

Tibet Brief

A report of the International Campaign for Tibet



November/December 2015

New ICT report “Blue gold from the highest plateau: Tibet’s water and global climate change” published amid COP21 talks

On 8 December, 2015, the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) published its new report, which documents the devastating consequences of China’s policies on Tibet’s environment.



ICT report was presented in the margins of the COP21 at the Grand Palais in Paris on 8 December and during a Breakfast meeting at the French Senate on 9 December. In the picture, left to right: Vincent Metten, ICT’s EU Policy Director; Dicki Chhoyang, Foreign Minister of the Tibetan government in exile; and Matthieu Ricard, Buddhist monk and French interpreter of the Dalai Lama.

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The report, “[Blue gold from the highest plateau: Tibet’s water and global climate change](#)” highlights a staggering and little-known development – Tibet is a climate change epicentre that is warming nearly three times as fast as the rest of the planet. Its glaciers are melting, and its permafrost disappearing. But instead of seeking to protect this fragile high-altitude ecosystem and address the significant challenges it faces, China’s policies are re-shaping the Tibetan landscape

with devastating consequences. With water from Tibet’s rivers being diverted and the flow stemmed for electricity generation in Chinese cities far from the plateau, mining, irrigation, urbanization and other economic activities fulfilling China’s strategic objectives, the transboundary implications of China’s control over Tibet loom larger than ever.

Tibet is known as the earth’s Third Pole because of its strategic importance as the largest repository of fresh water

outside the North and South Poles. It is a critical resource to the world’s 10 most densely populated nations surrounding the plateau. Conserving the environment of the Tibetan plateau is therefore an urgent task. This report sets out a blueprint for a new approach, involving a better understanding of its unique ecology and the collaboration of all of the people who have a stake in the future of Tibet. It calls for strengthened

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participation by Tibetan communities in the development process, based on the integration of science-based conservation with Tibetan stewardship of the land. It also requires that indigenous knowledge is better understood, including the efficacy of

many traditional natural resource management practices.

Tibet needs serious attention in global talks on climate change, and China's strategies to address climate change need to involve the Tibetan people.

As His Holiness the **Dalai Lama** said: "This blue planet is our only home and Tibet is its roof. The Tibetan plateau needs to be protected, not just for Tibetans, but for the environmental health and sustainability of the entire world." ■

Visit of EUSR for Human Rights to China & 34th EU-China Human Rights dialogue held in Beijing

The 34th round of the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue was held in Beijing on 30 November 2015, following the second official visit to China of the EU Special Representative for Human Rights.

Following his visit to Tibet in 2013, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights, Stavros Lambrinidis, paid his second official visit to China between 9-14 November 2015, visiting Beijing, Guangzhou, Shenzhen and Hong Kong-SAR. His six-day visit included meetings with Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs **Li Baodong**, the State Administration for Religious Affairs, the Ministry of Public Security, the Supreme Peoples' Court and the All-China Lawyers Association. **Mr. Lambrinidis** talked with his Chinese counterparts about the human rights of persons belonging to religious and ethnic minorities, including Buddhists.

Following this visit, the European Union and China held the 34th round of their Human Rights dialogue in Beijing on 30 November and 1 December. The two-day dialogue was led by **Mr Ugo Astuto**, Acting Managing Director for Asia and the Pacific in the European External Action Service. The Chinese delegation was led by **Mr Li Junhua**, Director-General for International Organisations and Conferences, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. Many issues were on the agenda, such as pending legislation on national security issues (counter-terrorism, cybersecurity and the administration of overseas non-governmental organisations), the right to adequate housing and reform of the Hukou system, freedom of religion or belief, off-line and on-line freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and



EUSR Stavros Lambrinidis and Wang Zuo'an, Director of the Chinese State Administration for Religious Affairs.

association, the due process of law, arbitrary detention, torture and the death penalty. Concerns about the rights of minority groups, especially in Tibet and Xinjiang, were also raised by the EU. Echoing the European Parliament's enduring criticism, **ICT** has often expressed its concerns about the way the EU has conducted its human rights dialogue with China, challenging its status quo and the lack of any concrete outcomes.

To read the EU's official press release on **Mr. Lambrinidis'** visit to China, [click here](#). To read the EU's official press release on the 34th EU-China Human Rights dialogue, [click here](#). ■

Activities in the European Parliament

In the last two months, several discussions about Tibet have taken place in the European Parliament, including an exchange of views on the human rights situation (DROI) and a conference on climate change and environment degradation.



