

## Major religious festival cancelled at Larung Gar amid further tightening of religious freedom

A major Tibetan religious festival has been cancelled at the Larung Gar institute, despite earlier assurances that it would go ahead.



A recent photo taken at Larung Gar shows a large vertical empty space caused by demolition, which sources say will be used to build a wide stairway for tourists to walk up the mountain. At the same time as undermining religious practice and teaching and stepping up intrusive security measures, the Chinese authorities are using interest in Tibetan Buddhism to attract domestic tourists in institutes like Larung Gar and Yachen Gar, leading to fears of further diminishment of these monastic communities.

The Dechen Shedrub religious festival, an eight-day prayer gathering event that brings together large numbers of devotees, was originally due to take place this year in Larung Gar starting on 6 November. It had been cancelled last year at the height of the demolitions, and once before in 2009 after protests and a crackdown in the area and across Tibet in 2008, and ahead of this year's

event, Tibetan religious teachers were summoned to the provincial capital of Chengdu and told that the religious festival could not go ahead this year either.

The Chinese authorities reportedly stated that it was not appropriate to hold such a large gathering given the

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situation at the institute, following the demolition and construction taking place there. However, it is believed that the real reason behind the decision is the wish by the authorities that expelled monks and nuns do not return to Larung Gar. According to information received by the International Campaign for Tibet, checkpoints have recently been set up on the approach to the institute. Uniformed officials check the identity of visitors and ask questions about

their visit, an indication of tightened security and control following the wave of demolitions and the [appointment](#) of Chinese Communist Party members to key positions at the institute.

This new development comes amid a consolidation of far-reaching powers of the Communist Party state and their desire to control the faith of its people. This has been demonstrated by their regularly stated aim of 'Sinicizing

religion' - meaning the moulding and shaping of religions to the dictates of the Chinese Communist Party. These [revised rules on religious activity](#), along with new laws on security such as a counter-terrorism law that conflates peaceful religious practice with 'threats' to China's security, have created a more dangerous political environment for monks, nuns, and lay Buddhists. ■

## 19<sup>th</sup> Chinese Communist Party Congress confirms Xi Jinping's grip on power and indicates likely continued hardline position on Tibet

**China's 19<sup>th</sup> Party Congress, held last month, revealed a new leadership committee and broke with tradition by not announcing a clear successor to Party Secretary and President Xi Jinping.**

The new configuration, which cements Xi Jinping's grip on power for the next five years and potentially beyond - with Xi's ideology approved for incorporation into the Party Constitution as 'Xi Jinping thought' - also hints to a likely continued hardline position on the Tibetan issue.

Among the new figures on China's top Politburo Standing Committee, the seven leaders who now govern the superpower, is Zhao Leji, an official who served in a Tibetan area and according to state media, was active in the "political struggle against the Dalai Lama". At a press conference on the fringe of the Party Congress, Zhang Yijiong, Executive Deputy Head of the United Front Work Department, warned foreign leaders not to meet the Dalai Lama. His Holiness was described as someone who had "betrayed the motherland" and as "a leader of a separatist group that is engaging in separatist activities". In

a marathon three-and-a-half-hour opening speech, Xi Jinping similarly warned: "We will never allow anyone, any organisation or any political party, at any time or in any form, to separate any part of Chinese territory from China,"

The Party Congress period has been a focus of propaganda efforts in Tibetan areas of China from the beginning of the year, and Tibet was furthermore closed to foreigners from 18 October, and under tight lockdown. A series of intimidating military drills were also held in the build-up to the meetings in Beijing, compounded by systematic blocking of communications and intrusive ideological campaigns.

On 17 October, ICT published a report summarising the development in Tibet since the last Party Congress - [click here](#) to read this analysis. ■

## Delegation of Tibetan Parliamentarians visit Europe

Between 11-30 November, ICT hosted a delegation of four members of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile on an advocacy tour in Europe.



The delegation of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile during the exchange of views with the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights. (Photo: ICT)

The parliamentary mission, which started in Brussels with a briefing session and included visits to France, Switzerland, Belgium and the Netherlands, was aimed at raising awareness with European officials and parliamentarians about the deteriorating human rights situation in Tibet under Chinese President Xi Jinping. The advocacy tour sought to re-energise support for the Tibetan cause as well as to establish new alliances following recent elections in some EU member states.

