

## ICT findings on self-immolations in Tibet presented at UN Human Rights Council



ICT participates in a briefing at the Palais Des Nations in Geneva

Together with two other NGOs and a Tibetan witness, the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) presented a briefing on self-immolations in Tibet and Chinese policy at the Palais Des Nations in Geneva, where the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) met for its 21<sup>st</sup> Session (10-28 September 2012). The panel discussion, entitled "The significance of self-immolations in Tibet and Chinese policy", featured new video footage of the crackdown in Tibet presented by a Tibetan witness, Namkho. Other speakers were Kate Saunders from ICT, Philippe Dam of Human Rights Watch and Gianfranco Fattorini, Mouvement Contre Le Racisme Et Pour L'Amitie Entre Les Peuples (MRAP).

The briefing was attended by representatives of official member delegations, including the Chinese mission in Geneva, as well as NGOs. ICT concluded that as the Party Congress approaches in Beijing, it has become increasingly evident that a fundamentally new approach is warranted in Tibet. The Chinese government needs to take immediate steps to address the current emergency in Tibetan areas. ICT called upon governments in the international community to seek to coordinate their

efforts with other like-minded countries and explicitly call upon the Chinese government to address the policies in Tibet threatening Tibetan culture, religion and identity that are at the root cause of the current crisis.

As part of the 17 September debate under Item 4 "Human Rights situations that require the Council's attention", several government delegations and NGOs addressed the worsening human rights situation in the People's Republic

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of China, particularly the rights of Tibetans and Uyghurs, in statements to the 21<sup>st</sup> Session of the U.N. Human Rights Council. Among the countries raising the human rights crisis in China were: the Czech Republic, Cyprus on behalf of the European Union (and Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland, Albania and Liechtenstein), Germany, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States. EU countries that took the floor aligned themselves to the EU statement delivered by

Cyprus (currently holding the EU Presidency). These countries expressed concern about reports of human rights violations in China, including forced disappearances, extrajudicial detentions, death penalty, persecution of lawyers and human rights activists and so forth. States expressed special concern over the lack of freedom of expression, freedom of religion and belief and the situation of minorities, including in Tibet and Xinjiang (see: <http://tinyurl.com/c8m88jo>). The Chinese delegation wholly rejected country statements on human rights violations occurring in China, characterizing them as “politicized”, but countered with its own criticism of the human rights situation in Western countries. ■

#### See also:

- ▶ ICT press release: <http://tinyurl.com/cyc2u57>
- ▶ Full video General Debate Item 4: <http://tinyurl.com/d7ozne2>

## Human Rights Watch urges UN General Assembly to address rights crisis in Tibet

On the advent of the 67<sup>th</sup> Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, Human Rights Watch called on governments concerned about the worsening situation of human rights in Tibet to meet on the sidelines of the Assembly to discuss the formation of a Tibet contact group. According to Human Rights Watch, this contact group could press the government of the People’s Republic of China to resume meaningful negotiations with Tibetan representatives and visibly demonstrate international concern about deteriorating conditions inside Tibet.

Read Human Rights Watch’s press release at: <http://tinyurl.com/8qylbcm>

## Stavros Lambrinidis appointed first EU Special Representative for Human Rights



Stavros Lambrinidis, EU Special Representative (EUSR) for Human Rights.

Stavros Lambrinidis has been appointed as the first EU Special Representative (EUSR) for Human Rights. This followed a proposal by Catherine Ashton, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice President of the European Commission. Mr. Lambrinidis, a Greek attorney, took office on 1 September 2012, with an initial mandate running until 30 June 2014.

Mr. Lambrinidis is the EU’s first thematic Special Representative. His appointment came after the adoption of the EU’s Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy in June 2012. Mr. Lambrinidis will operate under a broad mandate, working closely with the European External Action Service. Congratulating Mr. Lambrinidis on his appointment, High Representative/VP Ashton said: “Human rights are one of my top priorities and a silver thread that runs through everything that we do in external relations. This is therefore a key portfolio for the European Union and for me personally.” ICT has, in turn, called on the EU to view human rights as a “silver thread” in every aspect of its relations with the People’s Republic of China. Furthermore, given the current crisis in Tibet and the wave of Tibetan self-immolations, ICT has appealed to the EUSR for Human Rights to ensure that the situation in Tibet will be a priority on his watch-list. ■

