

# Tibet Brief

A report of the International Campaign for Tibet



June 2011

## Dr. Lobsang Sangay elected new Tibetan Kalon Tripa



Kalon Tripa Dr. Lobsang Sangay (Photo: Lobsang Sangay)

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Following Tibetan exile elections, the new Kalon Tripa-elect is Dr. Lobsang Sangay, a Tibetan legal scholar in international human rights law. He was born in 1968 in a Tibetan settlement in Darjeeling, India, and completed a Doctorate in Law at Harvard Law School after being awarded a Fulbright Scholarship.

Dr. Sangay is expected to take office as the Head of the Kashag (the highest executive office of the Tibetan Central Administration in Dharamsala) between August and September 2011. In a recent telephone interview [see: <http://tinyurl.com/3tvb8sw>], he said that he was happy to give up his life and job in America because the Tibetan people have entrusted their confidence in him and he would do his best to fulfill Tibetan people's aspirations and the mission of the Dalai Lama to have a secular government.

Mr. Sangay has promised to stick to the Dalai Lama's "middle way approach". He repeated that the stated policy of the Tibetan government in-exile is genuine autonomy within China and called on the Chinese government to resume the Sino-Tibetan talks, which have stalled since the last round in January-February 2010. Sangay's

appointment has been discussed in the media in relation to China's willingness possibility to engage in talks with him. The Economist published an article stating that Sangay is the "last Tibetan China wants to talk to" [see: <http://tinyurl.com/3o87gf5>]. Sangay has offered to negotiate with China "anytime, anywhere", but China has made clear that it will never engage in dialogue with him, as the Chinese do not regard the Kalon Tripa as a legitimate representative of Tibetans. Yet, Robert Barnett, a Tibet expert at Columbia University in New York, pointed out that there is nothing new in China's reaction towards Lobsang Sangay's overture. In fact, China had never had any contact with the government in-exile, but with Dalai Lama's representatives, which will continue to exist and be able to hold talks with the Chinese. While negotiating envoys will still be chosen in the name of the Dalai Lama, it is believed that candidates will be vetted by the Kalon Tripa.

A headline in the China's official Global Times, an English-language daily, summed up the official view: "Dalai's new 'prime minister' illegitimate: official" [see: <http://tinyurl.com/3ux2t68>]. In the article, Lobsang Sangay is labeled as a "terrorist" for his past leadership in the Tibetan Youth Congress. However, Mr. Sangay stressed that the Communist Party is threatened by the fact that he was elected freely by popular vote. Lobsang Sangay said that his first and main target is to fight for human rights and freedom for Tibetans inside Tibet and to "pave the way for the return of the Dalai Lama to his rightful residence at the Potala Palace" in the Tibetan capital of Lhasa. He often praised the Dalai Lama's decision to devolve his political powers to elected leaders as a "gift to the Tibetan people".

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## Ashton and Van Rompuy's high level talks with China



President Van Rompuy and the President of the People's Republic of China, Hu Jintao, meeting in the Great Hall of the People.

### During May, both the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, and the President of the European Council held high-level talks with Chinese leadership.

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On 15 May European Council President Herman Van Rompuy visited China. He held talks with both Chinese President Hu Jintao and Prime Minister Wen Jiabao and visited important institutes and institutions throughout the country. Human rights were raised, although it was not made public if Tibet was raised in private meetings. President Van Rompuy told members of China's Communist Party that China should bolster its international stance by upholding international human rights standards and the rule of law. In a speech at the Central Party School in Beijing he said that China's global image and influence would be shaped by factors going beyond its economic performance. He added that European citizens are concerned about the upholding of international human rights standards and this is reflected in the EU diplomacy across the world. President Van Rompuy assured

that he raised human rights in talks with both President Hu Jintao and Premier Wen Jiabao, but the exact content of their talks was not revealed. According to diplomats and the press, he didn't raise individual human rights cases leaving them for the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue taking place this month in Beijing (16 June). Hu Jintao pressed President Van Rompuy to lobby EU member states for a lifting of the EU arms embargo imposed on China after the brutal crackdown on peaceful protesters around Tiananmen Square in Beijing in June 1989.