The delegation was led by Mrs. Dolma Tsering, who has 26 years of teaching service in the Tibetan community and was joined by Mr. Dawa Phunki, the Chief Administrator of the Tibetan Delek Hospital; Venerable Geshe Atuk Tsetan, who was exiled in 1991 and obtained a Geshe Larampa degree (the highest level of Tibetan Buddhist scholarship), and Mr. Ngawang Tharpa, a former reporter at Khawa Karpo Tibet Culture

Centre in Dharamsala.

During their tour, the delegates met with parliamentarians from the countries visited. In France, they received a warm welcome by the recently re-established 20 member-strong Tibet group ("Groupe d'information internationale sur le Tibet") of the Senate, which expressed strong support for their struggle for democratic freedom. The delegation also had the opportunity to exchange with officials of some of the 4 countries visited, as well as a number of UN officials in Geneva. In Brussels, they met Mr. Jan Figel, the EU Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion and Belief, and on 23 November, exchanged views on the human rights situation in Tibet with members of the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights. In her [statement](#), Dolma Tsering Teykhang thanked the European Parliament for its 2016 resolution regarding Larung Gar,

and pressed the EU to remain united on human rights issues in China and Tibet. Along with meetings with EU and countries officials and parliamentarians, the delegates also met with Tibetan communities in the countries they visited, with whom they engaged in lively debates. In France, they also paid a visit to the Tibetan refugee camp in Conflans-Sainte-Honorine.

The visit was covered by a number of European media, including Belgian newspaper [Le Soir](#) and French newspaper [Libération](#). ■



Members of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile exchange with the newly re-established French Senate's Tibet group during a working breakfast in the Senate on 15 November. (Photo: ICT)



Member of Tibetan Parliament Geshe Atuk Tsetan helping a Swiss Tibetan weekend school student (Photo: ICT)



## German Political Parties committed to support Dalai Lama and Tibet

Ahead of the 2017 Federal Election in Germany, held on 24 September, political parties represented in the Bundestag (the German parliament), responded to questions on Tibet posed to them by the International Campaign for Tibet Germany, the Tibet Initiative Germany and the Association of Tibetans in Germany.

The Christian Democratic Union of Germany (CDU) and the Christian Social Union in Bavaria (CSU), the Social Democratic Party (SPD), DIE LINKE (The Left) and Alliance 90/The Greens responded to 11 questions reaffirming their support to encouraging dialogue on Tibet. They were specifically asked about policy plans to advocate for human rights in Tibet, Tibet's environment and direct dialogue between the representatives of the Dalai Lama and the Chinese government — in the Federal parliament,

by means of official representations with the People's Republic of China, and through international forums.

In their answers, all parties expressed concern at the worsening human rights situation in Tibet and the state of its environment. They said these should be on the agenda in their bilateral talks with the Chinese Government, and recognised the need to elevate the Tibetan issue in bilateral and international forums. The answer from Chancellor Angela Merkel's

CDU and Bavarian sister party CSU also specifically referred to [the report](#) on the dangers that the Chinese counter-terrorism law represents for Tibetans and Uyghurs – published in November 2016 and co-authored by ICT and FIDH (International Federation for Human Rights).

Click [here](#) to access the answers received in German. The unofficial translation by the International Campaign for Tibet can be accessed [here](#). ■

## Central Tibetan Administration holds international conference on the future of the Tibetan movement

Between 6-8 October, a number of ICT staff and board members participated in the Five-Fifty Forum, an international conference organised by the Department of Information and International Relations (DIIR) of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) in Dharamsala to discuss the future of the Tibetan movement.



The Dalai Lama addressing the participants of the Five-Fifty Forum on 7 October. (Photo: Tenzin Phende/DIIR)

The event, which brought together over 180 scholars, political strategists, activists, communication experts and old friends of Tibet from 21 countries, sought to explore strategies to resolve the Tibet issue - based on the Middle Way Approach - within a time frame of the next five years, while securing the future of the Tibetan people in the next 50 years in case the first option is unachievable.

Participants discussed four main topics: seeking a constructive dialogue and negotiations with the Chinese leadership, Tibet's core relationship with a rising India and Asia, CTA's International relations and advocacy, and the CTA leadership.