Mr Tseten S. Chhoeqyapa, Mr Vincent Metten, Csaba Sógor MEP, Mr Gabriel Lafitte, Molly Scott Cato MEP and Mr Andrew Fischer.

An exchange of views on the human rights situation in Tibet was held in Brussels on 22 October by the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI). The discussion highlighted the dire situation for human rights in Tibet, including restrictions on freedom of expression, self-immolations, arbitrary detention and torture, but also the astonishing cultural resilience demonstrated by many Tibetans despite the obstacles facing them. The speakers were **Françoise Robin**, teacher at [INALCO](http://www.inalco.org), **Marie**

Holzman, sinologist, the nephew of **Tenzin Delek Rinpoche** **Mr. Lobsang Tsering**, and **Vincent Metten**, ICT's EU Policy Director, who called on the European Union to counterbalance the "divide and conquer" strategy used by China in Europe by increasing the coordination among its Member States. A representative of the European External Action Service acknowledged that the human rights situation in China was very poor and kept deteriorating. She admitted that although the EU shares experience with countries holding human rights

dialogues with China, they were all "failing collectively to improve the human rights situation".

On 16 November, the **International Campaign for Tibet (ICT)**, in cooperation with the Office of Tibet, participated in a conference in the European Parliament on climate change and environment degradation affecting Tibet. Hosted by Members of the Parliament **Molly Scott Cato** (Greens/EFA) and **Csaba Sógor** (EPP), the event was called "Environment Degradation on the Third Pole: The Impacts of Climate Change and Resource Exploitation on the Tibetan Plateau and Beyond"; and took place just a few days before the start of the COP21 talks in Paris. **Molly Scott-Cato**, environmentalist and economist, aired concerns about the deteriorating permafrost condition on the Tibetan plateau, while guest speaker **Gabriel Lafitte**, an environmental policy consultant on Tibet for over 30 years, described how China was exploiting Tibet's vast minerals and oil reserve. **Tseten Samdup Chhoeqyapa**, Representative of **His Holiness the Dalai Lama**, also highlighted a recent study by Chinese scientists at Nanjing University of Information Science and Technology, which blames the worsening heatwaves in Europe on the decreasing snow cover on the Tibetan Plateau. ■

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US Congressional delegation visit to China

Nancy Pelosi, the Democratic Leader of the United States House of Representatives, and one of the most prominent supporters of the **Dalai Lama** worldwide, made an unannounced visit to Tibet in November, meeting the Communist Party chief of the region.



Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi and her delegation in front of the Potala in Lhasa, Tibet.

Pelosi, one of the most forceful critics of China's policies and human rights record in Tibet, led a delegation of Congressional Democrats on a trip to China from 10-12 November 2015. In Tibet, the delegation met with the Secretary of the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), **Chen Quanguo**; Vice Party Secretary of TAR, **Baima Chilin**; and Party Secretary of Lhasa, **Qi Zhala**. The delegation visited UNESCO World Heritage Sites including the Potala Palace, which served as the living quarters and burial sites for former **Dalai Lamas**; and the Jokhang Temple, a sacred destination for religious pilgrims. The delegation also met and observed monks at the Sera Monastery.

Unsurprisingly, the Chinese state media

immediately spun the visit, claiming that **Ms. Pelosi** praised the Chinese government's policies. This is consistent with the usual practice by official Chinese news organizations in selectively or inaccurately quoting prominent visitors for propaganda purpose.

In a [statement](#) following her visit, **Ms Pelosi** said that the delegation indeed recognized China's commitment to building infrastructure across China, including in Tibet, and addressing climate change. But she also expressed concerns about freedom of religion and expression for the Tibetan people; the preservation of Tibet's unique cultural, religious and linguistic heritage; and diplomatic and public access to Tibet. ■

Tibetan exiles participate in preliminary election for new leadership

Exiled Tibetan communities around the world gathered on 18 October, 2015, to take part in the first stage of an election process that will determine the next Tibetan leadership in exile – including the Sikyong or Prime Minister and members of the 16th Tibetan Parliament in exile.



A Tibetan voting in Sydney, Australia

The elections were overseen by the [Tibetan election Commission](#), an independent institution with responsibilities that include supervising the elections and providing guidelines to the candidates as well as the voting public. Tibetan exiles took pride in their participation in this democratic system, sharing news and photographs of the elections in their region on social media.

This was the first step in the electoral process - the final general elections are scheduled to take place on March 20, 2016. ■

UN activities: UPR of Nepal and China's CAT Review

November has also been a busy month for ICT's work at the United Nations level, which has included activities around the Universal Periodic review (UPR) of Nepal and the review of China by the Committee Against Torture.



