectional migration into and outside Tibet.

[Click here to read ICT’s full analysis.](#)

POLITICAL PRISONER FOCUS

GO SHERAB GYATSO

THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET IS ALARMED BY THE SENTENCING OF GO SHERAB GYATSO TO 10 YEARS' IMPRISONMENT, AND CALLS ON THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT TO RESPECT HIS FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS.



Officials from the Tibet Autonomous Region detained Gyatso, a prominent Tibetan Buddhist monk and scholar, in Chengdu in late October 2020 ([see Tibet Brief n°80 – April 2021](#)). In December 2021, Radio Free Asia [reported](#) that he

had been sentenced the previous month in a secret trial. No details were available regarding the charges on which he was convicted.

Gyatso's case received international attention, with [UN Human Rights experts raising concerns about his arbitrary detention](#). In response, China [told the UN](#) that Gyatso was detained "in accordance with the law on suspicion of inciting secession", but did not specify what criminal activities Go Sherab had allegedly engaged in. "Secession" is often used by Chinese authorities as a pretext to persecute Tibetans for expressing support for Tibetan culture or for voicing dissent.

There is no evidence that Go Sherab Gyatso, who is in his 40s, received a fair trial. In addition, his health has [reportedly recently worsened](#); he suffers from a chronic lung condition, and may not be receiving adequate medical treatment in prison.

The Chinese government must release him immediately, as he was imprisoned and sentenced solely for peacefully expressing his views.

RELEASE OF KUNCHOK TSEPHEL

THE [TIBETAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY \(TCHRD\)](#) HAS LEARNED ABOUT THE RELEASE OF PROMINENT TIBETAN WRITER, TEACHER AND ENVIRONMENTALIST KUNCHOK TSEPHEL ON 18 MARCH AFTER SERVING MORE THAN 13 YEARS IN PRISON.



Kunchok Tsepel, an environmental officer for the Chinese government, was sentenced to 15 years imprisonment in November 2009 by a court in Gansu Province on charges of disclosing state secrets, thought to relate to articles carried on a Tibetan literary website he founded called Chodme ('Butter Lamp'). He was held incommunicado for

almost nine months and his home was ransacked by police, with his family only hearing of his whereabouts when they were summoned to court to hear the verdict and sentence passed against him.

According to TCHRD, Tsepel's prison term had been reduced by almost two years after he saved the life of a fellow prisoner and collected 'points' for exhibiting 'good behavior'. He and his family members however remain under close surveillance and he still has to serve the four years' supplementary sentence of 'deprivation of political rights', which allows the police discretionary power to impose extreme restrictions on movement and activities of former political prisoners.

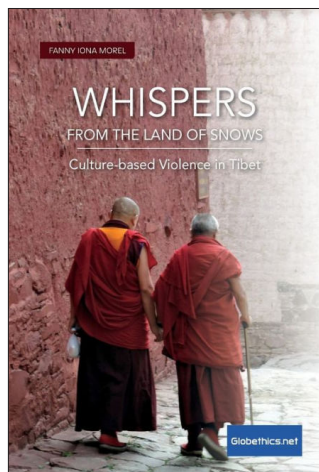


UPCOMING EVENTS

- **1 APRIL:** EU-China Summit (online)
- **21-23 APRIL:** 'Dialogue for our Future' Climate Conference with the participation of the Dalai Lama (more info: <https://www.dialogueforourfuture.com/>)
- **25 APRIL:** 33rd birthday of the 11th Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima

READING SUGGESTION

WHISPERS FROM THE LAND OF SNOWS - CULTURE-BASED VIOLENCE IN TIBET, BY FANNY IONA MOREL



In this interdisciplinary study, the author investigates the correlation between violations of cultural rights and the violence committed by state actors against a community rooted in a profoundly Buddhist society.

Based on the first-hand testimonies of Tibetan exiles who have sought asylum in Switzerland, the study uncovers the experiences, perceptions and opinions of Tibetans, most of who have suffered various forms of abuse in Tibet.

It also draws on the 2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and 2007 Declaration de

Fribourg, which reflect the essential role of cultural rights, on the concept of genocide developed by Raphael Lemkin. On this basis, it shows that several techniques of genocide were, and still are, being employed in Tibet, and how China has violently disrupted the natural process of cultural change in Tibet through forced cultural assimilation, which continues to engender violence.

[Click here to download the book.](#)