

## THE DALAI LAMA VISITS EUROPE, COMMENDS ICT'S 30 YEARS OF SERVICE

ON 12 SEPTEMBER, 2018, THE DALAI LAMA ARRIVED IN SWEDEN FOR A 12-DAY EUROPEAN TOUR, WHICH ALSO TOOK HIM TO THE NETHERLANDS, GERMANY AND SWITZERLAND FOR A SERIES OF BUDDHIST TEACHINGS AND TALKS ON HAPPINESS, COMPASSION, PEACE AND NON-VIOLENCE. DURING HIS VISIT TO ROTTERDAM, ICT HAD THE HONOR TO CELEBRATE WITH HIM ITS 30<sup>TH</sup> YEAR OF EXISTENCE.



Members of the Dutch Tibetan community offering the Dalai Lama a traditional welcome at his arrival at his hotel in Rotterdam on 14 September. (Photo: Jeppe Schilder)

In front of 12,000 enthusiastic visitors gathered for a public talk by the Tibetan spiritual leader on 16 September, ICT Europe's Executive Director Tsering Jampa opened the special part of the programme reserved for ICT with a passionate overview of the organisation's work to advance the Tibetan cause and support the Dalai Lama's efforts for a negotiated solution to China's oppression of the Tibetan people. "Your Holiness, we are profoundly grateful for your leadership, your wisdom, your compassion,

and for your vision of a world in which conflict is resolved through dialogue," she said. "Where religious harmony replaces religious strife, and where the oneness of humanity is respected," she said. "It is needed more than ever, in a world riven by conflict and tyranny. Our non-violent path is not a passive process; it requires courage. Your Holiness, it requires us to follow your example. At the International Campaign for Tibet, this is our guiding light."

ICT's Chairman and long-time friend Richard Gere then went into a conversation with the Dalai Lama, recalling His Holiness's belief that the Tibetan crisis could be solved through international support, which led to ICT's foundation in 1988. The Dalai Lama also drew attention to the importance of supporting Tibetan Buddhist culture, saying that its elements are "treasures of the world", and thus worthwhile to preserve and

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share around, and of Tibet's special environment. Finally, he expressed his thanks to ICT, saying that the organization is "very, very helpful in making clear about the Tibetan issue. I really appreciate." Gere concluded the conversation by drawing attention to the plight of Tibetan people in Tibet, saying, "Please remember the people inside Tibet. ICT is a vehicle you can trust to help the Tibetans inside and outside Tibet. So please help them."

Finally, ICT's President Matteo Mecacci closed the event by announcing the initiative by ICT on

its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary to offer a financial grant to the Dalai Lama Institute for Higher Education in the Indian city of Bangalore to launch a program on secular ethics - one of the core messages of the Dalai Lama.

The ICT event was immediately followed by a public talk by the Dalai Lama on "Why Compassion is Essential in our Troubled World."

#### MORE ON THIS:

- [Remarks by ICT Europe Executive Director Tsering Jampa at ICT's 30th anniversary event](#)
- [Video recording of the Dalai Lama in conversation with Richard Gere](#)



The Dalai Lama holding the text (mounted like a Tibetan thangka painting) of the ICT initiative to support a program on secular ethics at the Dalai Lama Institute for Higher Education in India. From left to right: ICT Chair Richard Gere, the Dalai Lama, ICT Vice-Chair Jan Anderson, ICT President Matteo Mecacci and ICT Europe Executive Director Tsering Jampa. (Photo: Jurjen Donkers)

## UN EXPERTS URGE CHINA TO PREVENT DISCRIMINATION AGAINST TIBETANS

ON 30 AUGUST, 2018, UN EXPERTS ON RACIAL DISCRIMINATION URGED THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT TO REVIEW POLICIES AND LAWS THAT DISCRIMINATE AGAINST TIBETANS AND OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS LIKE UYGHURS AND MONGOLS.



During the review session, the Chinese delegation [flatly denied](#) its systematic discrimination against Tibetans and Uyghurs. The Chinese officials' lies during the hearing prompted one committee member to ask sarcastically whether the delegation "has not come here all the way from China to tell us everything is okay?"

In its concluding observations from its review of China in August, the UN Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD) stated it was concerned about the significant restrictions to freedom of movement

country that affect Tibetans.