On 12 May HR & VP Catherine Ashton met with Chinese State Councillor Dai Bingguo in Gödöllő, Hungary, for the 6th round of the EU Strategic Dialogue with China. Ahead of the strategic dialogue, Guy Verhofstadt (European Parliament's ALDE group leader) and Edward McMillan-Scott (MEP, Lib Dem, UK) called on Catherine Ashton to address ongoing violations of human rights in China, particularly the treatment of political dissidents. Ashton reported that they discussed the human rights situation in China and she had the opportunity to represent EU's

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In late May the Dalai Lama ratified amendments to the governing Charter presented to him by the Tibetan Parliament in Exile that devolve his political powers in the exile government to a democratically elected leadership headed by a chief minister or Kalon Tripa. Following months of passionate discussion in the Tibetan exile community, His Holiness the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Parliament in Exile reached an agreement on terms that fully vest the Central Tibetan Administration with the powers and responsibilities of democratic governance, while allowing the elected Tibetan leadership to call on the Dalai Lama for assistance in serving their interests internationally, including through representatives and special envoys. Details of the deliberations and the amendments to the Charter are available on [www.tibet.net](http://www.tibet.net), the official website of the Central Tibetan Administration. ■

#### See also:

- ▶ Watch Lobsang Sangay's interview on BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/3usdm2c>
- ▶ Bhuchung K.Tsering's Blog Post: <http://tinyurl.com/3jfq4k>
- ▶ Robert Barnett's article in Foreign Policy: <http://tinyurl.com/4443ohm>

views. However, the content of discussions on human rights remains opaque.

A major concern among EU civil society relates to the lack of public statements about human rights in China on both occasions, in contrast with more assertive critique of the human rights situation in China made by American officials at the recent Sino-U.S. Strategic and Economic Dialogue. As stated by Kelley Curie in her article "Rebuilding a United Front on China Rights" (see: <http://tinyurl.com/3tbj3nm>), European officials said little or nothing about human rights in public. Ms. Curie suggests that there are steps the EU and the US could take to rebuild an Atlantic partnership on China human rights issues, for example, by developing forum to coordinate assistance programs focused on governance, the rule of law, media access (especially broadcasting into China), Tibetan welfare, and other political and rights issues. Neither side can stand alone before Beijing, but together they could build an effective partnership on human rights issues to exercise influence towards China's serious upholding of human rights. ■

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*A report of the International Campaign for Tibet*



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## “An Open Door for Tibet?”, Op-ed, published in the Wall Street Journal, by ICT President, Mary Beth Markey

Every day, Tibetans risk their lives to speak up for the Dalai Lama's return and against Chinese policies that constrain their free access to their spiritual leader. But Beijing so far hasn't budged. The last request made by the Dalai Lama to return, to be with his people after a devastating earthquake in Tibet two years ago, was left unanswered. So it's interesting that a Communist Party official said last week that the door is open for the Dalai Lama to go home anytime he likes subject to certain conditions, of course.

Could this indicate any further consideration of the Dalai Lama's possible return? Many have speculated that the Dalai Lama's decision this year to retire from his political duties would remove some obstacles. If so, this opening is worth exploring.

There already exists a clear basis for negotiations between the two sides to end the impasse over the fate of Tibet. Last week's "open door" announcement was made at a Beijing press conference held to set the stage for the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of "the peaceful liberation of Tibet." The celebration marks the day, May 23, 1951, when a "17-Point Agreement" was signed between representatives of the Tibetan and Chinese governments.

That agreement changed Tibet's status from an independent nation to a theoretically autonomous part of the People's Republic of China. It includes provisions that the central authorities would not alter the existing political system in Tibet; would allow the local Tibetan authorities to carry out reforms in consultation with the people; and that the unique religious and cultural identity of the Tibetans would be protected. This was the first instance of "one country, two systems," a model Deng Xiaoping later championed with respect to Hong Kong.

In the decades since the agreement was signed, much has changed. After the 1959 escape of the Dalai Lama into exile in India, both sides renounced the agreement. And whatever initiatives both sides used to get the Dalai Lama back to Tibet since 1959 were either bungled, mistimed or, in the case of his own request following the 2009 earthquake, ignored.

One problem is that the Chinese seek to limit the scope of their confrontation with Tibet to the status of the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama, of course, considers the well-being of some six million Tibetans living in Tibet as the defining issue but Beijing is loath to discuss this matter.

What's worse is that Beijing has reneged on what it offered in 1951 and systematically undermined Tibetan autonomy. Tibetans have experienced the slow degradation of

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What's worse is that Beijing has reneged on what it offered in 1951 and systematically undermined Tibetan autonomy. Tibetans have experienced the slow degradation of their distinct identity. The Buddhist culture is deliberately undermined Tibetan lamas can reincarnate only with the permission of the Chinese Communist Party while freedom of expression is blocked. Hundreds of Tibetans are imprisoned for non-violent dissent and many are broken by torture. Last month, two elderly Tibetans were reportedly killed by paramilitary troops while trying to prevent the forcible removal of hundreds of monks from Kirti monastery to be subjected to "patriotic education."

