



President Hu inspects the military parade near Tiananmen Gate in Beijing, 1 October 2009 [Credit: AP]

## China tightens screws on Tibet for October 1st 60th anniversary

As people throughout China celebrated the 60th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, in Tibet intense security and control measures remain in place following the March 2008 protests. In Lhasa and other cities, Tibetans were compelled to participate in birthday celebrations for the PRC despite widespread tensions, and military patrols have been stepped up. There have been restrictions on foreign tourists from entering the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) until a week after the celebrations are over.

In an ICT statement, Mary Beth Markey, Vice President for International Advocacy, said: "The critical distinction for Tibetans in this 60th anniversary is that the Chinese Communist Party brought revolution to China and occupation and oppression to Tibet. The Chinese authorities understand this distinction and that is why security and control measures – not parades – are everywhere throughout Tibet today."

Over the past year, the Chinese government has engaged in a cover-up of the torture, disappearances and killings in Tibet. Despite the risks, protests have continued. ICT has logged a total of 235 protests in Tibet of varying intensity since March 2008, but this is likely to be a minimal number<sup>[1]</sup>.

ICT has also been able to compile a list of 735 Tibetans detained since March, 2008, many now serving long prison terms [2]. New ICT data on the protests shows that there was a greater involvement of farmers, laypeople, students, children, and nomads than in previous protests, when political demonstrations tended to be dominated by monks and nuns.

The 2008 protests were the first significant protests to occur during the internet age, and mobile and internet communications facilitated the spread of news about protests in other areas and led to their geographical spread across most Tibetan areas of the PRC. ■

<sup>1</sup> Details of these protests are reported in ICT's new protest log at: <http://www.savetibet.org/action-center/protest-logs>

<sup>2</sup> See: [http://www.savetibet.org/files/documents/PPL\\_30\\_Sep\\_09.pdf](http://www.savetibet.org/files/documents/PPL_30_Sep_09.pdf)

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– ICT Statement, 1 October 2009

## US President Obama sends delegation to meet Dalai Lama in Dharamsala

Discussions between the Dalai Lama and a senior US Government delegation took place in Dharamsala on 13-14 September. The delegation was led by Valerie Jarrett, Senior Advisor and Assistant to the President for Intergovernmental Affairs and Public Engagement, and included Maria Otero, Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs (designated to serve concurrently as Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues) and other US Government officials.

According to a statement posted on the official website of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Ms. Jarrett personally conveyed the commitment of President Obama "to support the Tibetan people in protecting their distinct religious, linguistic, and cultural heritage and securing respect for their human rights and civil liberties" as well as the US President's commendation for the Dalai Lama's consistency in seeking genuine autonomy for Tibetans within the People's Republic of China through his middle way approach."

A senior aide within the Dalai Lama's office said: "Ms. Jarrett had expressed President Obama's wish for an enduring relationship with His Holiness and, additionally, for building a strong U.S.-China relationship. In this way the United States would be in a better position to seek progress in the dialogue, improvements in human rights and other improvements in the lives of Tibetans."

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Senior members of the Obama Administration meet with the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, India

## US President Obama...

The statement also revealed that President Obama and the Dalai Lama would meet in Washington, DC after the US-China Summit in November.

The same senior aide said, "Taking into considerations the broader issues, it was decided sometime ago that the meeting between His Holiness and President Obama should take place after President Obama's discussions in Beijing."

According to Lodi Gyari, Special Envoy of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, "His Holiness has shared with the US delegation his views about how the President can help the Tibetan people and he would value an opportunity to hear directly from the President about what transpired during the Beijing summit with regard to Tibet. I have the Dalai Lama's schedule for the remainder of the year and will work with the White House on a meeting date."

Professor Samdhong Rinpoche, the head of the Central Tibetan Administration, who also met with the US delegation, said, "This has been an important visit, as it demonstrates President Obama's great admiration for the leadership and approach of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and his respect for the Tibetan Buddhist culture. We are most appreciative that they have traveled so far to personally convey these messages to His Holiness and the Tibetan people." ■

## Bio of Maria Otero

Maria Otero is U.S. Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs and will serve concurrently as Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues. Under the Bush Administration, both these positions were held by Paula Dobriansky.



Ms. Otero was sworn in as Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs in August 2009 and oversees and coordinates U.S. foreign relations on a variety of global issues, including democracy, human rights, environment, refugees and migration.

Ms. Otero was formerly the president and CEO of ACCION International, a pioneer and leader in microfinance. She is a leading voice on sustainable microfinance, publishing extensively on the subject and speaking throughout the world on microfinance, women's issues and poverty alleviation.