The Dalai Lama, who addressed the second day of the forum, told crowds: "Tibetans are undergoing great turmoil and suffering imposed by China even now. However, we can take heart from the fact that we have a thousand millennium old cultural heritage. And despite China's repression, Tibetans inside Tibet have shown great valour and courage in preserving the indomitable Tibetan spirit. There are many communities fighting for freedom around the world. However, most of them employ violence to achieve their goals. Tibetans, on the other hand, have always been committed to the methods of peace and non-violence despite the hardships that we have faced."

Click [here](#) to watch the full address of the Dalai Lama to the Five-Fifty Forum. ■

## U.S. lawmakers call on President Trump to support Tibet

A bipartisan resolution was introduced to the U.S. Senate on 16 November, asking the Trump Administration to make Tibet an important factor in U.S.-China relations.

The resolution called on the Trump Administration to implement fully the U.S. Tibetan Policy Act, to promote access of U.S. citizens to Tibet, and to encourage China "to enter into a dialogue with the Dalai Lama or his representatives leading to a negotiated agreement with respect to Tibet." It complements a similar [resolution](#) introduced in the House of Representatives on 1 November.

These two resolutions, as well as an open letter by two U.S. parliamentarians urging President Trump to challenge the Chinese government on human rights and the rule of law, may indicate growing pressure on the White House to increase its advocacy for human rights abroad, including in China, and is particularly timely. During his first official visit to Beijing last month, President Trump indeed blatantly ignored [calls](#) to challenge the Chinese government over its dismal human rights records, focusing instead on "America First" – which translated as courting Chinese President Xi Jinping (whom he described as "a very special man") to secure his country's national interest. ■

## Australia Tibet Council's new report highlights Chinese influence on Australian Tibet policy

A new report by ICT's partner Australia Tibet Council has found that increased Chinese influence in Australia's educational and political institutions has led to the Australian Government's diminished engagement on Tibet.



The report, [Australia's silence on Tibet: How China is shaping our agenda](#), published in Australia's Parliament House on 13 September, shows that covert pressure in Australian universities, increasingly dependent on Chinese funding, has

produced a culture of self-censorship in the Australian academic community. Australia is home to many acclaimed China scholars, but few are willing to engage in critical discussions about Tibet for fear of a backlash from the university management or Chinese students on campuses. Recently, an Australian professor specialising in public ethics [said](#) that a publisher had withdrawn the release of his book about alleged Chinese influence in Australia for fears of "retaliation" by Beijing.

The report also revealed that the activities of key Chinese donors to Australia's major political parties were an integral part of China's global mission to reshape the Tibet narrative. "China's attempts to influence Australia's foreign policy is a threat to both the Tibet movement and the strength of Australian democracy. Australia's silence on Tibet contradicts its own values and diminishes its moral standing," said Kyinzom Dhongdue, Australia Tibet Council's Campaigns Manager. ■

## Uyghurs Friendship Group launched in the European Parliament

On 19 October, the Uyghurs Friendship Group of the European Parliament marked its inaugural event with a celebration of the Uyghur culture.

Similarly to the European Parliament's Tibet Interest Group (TIG), the newly-formed group of 17 Members of the European Parliaments (MEPs) will

serve as an informal network which will meet regularly to discuss the Uyghur community's harsh human rights

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Members of the Uyghur community and of the newly-formed Uyghurs Friendship Group (Photo: UNPO)

situation and ensure that the issue remain high on the European political agenda.

The launch brought together a number of the friendship group's members (including co-chairs Ilhan Kyuchyuk and Csaba Sógor - also a member of the TIG), as well as a mix of academics, NGO representatives and Uyghur community members, who discussed the deteriorating situation of human, cultural and religious rights that Uyghurs face at

the hands of the Chinese authorities.

Exiled Uyghur leader Rebiya Kadeer - whose relatives have increasingly been [targeted](#) by the Chinese authorities over the last few months - stressed that the support of members of European Parliament was vital at this current juncture. She also encouraged the Uyghur diaspora to share its culture with those they meet overseas in order to counter the People's Republic's attempts to dilute it.