Amongst other recommendations, the committee urged the Chinese government to "preserve the Tibetan language" by

that Tibetans are subjected to within and beyond Tibet, as well as on the use and development of the Tibetan language and criminalization of Tibetan language advocacy. There were additional concerns around the use of anti-terror and anti-separatism legislations to criminalize peaceful acts of expression by ethnic and religious minorities, including Muslim Uyghurs and Buddhist Tibetans and Mongolians. The committee also expressed general concern regarding resettlement policies in the

"encouraging and promoting its use in the fields of education, the judicial system and the media," and "strengthen measures to prevent acts of torture and ill-treatment committed against members of ethnic minorities."

ICT has welcomed the conclusions of the committee, which have sent a clear message to China to review and stop its discriminatory policies in Tibet and elsewhere. Ahead of the review, it had submitted a shadow report providing information about the paternalistic attitudes of the Chinese government towards Tibetans and the discriminatory policies in place in Tibet. ICT also participated in the interactive dialogue of the session, delivering an oral statement and replying to questions from the experts.

#### MORE ON THIS:

- [CERD's concluding observations from its review of China](#)
- [ICT's shadow report to the CERD](#)



## CHINA TIGHTENS SCREWS ON TIBETAN BUDDHISM

CHINA HAS TIGHTENED THE SCREWS ON TIBETAN BUDDHISM, WITH ONE OF CHINA'S TOP LEADERS EMPHASIZING INCREASED COMMUNIST PARTY CONTROL OVER THE RELIGION. THIS TOOK PLACE A FEW DAYS AFTER THE CHINA-APPOINTED PANCHEN LAMA PRAYED AT A SACRED LAKE ASSOCIATED WITH THE SEARCH FOR THE DALAI LAMA'S REINCARNATION.



*This image from Chinese state media shows top political advisor Wang Yang visiting a Tibetan family in Chamdo (Chinese: Qamdo), the Tibet Autonomous Region. During his visit, Wang Yang emphasized tightening controls over Buddhist religion.*

During an August visit to the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), Wang Yang, a member of the Standing Committee of the Chinese Communist Party Politburo, emphasized the importance of tightening control over religion in Tibet, saying the authorities' work on religious affairs is "significant for the social stability and the prosperity of Tibet in the long term." Wang, who has broad responsibility for religion in his role as head of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), the government's top political advisory body, also said that religious figures must be "courageous to battle all separatist elements" - political language meant to ensure compliance with Party policy and used in recent years to silence dissent. He particularly emphasized the importance of 'Sinicization' of the Tibetan Buddhist religion,

which represents a more far-reaching effort to shape Tibetan Buddhism to the dictates of the Communist Party, in total contravention of the right to freedom of religion or belief, and deepens the threat to the continued survival of Tibetan Buddhism in Tibet.

Wang's visit to Tibet coincided with a period of greater visibility of the Chinese-appointed Panchen Lama, Gyaltsen Norbu, including numerous statements in support of the Party and its religious policies. Partly because Norbu had kept a low profile for some months, the flurry of activity was noticeable and seemed to indicate a fresh determination by Chinese authorities to use him as an official and 'patriotic' figurehead in the service of the Party.

## NEW EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT REPORT CALLS ON CHINA TO REVIEW ITS POLICIES IN TIBET

ON 12 SEPTEMBER, THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ADOPTED A NEW REPORT ON EU-CHINA RELATIONS THAT URGES THE EUROPEAN UNION TO CALL ON CHINA TO REVIEW ITS POLICIES IN TIBET, AND FOR MORE BALANCE AND RECIPROCITY IN THE EU-CHINA RELATIONSHIP.

The report, prepared by Member of the European Parliament (MEP) Bastiaan Belder (ECR, Netherlands) and adopted with a large majority (530 votes in favor and 53 against, with 55 abstentions), tackles issues such as trade exchanges, China's Belt and Road initiative, the 16+1 format, digital surveillance, climate change and sustainable development and the human rights situation in the country. It also urges the European Union to rebalance its relationship with China, and to press Beijing to improve the overall human rights situation.

