

“Beijing cannot escape the reality that the EU, the United States and the United Nations all have serious concerns.”

—ICT Statement



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CHINA POSTPONES EU-CHINA SUMMIT OVER DALAI LAMA MEETINGS

Beijing has postponed the EU-China Summit that would have been held in Lyon, France on December 1 due to its displeasure over the Dalai Lama's visits to several European countries from November 29, including a meeting with French President Sarkozy in Gdansk, Poland and an address to the European Parliament in Brussels.

Vincent Metten, EU Policy Director of the International Campaign for Tibet, said: “Beijing’s decision to take such a disproportionate action would appear to be counter-productive to its own interests and risks damaging European confidence in China as a responsible partner. Beijing cannot escape the reality that the EU, the United States and the United Nations all have serious concerns about the political and human rights situation in Tibet and respect the Dalai Lama’s leadership and his willingness to engage with China.”

The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) called on the European Union to designate as soon as possible a high profile European Emissary to help resolve the issue of Tibet and put an end to tensions between China and Europe around Tibetan issues. Such an initiative would be welcome in Europe where the Dalai Lama enjoys overwhelming support for his moral leadership and would be an appropriate outcome of the Dalai Lama’s current visit to European countries.

“The Chinese government’s action in walking away from the EU-China Summit points to the urgent need to move Tibet from an irritant to a resolvable issue,” said Vincent Metten, EU Policy Director of the International Campaign for Tibet. “The mandate of an EU Emissary would be to represent the EU Council in engaging with the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama to collect views of both parties, identify the obstacles and suggest concrete recommendations to the EU Council on how to overcome these identified difficulties.”

China’s decision to postpone the meeting was announced to European ambassadors in Beijing only days prior to

the meeting, and it appears that the meeting with French President Sarkozy and the Dalai Lama in Gdansk on December 6 is of particular concern.

The EU has responded to the Chinese decision with regret as “the EU had set ambitious objectives for the 11th EU-China Summit.” The 5th EU-China Business Summit was also planned to take place in the margins of the political summit in Lyon. China has publicly announced the postponement of the summit in the same week the EU is holding its Legal Experts Seminar and Human Rights dialogue with China in Beijing.

European Commission head Jose Manuel Barroso said on France’s RTL radio on November 30, “We know that China is extremely sensitive when it comes to Tibet and relations with the Dalai Lama. But frankly there was no reason for this decision [to cancel the summit]. He [President Sarkozy] has the right to meet whoever he wants.” ■

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Lodi Gyari, Special Envoy of the Dalai Lama, briefs media ahead of the Tibetan Special Meeting in mid-November.

Tibetan Exiles back Middle Way despite doubts over Sino-Tibetan dialogue

At a Special Meeting in November called by the Dalai Lama, more than 500 Tibetan leaders from the exile community around the world have given their strong endorsement to the Dalai Lama's 'Middle Way' approach, which renounces violence and seeks a genuine autonomy for Tibet within the framework of the People's Republic of China. But delegates also clearly stated their reservations about the results of eight rounds of Sino-Tibetan dialogue and that exile Tibetans might take a position seeking independence if results of engagement were not evident "in the near future".

In the absence of any positive response from the Chinese leadership to his middle-way policy, the Dalai Lama called for the special meeting to be convened by the Tibetan government-in-exile, along with the Tibetan community, with the purpose of reviewing the current strategy of engagement with the Chinese government and the situation in Tibet.

No Progress in 8th Round as China rejects autonomy proposal

Despite the worsening situation in Tibet, the eighth round of Sino-Tibetan dialogue ended on 5th November without any tangible progress. Tibetan Special Envoy, Lodi

Gyaltzen Gyari and European Envoy Kelsang Gyaltzen visited China to conduct the official dialogue with officials of China's United Front Work Department in Beijing on 30 October. Prior to the visit, the Special Envoy stated his main objectives as to "follow up on the discussions held during the seventh round in July this year" and to present a "memorandum to the Chinese leadership on genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people".

During the visit, the Tibetan envoys presented the most detailed and substantive document offered by either side in the six years of talks since 2002: a memorandum that articulated a concept of genuine autonomy for Tibetans within the People's Republic of China and based on existing Chinese constitutional and autonomy laws. The proposal was specifically requested by the Chinese side in the May 2008 round of dialogue.

