

All the reincarnations of living Buddhas of Tibetan Buddhism must get government approval, otherwise they are “illegal or invalid”

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ICT Europe

Vijzelstraat 77
1017HG Amsterdam
The Netherlands

Phone: +31 (0)20 3308265
Fax: +31 (0)20 3308266
eupolicy@savetibet.org

ICT Brussels

11, rue de la linière
1060 Brussels
Belgium

Phone: +32 (0)2 609 44 10
Fax: +32 (0)2 609 44 32
ict-eu@savetibet.org

CCP TO TAKE CONTROL OF 'LIVING BUDDHAS'

The Chinese government has announced new measures stating that all reincarnated lamas (Tib. tulkus) must be approved by the government. The measures, which are deliberately targeted at one of the core belief systems of Tibetan Buddhism, reveal the Party's agenda to undermine and supplant the Tibetan religious hierarchy and weaken the authority of legitimate Tibetan religious leaders, including the Dalai Lama.

The new “State Order No. 5: Management measures for the reincarnation of living Buddhas in Tibetan Buddhism” was passed by the State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA) for implementation from 1 September 2007. The Chinese authorities use the term ‘Living Buddhas’ to describe reincarnate lamas or tulkus, individuals who Tibetan Buddhists believe have consciously decided to be reborn, often many times, for the benefit of all others.

The articulation of the measures in such detail indicates a more aggressive and consistent approach towards controlling the selection, installation and education of reincarnate lamas, as a means of strengthening the government's position as the ‘official’ arbiter of Tibetan Buddhist culture. The official language also emerges from an acute awareness of the Dalai Lama's continued influence in Tibetan areas, as well as recognition of the importance of the role of reincarnate lamas in Tibetan society.

The new measures have the following impact:

- Reincarnations of ‘living Buddhas’ who do not have government approval are “illegal or invalid”. The government will decide whether a reincarnation is a legitimate religious figure or not, regardless of the Tibetan system of recognizing and educating reincarnate lamas. This also applies to tulkus who have already been recognized by Tibetan religious authorities.



Heads of three of the primary schools of Tibetan Buddhism, (L-R) HH Sakya Trinzin, HH the 14th Dalai Lama and HH the 17th Karmapa. All live in exile.

- The measures state that “Living Buddha reincarnations should respect and protect the principles of the unification of the state, protecting the unity of the minorities, protecting religious concord and social harmony, and protecting the normal order of Tibetan Buddhism”. These broad criteria enable authorities to target individuals deemed critical of Chinese rule.

- Other measures taken by the authorities to control the system of reincarnation include the co-opting of Tibetan lamas into the process and a barely-disguised system of ‘reward and punishment’. For example, some lamas have been empowered by the Communist authorities to recognize new tulkus, challenging the legitimate religious system. Those who express loyalty to the Dalai Lama are penalized,

while those who denounce the Dalai Lama accrue certain privileges, such as increased numbers of monks being allowed to attend the monastery, funding for essential renovations, or political appointments.

Measures on reincarnation, and the fact that China continues to hold in custody the boy recognized by

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CCP TO TAKE CONTROL...

the Dalai Lama as the 11th Panchen Lama, Gendun Choekyi Nyima, are also part of the government's efforts to ensure they are in a position of control over the next incarnation of the Dalai Lama. But the Dalai Lama has clearly placed on record on numerous occasions that if the present situation regarding Tibet remains the same, he will be reincarnated outside Tibet away from the control of the Chinese authorities. Tibetans believe that individuals such as the Dalai Lama can choose their next rebirth.

Implementation of state religious policy has been particularly harsh in Tibet because of the close link between religion and Tibetan identity. Tibetan Buddhism continues to be an integral element of Tibetan identity and Tibetan nationalism, and is therefore often perceived by the Party as a potential threat to the authority of the state and 'unity' of the PRC. ■

ICT CAUTIOUS ON REPORTS LINKING PLA GENERAL'S RETIREMENT WITH NANGPA SHOOTING

On 7 August 2007, Associated Press reported that a Chinese General, Lt. Gen. Meng Jinxi, had been forced to resign from his post as a result of the September 2006 Nangpa shootings, where Chinese security forces were filmed firing upon a group of unarmed Tibetan men, women and children near the Tibet-Nepal border, killing a 17 year old nun.

AP quoted the Hong Kong based Information Center for Human Rights and Democracy as saying that Meng, a member of the Communist Party's Central Committee, the Standing Party Committee of Tibet Autonomous Region, and Deputy-Commanding Officer of Chengdu Military Command, had been forced to step down over the incident and would not be named as a delegate to the 17th Party Congress, despite being three years below the cut-off age of 65.

However, to date, no firm evidence has been presented as to the reason for the General's retirement and ICT remains extremely cautious as to the link between the events at Nangpa and Meng's retirement. Meng is known to be linked to the 'Shanghai Clique', a name popularly given to supporters of former President Jiang Zemin. In the months before the 17th Party Congress, Meng's retirement could be closely related to political

manoeuvring ahead of the Congress, rather than the events at Nangpa.