#### See also:

- ▶ Paola Trevisan’s blog: <http://tinyurl.com/bw3we9x>

# Tibet Brief

A report of the International Campaign for Tibet



October 2012

## Flame of Truth Relay arrives in Brussels during EU-China Summit



Flame of Truth Relay in front of the European Parliament (EP) with President of the EP Tibet Intergroup Mr Thomas Mann MEP

Considering the worsening situation inside Tibet over the last sixty years and the continuing outbreak of self-immolations inside Tibet since 2009, the Tibetan Parliament in-Exile has taken an initiative to embark on a six-month long world-wide campaign called the "Flame of Truth Relay" to collect signatures for a petition to be submitted to the United Nations on 10 December 2012 (Human Rights Day). The online signatures in support of the campaign and the petition can be accessed through the following link: <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/takeaction/198/920/082/>

The first leg of the campaign began on 6 July 2012 in India coinciding with the 77<sup>th</sup> Birth Anniversary of the Dalai Lama and has covered more than 48 regions in India. The second leg of the Flame of Truth Relay has begun simultaneously

in Europe, North America, South East Asia, Australia and Africa on 2 September. Tibet Support Groups in Belgium have welcomed the Flame of Truth in Brussels on 20 September and organized sit-ins and demonstrations to raise awareness about the current crisis in Tibet.

The Flame of Truth's events took place just prior to and during the 15<sup>th</sup> EU-China Summit, one month ahead of the leadership changes expected in October at the 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party in Beijing. The International Campaign for Tibet regretted that human rights issues and Tibet were not mentioned in the agenda of the Summit. However, in a press-statement following the Summit President Van Rompuy and President Barroso said they had raised human rights concerns with Chinese Prime

Minister Wen Jiabao, "in particular regarding restrictions of freedom of expression and the situation in Tibet" (see : <http://tinyurl.com/93o15mh>).

Chinese Prime Minister Wen has, on various occasions, publicly announced the need for China to adopt political reforms including during a press conference following the 5<sup>th</sup> Session of the 11<sup>th</sup> National People's Congress on 14 March 2012 where he stated that: "Now reforms in China have come to a critical stage," (...) "without a successful political reform, it's impossible for China to fully institute economic reform". In order for the EU to be consistent and coherent, ICT called on Presidents Barroso and Van Rompuy to repeat and insist on the messages that were voiced by HR/VP Lady Ashton at the European Parliament on 12 June 2012. ICT also addressed a letter to the new EU Representative for Human Rights Mr. Lambrinidis asking him to meet with Premier Wen in the margins of the Summit to raise the critical situation in Tibet and request to undertake an official visit to Tibetan areas where self-immolations have taken place.

ICT welcomed the fact that EU officials cancelled a planned press conference with Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and EU Presidents Barroso and Van Rompuy because it was not possible to mutually agree on the format of the event. In fact, China had requested limiting the press conference to 50 journalists, 25 accredited by the Chinese and 25 non-Chinese in order to avoid sensitive questions, such as on Tibet. ■

### See also:

- ▶ Article by Vincent Metten on Public Service Europe: <http://tinyurl.com/bslj8nn>
- ▶ Join Press Communiqué 15<sup>th</sup> EU-China Summit: <http://tinyurl.com/cc97ajx>

## Tibetan Parliament Speaker Penpa Tsering briefs EU officials on Tibet

Mr Penpa Tsering, Speaker of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, in the course of a five-day visit to Brussels and Amsterdam in September 2012, met with Dr Gerhard Sabathil, Director East Asia, Pacific and Australia, of the European External Action Service (EEAS) in Brussels.



Tibetan Parliament Speaker Penpa Tsering (2<sup>nd</sup> left) and Representative Ngodup Dorjee (1<sup>st</sup> right) during their meeting with Dr Gerhard Sabathil of EU's European External Action Service (2<sup>nd</sup> right) in Brussels, Belgium, on 6 September 2012

During his one-hour meeting with Dr Sabathil, Mr Penpa Tsering briefed him on the current human rights situation inside Tibet, particularly on the spate of self-immolations taking place in China's Tibetan inhabited areas. He also gave an overview of the repressive and discriminatory Chinese government's policies affecting Tibetans. Mr Penpa Tsering urged the EEAS to continuously engage the Chinese government to end the crisis in Tibet. Dr Sabathil said that the EEAS is keeping track of the current situation inside Tibet and had raised the issue of human rights violations in Tibet in several demarches with the Chinese government. He reiterated his deep concern regarding the deteriorating human rights situation inside Tibet and assured that the EEAS will continue to raise Tibet and the human rights of the Tibetan people with China. ■

## U.S. State Department adopts report on Sino-Tibetan Dialogue; U.S. Senate honours Dalai Lama's Special Envoy



Lodi Gyaltsen Gyari

In its annual report to Congress on the status of talks between the Chinese and Tibetans, the U.S. State Department faults the Chinese government for the impasse in the dialogue, and for "creating a cycle of repression" in Tibet that has led to the self-immolation crisis. The State Department submits a "report on Tibet negotiations" to Congress every year, as required by the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002. This most recent report covers the period from 2011 to the first quarter of 2012.