With regards to Tibet in particular, the report notes that the situation has deteriorated over the past few years. Amongst other recommendations, it urges China to "review its policies" on Tibet, calling on the Chinese government to amend laws and regulations adopted in recent years that limit the civil and political rights of Tibetans, and to resume the Sino-Tibetan dialogue. As the EU and China celebrate their joint year of tourism, Members of the European Parliament also repeated their call for unfettered access to Tibet for EU citizens "in reciprocity to the free and open access to the entire territories of the EU Member States that Chinese travellers enjoy."

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Reflecting increasing concerns amongst EU policy-makers about the impacts of China's systematic influencing efforts in Europe - highlighted earlier this year by a [substantial study](#) of the Mercator Institute for China Studies (MERICS) and Global Public Policy Institute (GPPI) - the report also calls on EU Member states to "step up collaboration and unity on their China policies" in order to better confront these efforts. Last year, the lack of unity amongst EU Member States had led to the EU's failure to make a joint statement critical of China's human rights records at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. Throughout the report, members of the Parliament urged for more reciprocity in the relationship, not only in terms of trade and market access but also in areas such as press freedom and freedom of movement.

#### MORE ON THIS:

- [Debate on the state of EU-China relations in the European Parliament on 11 September](#)
- [European Parliament's 2018 report on EU-China relations](#)

## CHINESE COURT REJECTS TASHI WANGCHUK'S APPEAL

A CHINESE COURT DOCUMENT HAS REVEALED REASONS FOR THE REJECTION OF THE APPEAL BY TIBETAN LANGUAGE RIGHTS ADVOCATE TASHI WANGCHUK AGAINST HIS FIVE-YEAR PRISON SENTENCE RECEIVED LAST MAY. THE DOCUMENT EXPOSES THE SHAM PROSECUTION AND RAISES FEARS THAT THE YOUNG HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER HAS BEEN TORTURED IN DETENTION.

In the document - dated 30 July with some pages posted on social media last month and [translated by ICT](#) - the court states that Wangchuk "distorted the facts, attacking the state's policies on ethnic minorities, making remarks that undermine ethnic unity and national unity."

The document also confirms earlier indications that China's sensitivity towards its international image was critical in this case, given the high global profile of The New York Times. Furthermore, no evidence is presented of anyone being "incited to split the country," as the court claims that Wangchuk did, and no denial is made that he was tortured – a fear his lawyers had raised. According to Chinese law, confessions obtained through torture, threats and illegal detention are supposed to be inadmissible in court. But

torture is deeply-rooted in the system and routinely used against Tibetan and other political prisoners, particularly when charges are connected to issues officially described as "damaging to national unity" or "splittist."

Wangchuk was arrested in early 2016, [two months after he was featured in a New York Times video and article about Tibetan language education](#). However, he did not stand trial until January 2018, and no verdict was returned until 22 May, when one of his two lawyers, Liang Xiaojun, announced the five-year sentence. Including time served, Wangchuk's sentence started on 29 January 2016 and is due to end on 28 January 2021. ICT President Matteo Mecacci said the court document exposes the emptiness of the case manufactured against Tashi Wangchuk and is "a further nail in the coffin of rule of law in China."

## FORMER HOME OF DALAI LAMA'S PARENTS DEMOLISHED IN LHASA

THE FORMER HOME OF THE PARENTS OF THE DALAI LAMA, ONE OF THE LARGEST AND MOST IMPORTANT OF THE LAST REMAINING HISTORIC BUILDINGS IN LHASA, HAS BEEN DEMOLISHED AND A NEW CONCRETE STRUCTURE IS BEING BUILT IN ITS PLACE.



The area next to the Yabshi Taktser building, former home of the Dalai Lama's parents, was used as a car park and surrounded by malls. The building, now demolished, had fallen into disrepair and because of its associations with the Dalai Lama, vilified by the Chinese government, Tibetans were reluctant to raise concern or propose appropriate renovation.

The Yabshi Taktser residence was close to the Potala Palace, where the Dalai Lama lived until his escape from Tibet in 1959. It had a particular significance as the home of the late parents of the Tibetan spiritual leader. Over many years, the building was neglected and had fallen into disrepair. According to expert sources, Tibetans were afraid to recommend maintenance or renovation work because of the building's association with the Dalai Lama.