ICT has called for a transparent investigation into the events at Nangpa and the allocation of responsibility by trial. Whether related to Nangpa or not, the quiet dismissal of a single individual without a transparent investigation and allocation of responsibility cannot be regarded as a fulfilment of the Chinese government's duty to investigate the killing of unarmed civilians by its armed forces. ■

SINOPEC ESTABLISHES EXPLORATION BASE IN TIBET

INTERFAX-CHINA has reported that China Petroleum & Chemical Corp. (Sinopec) has recently established an exploration base in Nagchu City in the Tibet Autonomous Region to exploit oil and gas resources there. The state-run oil company will conduct a 2-year geological survey, followed by a one to two-year assessment period to select two to three promising target blocks to dig.

"The buildup of the Qinghai-Tibet Railway and the Qinghai-Tibet Highway has made it a lot easier to transport equipment and other necessary exploration resources to the region," said Han Xiaoping, chief consultant with industry information service China Energy Network.

"After all, Tibet is the only piece of China's land that, in terms of mineral resources, has barely been touched," Interfax reports Han as saying.

ICT is about to release a major new report on the impact of the Qinghai-Tibet railway, which opened on 1 July 2006 and represents a major element in Beijing's attempts to integrate Tibetan areas with China and deepen political and economic control over Tibet. ■

OUTBREAK OF UNREST IN LITHANG REVEALS UNDERLYING TENSIONS

In Lithang (Kardze Tibet Autonomous Prefecture, present-day Sichuan) the situation remains tense after a local Tibetan nomad, Runggye Adak, was detained on 1 August after speaking about the importance of the Dalai Lama's return to Tibet to a large, sympathetic Tibetan crowd gathered for a festival there.

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Fax: +31 (0)20 3308266
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ICT Brussels

11, rue de la linière
1060 Brussels
Belgium
Phone: +32 (0)2 609 44 10
Fax: +32 (0)2 609 44 32
ict-eu@savetibet.org

OUTBREAK OF UNREST...

During the protest, Runggye Adak said that the Dalai Lama should return to Tibet, and called for the freedom of the 11th Panchen Lama, Gendun Choekyi Nyima, and Tenzin Deleg Rinpoche, a senior and respected lama from the area who is serving a life sentence for 'splittism'. According to different sources, Adak also referred to Tibet's independent status, stressed that the people of Lithang should have freedom of religious belief, and called for local Tibetans to stop fighting among themselves about land and water issues - a reference to fights that have broken out among Tibetan nomads, often following the division of their land by the authorities in accordance with Beijing's directives.

According to information received by ICT several weeks before the protest, the Chinese authorities had circulated a petition at Lithang monastery for monks to sign saying that they did not want the Dalai Lama to return to Tibet, which provoked tension in the area, and resentment towards monks who signed.

Following Adak's detention, a stand-off ensued between the gathered nomads and local police. Approximately 200 Tibetans gathered in the courtyard of Lithang police station to appeal for Adak's release while several Tibetans attempt to negotiate with police and Kardze officials. In the days following, large numbers of troops and police arrived in Lithang. Photographs provided to ICT by a tourist who arrived in Lithang on 7 August show that a day later, armed police and soldiers dispersed the peaceful gathering of Tibetans with shock grenades, tear gas, and beatings.

An eyewitness, who has now left Tibet, told ICT that dispersing the Tibetan crowd who were gathered was a coordinated action by police and army. "First they blocked all the roads leading to the area where the Tibetans were gathered...The army was in the meanwhile doing some kind of battle-formations; I could see them swinging their riot-shields and marching up and down. Later all the police cars drove down to the tents. Then the army started to fire tear-gas and hurl shock grenades at the crowd. It also seemed from my position that they were shooting towards the crowd, but it could have been that they were firing into the air, and I didn't hear later if anyone had been hurt. Closer to where I was standing, I saw them beating up a Tibetan guy with



Armed soldiers in riot gear march towards the informal Tibetan encampment south of Lithang.

metal prods."

Runggye Adak's nephew, a 45-year old monk called Lupoe, has also been detained after calling for the release of Runggye Adak, who remains in custody. Lupoe is reportedly being singled out by local officials as being a 'splittist' force behind Runggye Adak's protest. According to one report, official posters describing Lupoe as a 'splittist' element have been posted in Lithang. Two more of Runggye Adak's nephews, Gyatso and Nyima, were detained from his home village and held in temporary custody locally. Their detention involved more than a hundred police and Public Security Bureau officials. According to two reports, Gyatso and Nyima were released after Lupoe handed himself into police custody.

An official Chinese statement released via Xinhua on 3 August reported that Runggye Adak had been detained "for inciting separation of nationalities", saying: "The villager named Runggye Adak went to a platform at about 10:00 am Wednesday before the opening ceremony in Litang county, and shouted out words of "Tibetan independence" and stopped vehicles to disrupt public order, according to the sources. The villager was detained by police for being suspected of breaching the law.... The police sources said they would handle the case of Runggye Adak, whose words and deeds were meant to separate the country and harm national unity and has disrupted public order, according to law." ■

INTERNATIONAL
CAMPAIGN
FOR TIBET

ICT Europe

Vijzelstraat 77
1017HG Amsterdam
The Netherlands
Phone: +31 (0)20 3308265
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Fax: +32 (0)2 609 44 32
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