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– Lodi Gyari Gyaltsen,
Special Envoy for His Holiness
the Dalai Lama



Zhang Qingli, Party Secretary of the Tibet Autonomous Region, speaking during 'Serf Emancipation Day' in Lhasa, March 2009.

REPORT BY BEIJING SCHOLARS REVEALS BREAKDOWN OF CHINA'S TIBET POLICY

A new report in June by a group of Chinese scholars in Beijing challenges the official position that the Dalai Lama “incited” the protests that broke out in Tibet in March 2008, and outlines key failings in the policy of the government of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) on Tibet. The report is the result of a month-long investigation by a Beijing-based lawyers’ organization and think-tank called Gongmeng (Open Constitution Initiative).¹

The report is representative of a movement among intellectuals in the PRC that seeks political space and accountability of the state. Lodi Gyari Gyaltsen, Special Envoy of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, said, “It is gratifying that a group of Chinese academics have themselves taken up the responsibility to conduct an independent study of the circumstances that led to the spring 2008 demonstrations across Tibet. We hope that other progressive voices, including those within the PRC government, will support them and their findings, and help us find real solutions for Tibet.”

- The authors cite as a contributing factor to the protests that began in March 2008 the high levels of marginalization among Tibetans as a result of Chinese economic policies, saying: “From the level of actual benefits, the current rapid process of modernization has not given the ordinary Tibetan people any greater developmental benefits; indeed, they are becoming increasingly marginalized.”
- The report also refers to deepening rural-urban inequality in Tibetan areas, and notes the government policy of not interfering with the numbers of Chinese migrants flooding into Tibetan cities, and the undermining of the Tibetan language leading to disempowerment of Tibetans.
- The authors make explicit reference to a new “Tibetan aristocracy” of ethnic Tibetan cadres and officials with “low administrative abilities and backward understanding of governance”. The authors note: “Foreign forces’ and ‘Tibet independence’ are used by many local officials as fig leaves to conceal their

mistakes in governance and to repress social discontent.”

The report concludes with a series of detailed recommendations by the researchers and among them:

- The authors clearly assert the need for Tibetans to be involved in local governance, for training and education for Tibetans to be prioritized, and for the proper implementation of the Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law;
- The report notes that the government should “increase effective supervision over local power structures in the implementation of regional ethnic autonomy policies”;
- The authors suggest the Chinese government to “Earnestly listen to the voices of ordinary Tibetans and, on the basis of respecting and protecting each of the Tibetan people’s rights and interests, adjust policy and thinking in Tibetan areas to formulate development policies which are suited to the characteristics of Tibetan areas and which accord with the wishes of the Tibetan people.”

While this is the first investigative report on the Tibet situation based on fieldwork and analysis, International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) analysts do note that “the report is carefully worded, presenting its arguments in Marxist language typical of that seen in much of China’s social sciences, and it frequently quotes phrases and vocabulary used by the Chinese Communist Party leadership.

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CALLS FOR COHESIVE EU POSITION ON TIBET AS CHINA STEPS UP PRESSURE OVER DALAI LAMA VISITS

ICT-Europe released a new policy paper on May 18 in Brussels, which calls upon the European Union to adopt a consistent new position on Tibet to reflect the importance of Tibet in EU-China relations ahead of the EU-China Summit which was opened in Prague on May 20.²



Dalai Lama with Denmark's Prime Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen during his recent visit to Europe, May 2009 (Photo: Reuters)

The last summit meeting was cancelled by the Chinese government after French President Sarkozy, then EU President, met the Dalai Lama. Since then, Beijing has stepped up pressure on individual European countries including the Netherlands, to block meetings between heads of state, ministers and members of Parliament and the Dalai Lama. Recently, the Dalai Lama travelled in Europe from May 29 to June 7, visiting Denmark, Iceland, the Netherlands and France.

Vincent Metten, EU Policy Director for ICT in Brussels, said: "The cancellation of the last EU-China Summit by Beijing during the French EU Presidency raised the diplomatic stakes, pointing both to the importance China attaches to the Tibet issue and the need for a unified EU response. To equivocate on Tibet as a result of Chinese

interference would be a strategic mis-step in EU-China relations. The EU should intensify its support for a resolution and assist both sides, after 50 years of failed efforts, to remove obstacles and move forward."

The current EU-China human rights dialogue has been criticized as being manipulated by procedural gamesmanship and of having little impact. John Fox from the European Council on Foreign Relations stresses the need for a new approach to human rights in China from Europe, focusing more on rule of law. He highlights that "as on many other issues, the EU's effort is diluted with multiple competing dialogues run by individual member states. The EU should offer to combine these into a single enhanced dialogue with China, but on the condition that the principle interlocutors on the Chinese side are the senior government and Party officials whose opinion count on these issues."³

Fox concludes that: "European leaders need to increase, not decrease, their vocal commitment to the values that the EU stands for and that these are universal values, not Western ones that do not apply to Chinese citizens. The trick will be to focus bilaterally on the practical issues that matter with China, while reminding China publicly that we do not agree with how its government currently defines and uphold the rights of its citizens." ■

² See ICT-Europe's new policy paper: <http://www.savetibet.org/media-center/ict-news-reports/call-cohesive-eu-position-tibet-china-steps-pressure-over-dalai-lama-visits>

³ See: http://ecfr.eu/content/entry/commentary_fox_tiananmen_euobserver

REPORT BY BEIJING SCHOLARS...

