



The Nobel Peace Prize committee Chairman Thorbjørn Jagland (left) and Kaci Kullmann Five (right) applaud as they stand next to the empty chair of the laureate holding his award at the ceremony for the Nobel Laureate and dissident Liu Xiaobo at the city hall in Oslo on December 10, 2010.

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2010 Peace Prize Laureate: European and U.S. reactions to Liu Xiaobo's Nobel prize

Chinese writer and human rights activist Liu Xiaobo was awarded the 2010 Nobel Peace prize at the 10 December award ceremony in Oslo. Liu was unable to attend the ceremony as he is currently in jail serving an 11-years sentence for "inciting subversion of state power" as a consequence of his role as the leading author of "Charter 08", a political manifesto calling for gradual political reforms in China and the establishment of a society based on the rule of law, democracy and human rights. An empty chair represented Liu's absence at the award ceremony echoing all China's human rights defenders silenced by the Chinese government.

Ahead of the ceremony, on 7 December, ICT released the report "Reactions to Liu Xiaobo's Nobel Peace Prize in Europe" (<http://tinyurl.com/2ugnmmj>) at a joint press conference at the European Parliament with the Co-President of the Green Party, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, and the NGOs Reporters Sans Frontieres and the

International Federation for Human Rights¹. The report revealed a diversity of reactions in the European Union to Liu Xiaobo's Nobel Peace prize and called on foreign policy chief Baroness Ashton to attend the December 10 award ceremony in Oslo as an indication of unified support. Although Ashton did make a statement on the Nobel Peace Prize winner, saying "my thoughts are with Liu Xiaobo"², she did not attend the ceremony, claiming she was not invited.



On the right, ICT's EU Policy Director, Vincent Metten, speaks at the press conference "The impact of the 2010 Nobel Peace prize on EU-China relations", European Parliament, Brussels, 7 December 2010

Vincent Metten, EU Policy Director of the International Campaign for Tibet, said: "The EU should develop a clear and unified China policy that supports progressive forces and civil society, and Ashton should seize this critical opportunity to show that human rights reflect Europe's values and remain at the heart of its foreign policy."

On 10 December, U.S. President and 2009 Nobel Laureate Barack Obama released a statement saying, "Mr. Liu Xiaobo is far more deserving of this award than I was" (<http://tinyurl.com/2ujv8uj>). Citing other distinguished Nobel Peace laureates, President Obama stressed the universality of human rights and each person's responsibility to build a just peace. While congratulating China for its extraordinary challenge to lift millions of people out of poverty, he reminded that progress is also linked to the advance of democracy, open society and the rule of law, calling again on China for Liu's immediate release.

¹ Conference's press release available at: <http://tinyurl.com/2weky9p>

² Statement by EU High Representative Catherine Ashton on Nobel Peace Prize winner Liu Xiaobo: <http://tinyurl.com/3x717y4>

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Tibet in WikiLeaks' cables

The recent WikiLeaks' publication of classified United States government cables from embassies and missions around the world. The cables provide an insight into how US diplomats view international issues and reveal conversations with other governments on those same issues, providing a unique source of information on how Tibet is viewed by diplomats and governments in Europe, the US and across Asia.



The New York Times, The Guardian, Le Monde, El Pais, and Der Spiegel have had an advanced review of selected cables. According to The Guardian, 198 of 250.000 diplomatic cables contain "Tibet" as part of their subject, 134 have "Tibetan" in the subject, 41 contain "Tibetans", 144 have "Dalai", 133 contain "Lama", and 26 cables deal with "Lhasa". In addition, 1.145 of the cables contain the word "Tibet" in their contents, 828 contain the word "Tibetan", 776 cables contain "Dalai", and 1.346 contain the word "Lama".

An accurate analysis of those cables could help understand Beijing officials' attitude and policy when discussing Tibet with other governments. In addition, it would be possible to gain further information regarding China's Tibet policy and why certain decisions on Tibet have been taken. At the same time, these cables provide further facts about developments within the Tibetan society in Tibet as well as in-exile and are revealing of how Tibetans and the Tibetan government in-exile are seen by foreign governments.

As an example, a cable released by the German international magazine "Spiegel" revealed that President Hu Jintao remains firmly in charge of China's policy in Tibet given his background and previous experience in the region (Hu was the provincial Party secretary in Tibet in the late 1980s). It was possible to understand that Tibet is considered an "extremely sensitive" issue and that hardly anybody would contest the Party's hard line. Being Tibet an issue controlled by the President and the nine members of the Politburo Standing Committee, it is difficult to know in depth the content of leadership discussions on Tibet.

Although it is still too early to judge WikiLeaks' impact on Tibet and how disclosed information could be used to promote human rights for Tibetans inside and outside Tibet, it is undeniable that WikiLeaks has brought the scale of debate and discussion by the US and other governments on China's human rights record and the situation of Tibet to public attention in a way previously unseen. ■

See also:

- ICT Blog – WikiLeaks and Tibet: <http://tinyurl.com/24g8xmv>

Thousands of Tibetans evicted to make way for hydroelectric project

More than four thousand residents of Phodo, Lhundup County, near Lhasa, are to be evicted to make way for a hydroelectric project in the area. Local sources told Radio Free Asia that Chinese authorities have already built houses for Chinese soldiers involved in the construction of the dam. Some families have already been moved and the rest are believed to be planned for transfer before September 2011. More than 500 families have asked to remain in the area and have been refused permission. Authorities have warned residents not to cultivate, irrigate or grow crops in the region. Sources said that every family would receive 10 thousand yuan in compensation to build new houses.