At the same time, the U.S. Senate has passed a resolution honouring Lodi Gyaltsen Gyari for his years of service as Special Envoy of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The bipartisan resolution was approved by unanimous consent through a voice vote.

*"The Senate has offered a wonderful tribute to a man who has dedicated his life to service of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people,"* said Gare Smith, Vice Chairman of the Board of Directors of the International Campaign for Tibet, and a past Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. *"Lodi Gyari has worked for decades as a skilled diplomat to advance the vision of His Holiness in diplomatic circles. This resolution is a fitting way to honor Lodi, as he understood early on the essential role that the U.S. Congress could play in elevating, promoting and institutionalizing the Tibetan issue in the U.S. government and the international community."* ■

Continue reading at: <http://tinyurl.com/cgh6rf8>

## Tibetan monks in Dharamsala release report on self-immolations in Tibet

The Dharamsala-based Dhomay Alliance for Freedom and Justice has released a new report on the self-immolations in Tibet entitled *"Iron Hare 2011 - Flames of Resistance"*. The Dhomay Alliance for Freedom and Justice is led by Kirti monks in Dharamsala, who have played a critical role in reporting the Tibetan self-immolations to the outside world, working with officials from the Central Tibetan Administration in Dharamsala, writers, and other monks. Beginning with the young monk Tapey who set fire to himself in February 2009, 10 of the 51 self-immolations to date were monks at Kirti in Ngaba, and 10 were former monks at Kirti.

You can download the full report at: <http://tinyurl.com/csgdb2j>

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## Special meeting of Tibetans begins in Dharamsala, India



Second General Meeting of Tibetans in-Exile in Dharamsala, India (Tibet.net picture)

On 25 September 2012, hundreds of Tibetan delegates from across the world opened the Second General Meeting of Tibetans in-Exile in Dharamsala, India. On this occasion, Tibetan delegates from 26 countries will discuss ways to deal with the critical situation in Tibet and garner concrete support from the international community to resolve the issue of Tibet.

The Head of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) Sikyong Dr Lobsang Sangay thanked foreign governments and parliaments for raising the issue of Tibet in their own country by issuing statements and adopting resolutions. He also called on foreign governments to take concrete actions to urge the Chinese government to open up Tibet to fact-finding delegations and international media in order to independently assess the actual situation in Tibetan areas. ■

### Political prisoners focus

#### Yonten Gyatso

According to the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) based in Dharamsala, India, on 18 June 2012 senior monk Yonten Gyatso, whose whereabouts had been unknown for eight months, was sentenced to seven years for “sharing pictures of Tenzin Wangmo (a nun who self-immolated in October 2011, see: <http://tinyurl.com/d45s6lo>) and information related to self-immolation protests”. Yonten Gyatso was found guilty of sending information out of Tibet to the United Nations Human Rights Council. The sentence was pronounced by an Intermediate People’s Court in Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) Prefecture, Sichuan Province. Gyatso is now serving his sentence at Mianyang Prison in Sichuan province.

The Czech Republic has denounced the individual case of Yonten Gyatso during the General Debate under item 4 of the 21<sup>st</sup> Session of the UN Human Rights Council and expressed concern over the increasing detentions of Tibetan intellectuals and cultural figures who exercise their right to freedom of expression. ■

*This number’s reading suggestion*

**“My take: Why the Dalai Lama cannot condemn Tibetan self-immolations”**

By Tenzin Dorjee

In this article, published on the Belief Blog of CNN’s website on 18 July 2012, Tenzin Dorjee, Executive Director of Students for a Free Tibet, takes his stand in explaining the root causes of self-immolation by individual Tibetans and the difficult role of the Dalai Lama in expressing himself on this issue. To read the full article: <http://tinyurl.com/7rqyu6> ■

## Upcoming Events

### ► 1<sup>st</sup> October 2012:

International Conference on the Upcoming Chinese Leadership Change and its Potential Impacts on Uyghurs

### ► 8 November 2012:

18<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party of China

### ► 16-18 November 2012:

International Tibet Support Groups Conference in Dharamsala, India