ICT's Kai Müller and former Tibetan political prisoner Golog Jigme hold a copy of ICT's submission to the UN Committee Against Torture.

Ahead of the Universal Periodic Review of Nepal in the Human Rights Council in Geneva on 4 November 2015, the **International Campaign for Tibet**, together with the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), organized an information meeting on the situation of Tibetan Refugees in Nepal in the Palais des Nations.

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), there were around 20,000 Tibetan refugees living in Nepal in 2011, with an additional 1,500 Tibetans living in "refugee-like situations". Yet, Nepal, which is not party to the Refugee Convention of 1951, does not officially register them or provide them with legal status. This leaves them vulnerable to arbitrary arrest and allows unjust restrictions on their freedom of movement, assembly, and expression, and a denial of their right to education and work. Moreover, the increasing

cooperation between Nepal and China, who see the Tibet issue as the defining element of China's bilateral relations with Nepal, has resulted in unprecedented levels of surveillance, threats, and arrests of members of the Tibetan community by both Nepali and Chinese state agents. Guest speakers at the event were **Mandira Sharma**, a prominent human rights lawyer from Nepal who focused on the legal approach to the issue and analysed Nepal's new Constitution, and **Tsering Passang**, a Tibetan born in Nepal and who now works for the Tibet Relief Fund based in London. He gave participants more concrete examples of the difficult situation of Tibetan refugees in Nepal and warned about the growing influence of China in the country.

At the session of the UPR in the afternoon, six States amongst the 73 that participated in the discussion raised the issue and made recommendations in this regard:

Costa Rica, France, Germany, Portugal, Spain, and the US. **ICT** particularly welcome the statements of France, the United States and Costa Rica, who specifically referred to the case of the Tibetan refugees.

On 9 December, the United Nations' Committee against Torture published its Concluding Observations following an examination of China's record on torture. The U.N. Committee did not only criticize the practice of torture and ill-treatment in China, but also tackled the entire PRC system, referring in particular to the lack of independence of the Chinese judiciary and the influence of the CCP as a fundamental failing. It said that it remained "seriously concerned over consistent reports indicating that the practice of torture and ill-treatment is still deeply entrenched in the criminal justice system". It also criticized the lack of independent investigation into torture. In particular, the Committee expressed concern about deaths in custody, such as the case of the prominent and highly respected Tibetan lama **Tenzin Delek Rinpoche** who was held on trumped-up charges and died at a high-security remote prison in July. Ahead of China's CAT review, the **International Campaign for Tibet** submitted [a report on torture in Tibet to the Committee](#) in October. Back in February, ICT had published [a report](#) that highlighted the cases of 29 Tibetans, detailing evidence that they had suffered torture and ill-treatment. The report documents 14 cases of Tibetans who have died in prison or immediately after their release.

The Concluding Observations by the Committee against Torture can be downloaded [here](#). ■

Major policy meeting on Tibet in build-up to sensitive anniversary

Chinese President **Xi Jinping** received a ceremonial state welcome of the highest order in Britain last October, amidst a public backlash against the UK government's compliance to the Beijing leadership, which included the arrest of Tiananmen survivor **Shao Jiang** and two Tibetans for waving Tibetan flags at Xi.



Police arrest Shao Jiang

Chinese President **Xi Jinping** arrived in the United Kingdom on 19 October, 2015, for a four-day state visit aimed at forging business and trade ties between the two nations. The programme included a ceremonial gun salute, an address to both houses of Parliament and meetings with three generations of the royal family. The two countries sealed deals on nuclear and railway projects

and announced the launch of sovereign debt in yuan in London.

The Chinese state media gushed and effused about "the reddest of red carpets" and a new golden era of "win-win results" between China and the UK. Britain, indeed, seemed to be doing everything it could to please the Chinese president during his visit. And on 21 October, the British police went as far as to arrest Tiananmen survivor **Shao Jiang** and two Tibetan women who waved Tibetan flags at the Chinese Communist Party leader. As they were being held in custody on charges of 'conspiracy to commit threatening behaviour', the police went to their homes and seized laptops, phones, and USB sticks. The charges have since been dropped but the arrests made front page news in the UK, in the context of an overwhelming public backlash against the UK government's 'epic kowtow' to Communist Party boss Xi. Business leader and expert on China **James McGregor** [told the BBC's influential Today programme](#): "If you act like a panting puppy the object of your attention is going to think they've got you on a leash". ■

Wave of solo peaceful protests in Ngaba: repression and further restrictions imposed

There has been a wave of solo peaceful protests in Ngaba (Chinese: Aba), one of the most oppressive areas of Tibet, since an important political anniversary in August and the **Dalai Lama's** birthday in July.