Perhaps exercising the same caution, and possibly based on an intention not to alienate policy-makers, the report portrays the issue of Tibet only as one of governance and policy, without exploring the more politically sensitive issue of the relationship between Tibet and China, nor do they go so far as to use the concept of colonialism to describe the situation in Tibet." ■

¹ The full text of the report is available in Chinese at https://docs.google.com/Doc?id=df4nrxxq_91ctcf6sck and the English translation and analysis of the report by ICT is available at <http://www.savetibet.org/media-center/ict-news-reports/bold-report-beijing-scholars-reveals-breakdown-china%E2%80%99s-tibet-policy>



Tibetan delegate speaking at the Human Rights Council on the outcome document of UPR-China, June 2009

UN UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW PROCESS UNDERMINED BY CHINESE INTRANSIGENCE

The UN Human Rights Council held its 11th regular session during June in Geneva. On June 11, the Council adopted the outcome report on Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of China. The International Campaign for Tibet previously submitted a UPR report on China in November, documenting a range of abuses taking place inside Tibet.

Along with Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, Tibetan delegates questioned the effectiveness and credibility of the UPR process as China rejected around 70 state recommendations and manipulated the participation of civil society in the process. ICT was also deeply concerned by the failure of any EU state to raise any critique of the Chinese failure to acknowledge legitimate international concerns, thereby leaving the only questioning of China's approach to the few human rights NGOs given the opportunity to speak.

In particular, the Tibetan delegates noted their deep concern at the rejection of recommendations by China, including almost all those that seek an improvement in the human rights situation of the Tibetan people. The rejected recommendations included:

- Review laws and practices on freedom of religion, movement, protection of culture and language [para. 82(f)]
- Revision of legislation and practice that violate the right to freedom of expression and release (of) all persons held [para.82 (b)]
- Ending the "strike hard campaign" in Tibet. [para. 82(g)]

- Investigation of all cases in Tibet of police brutality and torture [para. 82(h)],
- Ensuring protection in Tibet of the right of peaceful assembly and release persons arrested for such assembly [para. 82(i)] and,
- Respecting the fundamental rights notably freedom of religion and movement. [para. 31(d)].

Accepting these recommendations would compel the Chinese authorities to revisit and review some of the following issues affecting the Tibetan people:

- Order No. 5, issued by the State Council of China, which interferes in the ancient religious procedure and tradition of the confirmation of reincarnates of Tibetan Buddhism.
- Finding ways to end "strike hard campaigns" and thereby have a calming effect on the situation in Tibet. The same follows for the use of patriotic education programs that force Tibetans to denounce their spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama.
- Official investigation into brutalities by the security services in Tibet, signaling that China is serious about its Constitutional obligation which "respects and safeguards human rights". ■

STATUS OF TIBETAN DEATH PENALTY CASES UNKNOWN

Chinese State Media reported on April 8, that two Tibetans named Lobsang Gyatse [Gyaltzen] and Loyar, had been sentenced to death by the Lhasa Municipal Intermediate People's Court for allegedly starting fires which resulted in seven deaths and the destruction of five shops in Lhasa.⁴ This is the first report of death sentences given out for the March 14, 2008 unrest in Lhasa that Chinese officials say killed 22 people. Three others were also sentenced in connection with the fires – two received suspended death sentences – and the third was sentenced to life imprisonment.

ICT has learned that the EU Troika undertook a demarche on 8 May asking for the commutation of the death sentences

and transparency with respect to the legal proceedings linked to trials since March 2008. The EU also recalled its principled opposition to all use of the death penalty. The US State Department has also confirmed that it undertook a demarche via the US Embassy in Beijing.

Thus far, little has been heard from the Chinese authorities on any appeals process, as well as the review process by the People's Supreme Court that is required in all death penalty cases. ■

⁴ See: http://ecfr.eu/content/entry/commentary_fox_tiananmen_euobserver

ICT LAUNCHES WEBSITE FOR EUROPEAN POLICYMAKERS

ICT has launched a new website at www.tibetpolicy.eu specifically targeting the needs of European policymakers and policy organizations seeking a central point to gather insights on Tibet. The website will cover the following areas:

- News on the situation inside Tibet, as well as how developments in China might impact Tibetan areas
- ICT research reports, as well as external analysis and online video documentaries
- News of international political developments related to Tibet, with a particular focus on Europe
- Policy recommendations from ICT on specific issues, such as the Tibetan economy or EU presidencies

“Key components of ICT’s work are policy advocacy and monitoring what is happening inside Tibet. This website merges ICT’s research and policy perspectives so governments and the wider policy community have a trusted resource designed specifically to help inform their decisions on Tibet and China,” said Stewart Watters, ICT’s Government Relations Director, on the launch of the new site.



To visit the new website, go to www.tibetpolicy.eu and add your name to the ‘Subscribe to policy updates’ field to receive regular updates. ■