About 500 families have asked to remain in Phodo because they feared receiving inadequate housing and remaining without work. However, they have been refused and housed in various centers. Peasants moved to Lhasa were forced to sell their livestock and there are question marks over what employment prospects exist in Lhasa in order to make their livelihood.

Although Chinese authorities consistently claim to have brought economic development to Tibet, new prosperity has overwhelmingly been amongst Han Chinese migrants moving to the region, rather than amongst local Tibetans. As well as the economic and demographic impact of such changes, Tibetans are concerned about the lack of environmentally sustainable projects as the drive to development takes place without consideration of the impact major infrastructure projects, such as massive dams, could have on the fragile Tibetan environment. ■

See also:

- Asia News - Thousands of Tibetans evicted to make way for Lhundrub dam: <http://tinyurl.com/2aljhr7>

Events

11 January 2011

Launch of 2011 EU-China Year of Youth

19 January 2011

Hu Jintao, President of the People's Republic of China, hosted at the White House



Jampel Wangchuk, disciplinarian at Drepung's Loseling college; Konchok Nyima, the scripture teacher at Drepung's Gomang college; Ngawang Choenyi, scripture teacher at Drepung's Ngakpa college

Senior Drepung monk scholars “with no political record” sentenced to life, long sentences: crackdown continues at monastery

Jampel Wangchuk, 55, the disciplinarian at Drepung's Loseling college, has been sentenced to life in prison, and Konchok Nyima, 43, the scripture teacher at Drepung's Gomang college, has been sentenced to 20 years, according to information from ICT sources and the Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD). A third monk, 38-year old Ngawang Choenyi, the scripture teacher at Drepung's Ngakpa college, who was arrested at the same time, is also believed to be serving a sentence of 15 years, according to sources cited by the Tibetan government in-exile.

Since the Drepung monks took to the streets on March 10, 2008 the Chinese government has engaged in a widespread cover-up of the torture, disappearances and killings that have taken place across Tibet combined with a virulent propaganda offensive against the Dalai Lama. As part of this offensive, officials have intensified the implementation of patriotic education campaigns in monasteries in order “to offer legal education to monks because religious activities must also be considered under the framework of the law.” ■

See also:

■ ICT Report: <http://tinyurl.com/3544js8>

ICT welcomes EP's recent policy...

On 16 December the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the Annual Report on Human Rights in the World 2009 and the European Union's policy on human rights (full text available at: <http://tinyurl.com/36q84uq>). This represents the Parliament's first human rights report since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty and aims to ensure that the EU pursues a substantive human rights policy, including in its external policies. MEPs called on EU foreign policy High Representative/Vice-President of the Commission Catherine Ashton to establish a special human rights directorate within the European External Action Service (EEAS) to ensure that human rights are at the heart of the EU's external actions, and to appoint a Special Representative for human rights with a clear mandate.

In the report, MEPs criticized the human rights records of, inter alia, China, Russia, Iran and Cuba. With regard to Tibet, the EP “urges the Chinese authorities to refrain from their oppressive policy in Tibet, which could eventually lead to the annihilation of the Tibetan religion and culture” and “points out that, despite some steps taken by the Chinese authorities in the right direction (labour reform, Supreme People's Court review of death sentences), the human rights situation continues to deteriorate and is marked by widening social unrest and tightening of the control and repression of human rights defenders, lawyers, bloggers, and social activists, as well as by targeted policies aimed at marginalizing Tibetans and their cultural identity”. MEPs also expressed their concern about the lack of progress of the Sino-Tibetan dialogue. ■

See also:

■ EP Press Release - Human Rights - A silver thread through all external policies: <http://tinyurl.com/3776cs8>

Fears for the life of Tibetan political prisoner tortured after speaking to UN Rapporteur

Tibetan political prisoner Jigme Gyatso, is serving 18 years in prison for “counter-revolution” and “inciting splittism”. He was tortured after speaking to the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture during an official prison visit in 2005 and he is now believed to be seriously ill in Chusur prison in Tibet. The International Campaign for Tibet is appealing to the new UN Special Rapporteur on Torture, Juan Mendez, to call for his urgent release on medical grounds due to fears for his life following repeated torture since his arrest 15 years ago.

On November 27, 2005, then UN Special Rapporteur on Torture Dr. Manfred Nowak met Jigme Gyatso during an official visit to Chushur (Chinese: Qushui) prison near Lhasa. Nowak subsequently called for his release. On March 10, 2006 the UN Human Rights Council published a report about his visit that said: “Since he [Jigme Gyatso] has been convicted of a political crime, possibly on the basis of information extracted by torture, the Special Rapporteur appeals to the [Chinese] Government that he be released.” ■

See also:

■ ICT Report: <http://tinyurl.com/389vf3q>

This number's reading suggestion: a listening project!

Survival of the heart: Capturing the experience, strength and beliefs of Tibetan elders

By Tibet Oral History Project

The Tibet Oral History Project (TOHP) aims to preserve the true history of the Tibetan people. At the request of the Dalai Lama, they record the life experiences of Tibetan elders who were forced to flee their homeland. The Dalai Lama has emphasized the urgency of conducting interviews of these elders before they pass away and their stories are lost forever. Marcella Adamski is the founder and Executive Director of this project. She secured approval from the Tibetan government to run the project, sought funds, designed the oral history protocol and methodology and selected a project team to conduct interviews, videotapes and translations.

To read interviews and watch and listen to interviews, visit Tibet Oral History Project at www.tibetoralhistory.org