The 'Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy of Tibetan people' explores the needs of Tibetan nationality within the framework of the PRC, including the autonomy in the preservation of language, culture, religion, education, environmental protection, utilization of natural resources and economic development and trade. (See for more details: <http://www.tibet.net/en/index.php?id=81&articletype=press>)

However, within days of completing the dialogue round, Chinese official Zhu Weiqun publicly condemned the genuine autonomy proposal as "disguised independence" and openly speculated over the Dalai Lama's death. The outright rejection of the Memorandum signals a continuation of Beijing's hard-line position over Tibet's future. At an unprecedented press conference in Beijing, Zhu, the Executive Vice Minister of the United Front Work Department (UFW) of the Chinese Communist Party, declared that "We will never make a concession" on the Tibet question and that Tibetans should "shoulder full responsibility" for "lack of progress."

The failure of the 8th round and the uncompromising Chinese response to the autonomy memo they themselves requested falls well below the expectations of the international community for progress in Tibetan-Chinese relations. After the first round of dialogue in September 2002, the U.S. Government expressed hope that "substantive dialogue between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama or his representatives [would] lead quickly to a negotiated settlement on questions related to Tibet." This position has been reiterated by governments around the world consistently for six years.

Shortly prior to the talks, the Dalai Lama admitted that his faith in the present Chinese government is 'thinning'. ■



Phuntsok Nyidron and Takna Jigme, both former Tibetan political prisoners and victims of torture, appear before the UN CAT, 6 November, Geneva.

UN Committee against Torture's review of China finds "deepened climate of fear" in Tibet

On 21 November 2008, the UN Committee against Torture released its concluding observations (CAT/C/CHN/C/4) on the PRC's fourth periodic report on its adherences to the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) and the Tibetan Government-in-exile submitted reports to the Committee, providing detailed accounts of torture and abuses that have taken place in Tibetan areas.

The UN Committee expressed deep concern about allegations "corroborated by numerous Chinese legal sources, of routine and widespread use of torture" and, in its section on Tibet, noted "longstanding reports of torture, beatings, shackling and other abusive treatment, in particular of Tibetan monks and nuns, at the hands of public officials, public security and state security, as well as paramilitary and even unofficial personnel at the instigation or with the acquiescence or consent of public officials."

The Committee has asked China to provide, within one year, a response to reports of widespread and excessive use of force and other abuses related to the spring demonstrations in the Tibetan Autonomous Region and neighbouring Tibetan prefectures and counties.

ICT also noted the expert committee's call for a 'prompt, impartial and effective investigation' of the situation on the ground in Tibet, which the Dalai Lama has publicly called for and which his envoys convey directly to Chinese officials during a round of the Sino-Tibetan dialogue.

"Governments around the world should take serious note of the Committee's findings and bring them into their human rights discussions with China and resolve to press Beijing to ease its hard line policies and engage with the

Dalai Lama in good faith," said Tsering Jampa, Executive Director of ICT Europe.

In particular, the Committee against Torture expressed concern over:

- The large number of Tibetans arrested after March 2008 and the "reported lack of restraint with which persons were treated";
- The failure by Chinese authorities to investigate deaths of Tibetans "from indiscriminate firing by the police into crowds of reportedly largely peaceful demonstrators" in Kardze county, Ngaba county and Lhasa;
- The failure to conduct independent and impartial investigations into the use of torture, as well as China's refusal to allow independent investigators, including the UN and Red Cross, into Tibet;
- China's failure to inform the Committee of the whereabouts of "a large number of persons" who have been arrested since March, but whose fate remains unknown.

The Committee also raised the case of the missing 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, who was disappeared as a young boy by the Chinese government in 1995 and has been missing since, as well as highlighting gender-related abuse against Tibetan nuns in detention.

The UN Committee against Torture is composed of 10 independent experts with recognized competence in the field of human rights. The Committee heard oral testimony from former Tibetan political prisoners, as well as the International Campaign for Tibet, before issuing its concluding observations. ■



Despite Chinese attempts to block information from leaving Tibet, images like this of armed troops patrolling Lhasa continue to emerge.

Scale of repression and intimidation in Tibetan Areas continues to emerge: Ngaba county, Qinghai, Gansu and Lhasa

New images emerging from Tibet depict the continuing crackdown and an atmosphere of fear and intimidation across the plateau. Although Chinese authorities are attempting to maintain a complete information blackout, reports on the situation on the ground in Tibet continue to emerge, following six months of protest across Tibet since the March 10 anniversary of the 1959 Tibetan uprising. In some areas, there have been reports of a continued or even increased presence of troops and security personnel on the ground after the 2008 Summer Olympics, which may confirm fears that repression would intensify once the global focus shifted away from the Beijing Games.