While Beijing tries to break Tibetans' spirit, the government is forcing the people towards assimilation into the greater Chinese state. Massive development projects facilitate unchecked Chinese migration and resource extraction.

At this impasse, a fresh and realistic look at the 1951 agreement is what's needed, with the Dalai Lama's return home the perfect time to push for a return to the diplomatic status quo ante. It could prove instructive for moving forward on Tibet. If Beijing was once comfortable giving Tibetans "the right of exercising national regional autonomy" in exchange for unification with "the big family of the Motherland," both sides should try proceeding from this negotiating position. Tibetans' demands that they not adopt Beijing's economic or religious diktat could then follow logically.

The burden of the Chinese military occupation on local resources, competing and unequal governing authorities and the trauma of thousands of internal refugees from Communist aggression thwarted the "peaceful coexistence" that the Dalai Lama had hoped for in the 1950s. Decades of Chinese rule in Tibet are still characterized by instability, inequality and unmet grievances. Yet, watching China rise, the Dalai Lama sees the promise of a better life for all its citizens. Under circumstances that would provide Tibetans an equal footing and sufficient safeguards for their identity to thrive within the People's Republic of China, the Dalai Lama has proposed a "Middle Way" with the hope that Chinese leaders will again opt for an accord with the Tibetans.

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Indeed, the elements of the original 17-point document track very closely the "Middle Way" proposal that the envoys of the Dalai Lama have placed on the table for discussion since 2002. The Chinese government has identified a "core interest" in sovereignty and territorial integrity. An accord reached with the involvement of the Dalai Lama, who is integrally linked with the welfare of Tibet in the Tibetan psyche, would be broadly accepted and ensure stability based on the will of the people rather than on coercion or force.

The issue of Tibet has generated angst abroad and paranoia in Beijing. Now is a rare opportunity for a negotiated solution, one that could be achieved with the participation of the Dalai Lama. If sold correctly, the leaders of the Communist Party should jump at the chance to declare that the Tibet's national leader is once more within Chinese borders indicating that Tibetans can live in harmony in China. And, for Tibetans, it could be a chance to gain the genuine autonomy they have been aspiring to. ■

(Published in the Wall Street Journal on 25 May 2011 : <http://tinyurl.com/6e8c859>)

## United Nations: UN Human Rights experts' urgent intervention with China regarding restrictions imposed on the use of Tibetan language

According to documents made available before the 17<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Human Rights Council, on 22 October 2010 four human rights experts of the Council issued a joint urgent appeal to China "regarding allegations relating to restrictions imposed on the use of the Tibetan language in schools in the Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of China." The experts were the Special Rapporteur on the right to education, the Independent Expert in the field of cultural rights, Special Rapporteur on Contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance and Independent Expert on minority issues.

The experts told the Chinese government: "Such alleged restrictions on the use of the Tibetan language in schools would have a negative impact on those of Tibetan origin and the preservation and promotion of the Tibetan language generally. Concerns related to the impact of the education reforms on the education outcomes as well as to access to their cultural heritage of children whose mother tongue language was Tibetan. Those children had benefited from bilingual education that had enabled them to become proficient in both languages, ensuring access to their own cultural heritage."

China's response to the experts denied that there had been any detentions of students connected to the protests, and stated that they had listened to their grievances. In a response dated 18 November 2010 to the UN human rights experts, China said following the protests, "The Qinghai provincial government and education authorities at all levels promptly met with students and teachers to publicize the State's minority education policy, listening extensively to the views and opinions of teachers, principals and students. People from all ethnic groups as well as teachers and students gained a fuller understanding of the significance of bilingual education and the provincial government's policy in that

area. Today the matter has been resolved satisfactorily, and the situation in the schools has quickly returned to normal. Throughout these events no student who participated in the demonstration was arrested, detained or charged with criminal acts."

China's explanation to the UN human rights experts fails to refer to the written petition signed by more than 300 teachers and students from Qinghai expressing their view that while learning Chinese is essential for students in Tibet today, the main language medium for teaching should remain Tibetan. Similarly, no mention was made about the intensified buildup of troops in the areas where students protested, when sources in the area reported the detention of more than 20 students from the Tibetan Middle School in Chabcha (Chinese: Gonghe) on Friday on 22 October 2010 (see ICT report: <http://tinyurl.com/23xd4lz>).