Ms. Otero holds an M.A. in international relations from Johns Hopkins' Nitze School for Advanced International Studies (SAIS). She sits on the board of the U.S. Institute of Peace, a position to which she was originally appointed by President Clinton and now holds as the State Department representative and is a member of the US Council on Foreign Relations in Washington, D.C. ■

## Dalai Lama visits Taiwan to comfort typhoon victims

At the start of September, the Dalai Lama visited Taiwan for the first time in eight years. Taiwan's President Ma Ying-jeou approved the visit following a request from the opposition DPP to invite the Dalai Lama to comfort victims of Typhoon Morakot. The typhoon hit southern Taiwan, killing an estimated 500 people as a result of severe flooding and mudslides.

A visit to Taiwan by the Dalai Lama is a particularly contentious issue for Beijing. Although China is normally vehemently opposed to all foreign visits by the Dalai Lama, in this case Beijing considers Taiwan to be part of its territory. Although during the visit Beijing did criticize the invitation to the Dalai Lama, China was careful to show restraint in its criticism because of improved relations between Beijing and Taipei since President Ma's election, and to avoid weakening the President against Taiwan's pro-independence opposition DPP.

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## Dhondup Wangchen faces trial: new information on charges

Dhondup Wangchen, who was detained last year soon after completing filming of a documentary, may be facing charges of 'inciting separatism' and espionage, according to information from an official source passed onto Western governments. Charges were brought against Dhondup Wangchen, who was denied access to a Chinese lawyer of his family's choice, in June 2009.

Dhondup Wangchen was detained on March 26, 2008, soon after completing filming of the documentary 'Leaving Fear Behind'. The film documents Tibetan views of last year's Beijing Olympics, the current situation in Tibet and the Dalai Lama's return to Tibet<sup>1</sup>.

Several other people involved with or appearing in the documentary have also been investigated by the authorities. According to information provided by official sources, Dhondup Wangchen was formally arrested in July 2008 under suspicion of "inciting separatism and stealing, secretly gathering, purchasing, and illegally providing intelligence for an organization, institution, or personnel outside the country."

Li Donyong, from the Beijing Gongxin law firm, was blocked from taking on the case by the Xining judicial authorities, who informed Dhondup Wangchen's family that the court would designate a government-appointed lawyer for the trial. This is in violation of China's criminal procedure law and its obligations under international human rights law, which guarantee criminal defendants the right to choose their own defense counsel and to meet with their counsel while in detention<sup>2</sup>.

According to a further report, at least one government was refused permission to have access to any trial or hearing of Dhondup Wangchen. Various Western governments have raised concern about Dhondup Wangchen's case.

There are serious fears for Dhondup Wangchen's welfare as he is being held incommunicado, without being allowed family visits. His wife, who lives in exile in India, also says that he is not being given medical treatment although he is in poor health and has Hepatitis B.

Jigme Gyatso, a monk from Qinghai province who worked with Wangchen on Leaving Fear Behind, was arrested at the same time. He was released on bail seven months later, on October 15, 2008, and reported that he had been tortured in detention.

ICT has informed governments of its concern over the disturbing reports, and is seeking the following:

1. That Dhondup Wangchen be given a fair trial, which should exclude evidence obtained under torture or other mistreatment, and the right to be represented by a counsel of his own choice.
2. That Chinese law provides that trials should be open unless they involve state secrets, and that governments request to attend judicial proceedings against Dhondup Wangchen as a matter of urgency.
3. That Dhondup Wangchen be given access to his family and allowed medical treatment. ■

<sup>1</sup> See: <http://www.leavingfearbehind.com>

<sup>2</sup> Human Rights Watch report, <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2009/08/03/china-ensure-fair-trial-tibetan-filmmaker>



Thousands of Buddhist devotees attend a mass prayer session for Typhoon Morakot victims, led by the Dalai Lama, in Kaohsiung, southern Taiwan, 1 September 2009. [Credit: Reuters]

## Dalai Lama visits Taiwan...

President Ma held a five-hour meeting with security officials before he decided to allow the Dalai Lama's visit. The BBC reported Ma as telling reporters "We've... decided to let the Dalai Lama visit as he is coming here to pray for the dead victims, as well as the survivors."

Presidential spokesman Wang Yu-chi and the Dalai Lama insisted that the visit was strictly religious, with no political overtones. Wang told reporters "We welcome the Dalai Lama to come to Taiwan to take part in mass prayers." He said the visit was approved "for humanitarian and religious considerations ... and we believe it will not harm cross-strait relations." The Dalai Lama did not request any meeting with President Ma during the visit.

Speaking to CNN, the Dalai Lama said "As soon as I received the invitation, I know there's some complications maybe. But it is my sort of moral responsibility to come and to see, show my face, to those people who are passing through a difficult period."

Taiwan has a large exiled Tibetan community and the Dalai Lama has visited the island three times in the past 12 years, drawing crowds of tens of thousands. ■