News of Tibetans recently detained or currently facing trial continue to filter out, while the situation remains especially tense in Tibetan areas with a prominent military presence:

- From Eastern Tibet, ICT recorded that in October several monks and lay people from Kirti monastery appeared in Ngaba county [Chinese: Aba] court to face charges linked to dissent in recent months. ICT has found that since the March protests began, around 20 people in the Ngaba area have been sentenced on charges believed to be related to their participation in protests and dissent. Moreover, security checkpoints are reportedly positioned close to the demarcation of the monastery's perimeter.
- A Tibetan female cadre in her thirties, Norzin Wangmo, has been sentenced to five years in prison for passing on news through the phone and internet about the situation in Tibet to the outside world, according to two sources including the Tibetan government in exile. Norzin Wangmo, from Ngaba Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (TAP), Sichuan, was convicted on November 3.
- In Tibetan areas of Qinghai and Gansu, an American environmentalist whose name is known to ICT,

visited those areas and described the situation:

"Young green-uniformed soldiers stood guard, black guns with thick barrels at the ready, before a military transport... The repercussions were underway.

Terror is not threatened, it is a reality. Monastery after monastery, town after town we traveled, driving hundreds of miles down unpaved roads; the same story, the same choked silence."

- In Lhasa, new images of military of the streets of Lhasa in September were reported by ICT, together with the further evidence of continued disappearances and detention, with Tibetans experiencing extreme brutality while in custody. Two Australian journalists who accompanied an Australian parliamentarian on a four-day visit to Tibet at the invitation of the Chinese government wrote: "The military stranglehold on Lhasa by day is maintained with one chilling addition -- snipers are installed on rooftops around the city's most holy site, the Jokhang Temple, ready to train their guns on the hundreds of Tibetan pilgrims praying in Barkhor Square below. The heavy military presence betrays China's unspoken fear that it is losing, rather than winning, the hearts and minds of local Tibetans, who accuse Beijing of subjugating their culture and religion to preserve national unity."

ICT has observed that Chinese official propaganda characterizing Tibet's protest in March against the government's policies as an act of 'ungratefulness and ethnic conflict' is prominent on Chinese Central Television (CCTV). One experienced visitor to the region wrote to ICT: "there is a possibility that the hatred constructed by such propaganda could get out of hand. For Tibetans this use of brutal force to create 'stability' or at least silence has created a life drenched in terror and loss; loss of family members, loss of land, loss of culture, loss of vital monastic establishments, loss of environmental integrity, indeed loss of freedom in any sense." ■

Obama administration to include strong Tibet competence

The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) has congratulated US President-elect Barack Obama on his election win and anticipates strong support from the Obama Administration for Tibetan issues.

John Ackerly, President of ICT, remarked after the election that “the Tibetan people will have a friend and strong supporter in President-elect Obama,” He added that “this is a critical time for the Tibetan issue and we are confident that the Obama Administration will continue the existing support for Tibet and provide new energy for the efforts of the Dalai Lama to engage with the Chinese government. If we build on what Senator Obama has said about Tibet in the past, then we can expect even stronger initiatives from the United States in the future,”

President-elect Obama has a solid record of support for Tibet and has previously met with the Dalai Lama to discuss human rights issues. Senator Obama attended a private Senate Foreign Relations Committee briefing with the Dalai Lama in November 2005. In addition, he has personally urged Chinese President Hu Jintao to resolve the situation in Tibet through dialogue with the Dalai Lama or his representatives, and this spring, when demonstrations spread across the Tibetan plateau, Senator Obama telephoned the Dalai Lama in India to discuss the situation. The Senator subsequently called on the Chinese to show restraint in dealing with the protests.

The new team being put together is receiving transition briefings from State Department officials familiar with the Tibet portfolio.

Who's who on Tibet

Vice President-elect Joe Biden

As a long-serving member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, has been a consistent voice in support of Tibetan issues and a force behind the establishment of Radio Free Asia, which is crucial to disseminating news unfiltered by Chinese state media to communities inside Tibet.

Speaker Nancy Pelosi

A long time supporter of Tibet in the US Congress. On 3rd April, Speaker Pelosi with the members of a bipartisan congressional delegation introduced House Resolution 1077 that calls on China to cease the crackdown in Tibet, release protestors, provide unfettered access to journalist and independent international monitors to Tibet, and ‘engage in a results-based dialogue’ with the Dalai Lama.

Sen. Hillary Clinton

The President-elect’s selection for Secretary of State is well acquainted with the Dalai Lama and Tibetan issues. She has met frequently with the Dalai Lama, both in the White House as First Lady and in the Senate. During the presidential campaign, Senator Clinton often referred to her participation in the 1995 UN World Conference on Women in Beijing as a reflection of her strong advocacy on human rights issues.

Greg Craig

A senior foreign policy advisor to the Obama campaign and appointed as White House Counsel to President Obama. Craig was the first U.S. Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, appointed by then Secretary of State Madeleine Albright in 1996. ■