The 17<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council took place from 30 May to 17 June 2011 at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. The High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Navanethem Pillay, referring to China expressed concern over the restriction of freedom of expression. Mr. Tenzin S. Kayta, on behalf of Society for Threatened Peoples, Mr. Ngawang Choephel, Asian Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Network (AITPN) and Mouvement contre le Racisme et pour l'Amitié entre les Peuples (MRAP) were invited to take the floor as representatives of civil society's organizations. Each made a statement on different aspects of the worsening of human rights in Tibet, including the current crackdown in Kirti monastery, the extrajudicial killings of Tibetans by Chinese police in Payul, (Ch : Baiyu), Sichuan province, in August 2010 and the detention of more than 20 students from the Tibetan Middle School in Chabcha (Chinese: Gonghe) on 22 October 2010 during the wave of students' protests in Qinghai province. ■

## New Qinghai railroads to pass through sensitive Tibetan areas

New rail lines are due to be opened in connection with the Qinghai-Tibet Railway and are planned to pass through some of the most significant areas of Tibet, and which remain under a security crackdown since demonstrations spread across Tibet in 2008. The rail projects are likely to have a greater impact upon Tibetan communities than the Qinghai-Tibet Railway, which began operations in 2006 as the most high-profile symbol of Beijing's ambitious plans to develop the western regions of the People's Republic of China. For further information about this project, see the ICT report at: <http://tinyurl.com/5ttrvba>



Yellow line roughly indicates areas designated as Tibetan autonomous within the PRC  
Dotted red lines indicates future railroads  
Solid red lines indicate currently planned railroads  
Black lines indicate existing railroads  
(Map adapted from China's Ministry of Railways)

### See also:

- ▶ Reports of the 17<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council: <http://tinyurl.com/3arc2g8>
- ▶ ICT report: <http://tinyurl.com/3gth9co>

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## Crackdown in Ngaba: new information and updates



Kirti monks attending a prayer session on the morning of 18 March before Phuntsog's body was carried to the sky burial site for cremation.

A climate of fear continues in the Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) area in Sichuan province (the Tibetan area of Amdo) following the removal by troops of more than 300 monks from Kirti Monastery and the deaths of two elderly Tibetans trying to protect them.

ICT has learned that currently many monks may have been detained due to wrong answers given during "patriotic education" sessions in Kirti Monastery and other monasteries nearby. Exiled Kirti monks now in India said that soldiers, police and special police forces, armed with a variety of weapons, were maintaining their blockade of Kirti Monastery. They have held "Patriotic Religion" reeducation meetings in the monks' dormitory buildings and asked a series of questions. When monks cannot give the answers they want to hear, they say, the police is arrest them.

It is particularly worrying that the wife and daughter of one detainee, 60-year old Gerik, were subject to intimidation and beatings after he was taken into custody. According to these sources, Gerik and nine other monks are accused of involvement with the self-immolation of the monk Phuntsog, and he may have been subjected to serious torture while in detention. This is the third time that Gerik has been detained; he was detained on suspicion of distributing leaflets and held for a month in 1998, and again in 2008, under suspicion of speaking about the situation in Tibet. According to exile sources, Gerik's daughter Metok has been beaten severely while in detention. She was allowed to go home, but not to hospital, and is still in serious condition. She is believed to be psychologically affected by her ordeal. The same sources report that she was detained for questioning about her father. There are fears for other associates of Gerik whose whereabouts are not known, although further details are not available. ■



Prayer Vigil on the Esplanade of the European Parliament on Monday 23 May 2011 organized by the Tibetan Community of Belgium, Vrienden van Tibet and International Campaign for Tibet in solidarity with monks and laypeople of the Tibetan area of Ngaba, Sichuan, China.

This number's reading suggestion

## L'Insoumise de Lhassa

By Gyaltsen Drölkar

In 1990 Gyaltsen Drölkar, a young Tibetan nun, demonstrated to wish long life to the Dalai Lama and freedom for Tibet. Together with other three nuns, she was detained and tortured in a Chinese prison. Freed twelve years later, in 2002, she fled Tibet on foot, walking in the snow for twelve days to reach Nepal and then onwards to India. Today she lives in Brussels, Belgium, and her book tells her story from her nomadic childhood to her arrival in Europe. She tells about the cruel and degrading treatment reserved for those who refuse to submit to the Chinese government. ■

See also:

- ▶ <http://www.savetibet.fr/2011/04/linsoumise-de-lhassa>

## Upcoming Events

- ▶ **01 June 2011:**  
First session of the 15<sup>th</sup> Tibetan Parliament in-Exile begins
- ▶ **16 June 2011:**  
EU-China Human Rights Dialogue
- ▶ **20 June 2011:**  
Launch of ICT Report on Tibetan Refugees (update 2011)

See also:

- ▶ BBC reporting: <http://tinyurl.com/69pes7l>
- ▶ ICT Report: <http://tinyurl.com/6z7ksgf>



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