At least nine Tibetan, including four young women and four monks, have held solo demonstrations in Ngaba since July, calling for the return of the **Dalai Lama** to Tibet, and freedom for Tibet. Several held up images of the exiled Tibetan religious leader or clasped their hands together in prayer.

Images have since reached **ICT** of stepped-up patrols of paramilitary police in riot gear on the streets of Ngaba county town, Sichuan (the Tibetan area of Amdo). The protesters' actions are all the more striking given the political context; they know that the consequences of even mild dissent in Ngaba are likely to involve severe torture in custody and a possible prison sentence.

Ngaba is where Tibetans began to self-immolate in 2009, but it is notable that in a different pattern of protests, the young monks and women who demonstrated – and who have now disappeared – did not harm themselves. ■



Young monk **Jampal Gyatso's** protest on 9 September, holding up a large portrait of the Dalai Lama wrapped in a blessing scarf (khatag) and calling for freedom for Tibet.

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Political Prisoner Focus

Dolma Kyab



Tibetan writer **Dolma Kyab** was released from prison in October 2015, after serving 10 years and six months for 'endangering national security' for an unpublished book.

Dolma Kyab, was released from Chushur (Chinese: Qushui) Prison in Lhasa on 8 October and taken back to his hometown in the Tibetan area

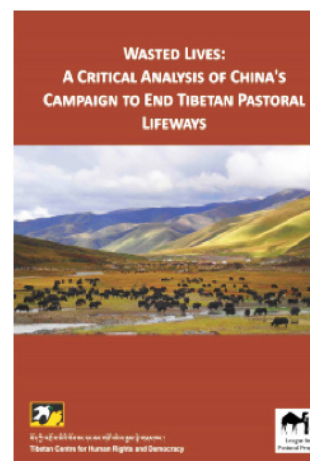
of Amdo, where he was welcomed by family and friends and draped with khatags (white blessing scarves). According to a friend, his family is concerned about his health, and plan to take him for medical treatment as soon as possible.

A well-educated young Tibetan, who did post-graduate study in Beijing and highly respected among his peers, Dolma was arrested on March 9, 2005 in Lhasa, where he was teaching history at a middle school. He was tried in secret, and is believed to have been sentenced because of the ideas expressed on Tibet in his unpublished manuscript, written in Chinese. Entitled 'The Restless Himalayas', he reflects with sadness on the current situation but also with deep pride in his Tibetan identity.

Extracts from **Dolma Kyab's** book are translated by the literary website High Peaks Pure Earth and in the ICT publication, ['Like Gold That Fears no Fire: New Writing from Tibet'](#). ■

Reading Suggestion

Wasted Lives: China's Campaign to End Tibetan Nomadic Lifeways'



published by the *Tibetan Centre for Human Rights & Democracy (TCHRD)* and the *League for Pastoral Peoples (LPP)*, May 2015.

The report 'Wasted Lives: China's Campaign to End Tibetan Nomadic Lifeways', written by Australian researcher Gabriel Lafitte, takes the reader to Tibetan pastures, to hear the voices of Tibetan nomads who are forced to live "wasted lives" in concrete barracks on the outskirts of cities, and rendered unfit to merge into the Chinese society due to lack of skills or even knowing the Chinese language. But what emerges in their stories is not only the grief of skilled pastoralists, now made redundant by the requirements of China's commoditized meat machine, but also their hopeful embrace of a new paradigm sweeping the pastoral lands of the world. There is much that is new in this report; plenty to chew on for those who would like to learn about the vast rangelands of the Tibetan Plateau for themselves but cannot get access. This excellent report looks beyond the stereotypes of noble ecological migrant vs passive victim of coercion.

To read the report '*Wasted Lives: A Critical Analysis of China's campaign to end Tibetan Pastoral lifeways*', [click here](#). ■

Upcoming Events

- ▶ **JANUARY 2016:**
START OF THE NETHERLANDS EU PRESIDENCY
- ▶ **10 MARCH 2016:**
TIBETAN UPRISING DAY (DEMONSTRATION IN BRUSSELS)
- ▶ **20 MARCH 2016:**
SECOND AND FINAL ROUND OF THE ELECTIONS OF TIBETAN LEADERSHIP IN EXILE