Speaking at the event, ICT's Vincent Metten highlighted the long-standing relationship between ICT and the World Uyghur Congress, and urged both groups to support each other against the Chinese government's suppression of minority rights.

A celebration of Uyghur culture and identity marked the end of the event, with two presentations on Uyghur language and history, as well as traditional songs and dances by members of the Uyghur community.

Source: UNPO ([click here](#) for the full report from the event) ■



ICT's Vincent Metten speaking at the launch of the Uyghurs Friendship Group in the European Parliament (Photo: UNPO)

## Political Prisoner Focus

### Lobsang Jinpa



**A Tibetan monk jailed for five years after he wrote song lyrics honouring the Panchen Lama was released from prison in China's Qinghai province on 30 October.**

Lobsang Jinpa, now aged 35, was first arrested in September 2012 along with four others suspected of "separatist activities" during a [raid](#) at the Nyatso Zikar Monastery in Kyegudho County, in the Kham area of eastern Tibet. He was accused of writing a song called 'Dear Panchen Lama' about the previous 10<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama and his 11<sup>th</sup> incarnation (who has been disappeared by the Chinese authorities since 1995) for singer Lo Lo, who is likely still in prison (see ICT report [The teeth of the storm: Lack of freedom](#)

[of expression and cultural resilience in Tibet](#))

According to an anonymous source speaking to Radio Free Asia, news of his release, after serving his full term, was delayed because of the tightened restrictions imposed on the internet and other communications channels in the lead-up to the 19<sup>th</sup> China Communist Party Congress.

Lobsang Jinpa's current condition is still unknown, but the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) said it was gravely concerned about his health, as he had developed kidney and liver problems during his incarceration. ■



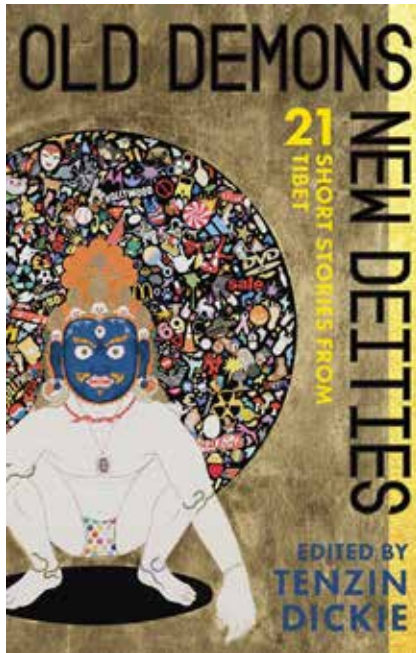
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## Reading Suggestions



### ***Old Demons, New Deities: 21 Short Stories from Tibet, Edited by Tenzin Dickie***

The first English language anthology of contemporary Tibetan fiction available in the West, *Old Demons, New Deities* brings together the best Tibetan writers from both Tibet and the diaspora, who write in Tibetan, English and Chinese.

Modern Tibetan literature is just under 40 years old. It dates back to 1980, when the first Tibetan language journal was published in Lhasa. Since then, short stories have become one of the primary modern Tibetan art forms. Through sometimes absurd, sometimes strange but always moving stories, English-reading audiences can now discover the authentic lives

of ordinary, secular, modern Tibetans navigating the space between tradition and modernity, occupation and exile, the personal and the national. While the story setting may be the Himalayas, an Indian railway or a New York brothel, the insights into an ancient culture and the lives and concerns of a modern people are powerful and real.

For this anthology, editor and translator Tenzin Dickie has collected 21 short stories by 16 of the most respected and best-known Tibetan writers working today, including Pema Bhumi, Pema Tsenden, Tsering Dondrup, Woese, Tsering Wangmo Dhompa, Kyabchen Dedrol, and Jamyang Norbu.

Click [here](#) to buy this book

## UPCOMING EVENTS

- ▶ **5-6 DECEMBER:**  
19<sup>th</sup> EU-NGO Human Rights Forum in Brussels
- ▶ **7 DECEMBER:**  
Conference on Tibetan nomadism organised by Les Amis du Tibet Luxembourg ([more information at: www.amisdutibet.org/event/nomads-in-no-mans-land/](http://www.amisdutibet.org/event/nomads-in-no-mans-land/))
- ▶ **10 DECEMBER:**  
International Human Rights Day