The building appears to have been razed two

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## POLITICAL PRISONER FOCUS

### TENZIN CHOEPHEL

ACCORDING TO A [RECENT REPORT FROM RADIO FREE ASIA \(RFA\)](#), A TIBETAN BUSINESSMAN IN HIS 40S ARRESTED BY CHINESE POLICE EARLIER THIS YEAR IS STILL MISSING MORE THAN FIVE MONTHS LATER, AND COULD BE AT RISK OF TORTURE.



Tenzin Choepel, a native of Nagchu prefecture in China's Tibet Autonomous Region, was taken into custody at Lhasa airport on a return flight from Chengdu last March. He

has since been detained at an undisclosed location without charge - in total contravention of international human rights standards.

The reasons for his arrest are unknown, but it is likely that Tenzin Choepel was targeted because of his work to promote Tibetan unity and his advocacy efforts some years ago to protect sacred mountains in Nagchu from mining projects. When police searched his house, some political literature and photos of the Dalai Lama - still banned in most parts of Tibet - were also discovered. His family now fears that he is being tortured in detention - a fate all too common for Tibetans dedicated to the protection of Tibetan cultural, social, economic and environmental rights.

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months before Lhasa's protection was discussed at the annual meeting of the world's leading heritage body UNESCO in June. Images posted online by the Tibetan writer Tsering Woesser depicted the site after the building was torn down, with diggers and heavy vehicles levelling the ground, and showed concrete foundations being laid and new construction. The new building's function is not known.

In a letter addressed to the Director of UNESCO's World Heritage Centre at the end of August, ICT [urged](#) the UN body in charge of protecting the world's natural and cultural heritage sites to look into the destruction of Yabshi Taktser, arguing that it may have been a protected site under its guidelines.

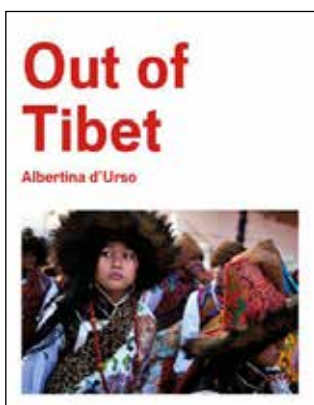
## AN INTERVIEW WITH GOLOG JIGME



On a visit to Washington, D.C. to participate in the [U.S. State Department's first Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom](#), Tibetan activist and former political prisoner Golog Jigme took the time to sit down with ICT Vice President Buchung Tsering and discuss the current situation in Tibet. Jigme – [who spent years in Chinese jail for helping Tibetan filmmaker Dhondup Wangchen to create the documentary "Leaving Fear Behind" and eventually escaped from Tibet in 2012](#) - told him that the situation in his homeland has become much worse. "Whether it is culture, environment, in terms of [freedom of] movement or religious belief, there is unbelievable restrictions on all fronts," he said.

Click [here](#) to watch the full interview.

## READING SUGGESTION



### OUT OF TIBET BY ALBERTINA D'URSO

For more than 10 years, Italian photographer Albertina d'Urso has followed in the footsteps of Tibetans forced to escape from their homeland, many of whom crossed the Himalayan range on foot to defend their cultural and religious identity, their traditions and their language from Chinese repression. In Out Of Tibet, she has documented their new lives throughout the world – including several places in India as well as in Nepal, Taiwan, New York, London, Paris, Zurich, Rome, Brussels, Amsterdam and Toronto. It is a moving exploration of their culture and traditions in the country where they now live.

Albertina's work was presented during an exhibition entitled "[Tibetans in Diaspora: A Success Story](#)" held in the European Parliament in Brussels at the end of August. You can see some of it at <http://albertinadurso.com/out-of-tibet/>

EDITOR: Dewi Lewis Publishing

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Click [here](#) to buy this book

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### • 9 OCTOBER:

Side event to the Forum 2000 in Prague “*Will the democratic world pass the Tibetan test?*” in presence of Lobsang Sangay, President of the Tibetan Government in Exile

### • 18-19 OCTOBER:

12<sup>th</sup> ASEM (Asia-Europe) Summit in Brussels and protest of the Tibetan, Uyghur and Mongolian communities (on 18 October from 11h-13h, Schuman Roundabout)

### • 6 NOVEMBER:

China's third cycle Universal Periodic Review (UPR) at the United Nations Human Rights Council

### • 21 NOVEMBER:

ICT-FIDH conference “*Access to Tibet and the Principle of Reciprocity*” in the European Parliament