

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 11, 2013

The Honorable John F. Kerry  
Secretary of State  
Department of State  
2201 C St. NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

We are writing to ask for your commitment to press for meaningful improvements in the conditions in Tibet, both based on your personal interest in the issue and building on the ground laid by your predecessors.

During your service on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the panel approved a number of policy and programmatic measures that served to establish and broaden the U.S. government's policy on Tibet. These efforts not only helped to provide critical assistance to Tibetans struggling to preserve their culture and identity, but also to promote a negotiated solution through dialogue. We appreciate your personal engagement on the Tibet issue and with His Holiness the Dalai Lama, whom you hosted twice as Chairman, as well as the elected prime minister of the Tibetan community in exile, Sikyong Lobsang Sangay.

The situation in Tibet is at a crisis point. We are witnessing a cycle of repression, protest, and further repression, which threatens to escalate into further instability. We welcome the State Department's call on Chinese authorities to end the counter-productive policies that are stoking the grievances that are leading to Tibetans taking their own lives through self-immolations. We share the State Department's hope that the acts of self-immolation will end, and we commend the Tibetan exile leadership led by Sikyong Lobsang Sangay for consistently and categorically discouraging Tibetans in Tibet from self-immolating as a form of protest.

Unfortunately, the Chinese government has failed to respond to the calls for a change in its policies toward Tibet and to respect the rights and dignity of Tibetans. In fact, by commencing prosecution of Tibetans allegedly associated with acts of self-immolation, Chinese authorities are making things worse.

We view the Tibet problem as a resolvable issue. While the Chinese government's external stance on the Tibet issue conveys intransigence, there are still hopes that dialogue could resume between China's new regime – led by Xi Jinping, whose father had ties to the Dalai Lama – and Tibetan representatives. Moreover, there is an open discourse among a range of Chinese scholars and 'netizens' about the wisdom of the government's approach. Lastly, Tibetans have adhered to the non-violent approach of the Dalai Lama,

and the Tibetan exile leadership led by Sikyong Lobsang Sangay remains committed to dialogue. All of this suggests there is room for engagement with the Chinese.

We welcome the statement on Tibet by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay, made in November 2012. She cited "continuing allegations of violence against Tibetans seeking to exercise their fundamental human rights of freedom of expression, association and religion," and pointed to "reports of detentions and disappearances, of excessive use of force against peaceful demonstrators, and curbs on the cultural rights of Tibetans." The UN High Commissioner's statement brings important focus to the Tibet issue, as her office and her mandate reflect an objective assessment of the situation in Tibet through the application of fundamental and universal human rights norms.

We believe that Ms. Pillay's statement can serve as an impetus for a new level of collaborative engagement on the Tibet issue. We note that in December 2012, the European Union, United Kingdom and Canada issued statements on Tibet. Also, on December 11, 2012, then-Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues Under Secretary Maria Otero cited Tibet as an example of U.S.-EU strategic engagement on Asia, saying "European governments, including Germany, UK, Switzerland, the Czech Republic, and Poland, have joined the call for Chinese authorities to address the worsening human rights conditions in Tibetan areas."

In this context, we urge you to:

- make Tibet an integral issue in your engagement with your Chinese counterparts, not only as consistent with the work of your predecessors and U.S. policy, but as an expression of a principled foreign policy grounded in fundamental and universal values;
- urge the Chinese government to resume meaningful dialogue with the Tibetan leadership;
- appoint a new Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues as soon as practicable;
- continue to fund the programs that provide humanitarian assistance, economic development, and independent information to the Tibetan people;
- coordinate with other governments on implementation of the recommendations made by UN High Commissioner Navi Pillay, including allowing access by independent and impartial monitors (such as UN Special Rapporteurs) to assess conditions on the ground, adoption of policies recommended by UN Special Rapporteurs as referenced in Ms. Pillay's statement, and lifting restrictions on media access to the region;
- seek access by U.S. diplomats to Tibetan areas as reciprocally commensurate with the access Chinese diplomats have in the United States; and
- continue to make a consulate in Lhasa a top priority for the next diplomatic posts in the People's Republic of China.

While the more than 100 self-immolations of Tibetans continue to make headlines, we know that there are countless others among the six million Tibetans inside Tibet who struggle silently every day to preserve their culture, their religion, and their dignity in the face of destructive Chinese policies. The United States has a moral responsibility to help the Tibetan people in this quest. We know that you understand the longstanding basis for America's support of Tibet, and we welcome your continued efforts in this regard in your new role as Secretary of State.

Sincerely,



Senator Mark E. Udall



Senator Marco Rubio



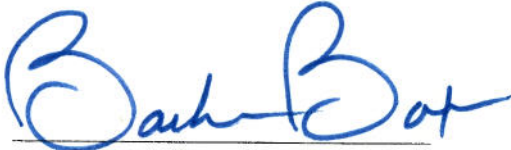
Senator Dianne Feinstein



Senator Michael F. Bennet



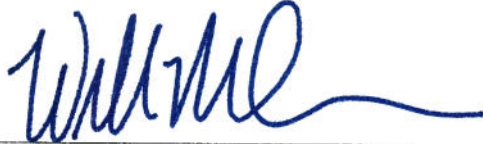
Senator Richard Blumenthal



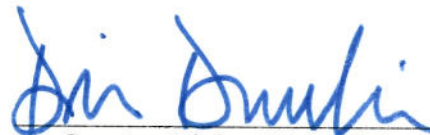
Senator Barbara Boxer



Senator Benjamin L. Cardin



Senator William M. Cowan



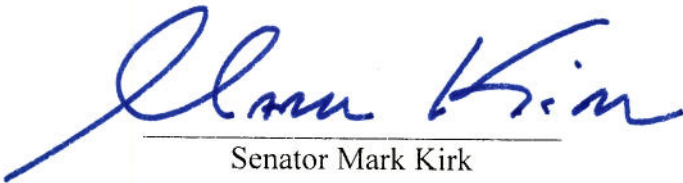
Senator Richard J. Durbin



Senator Al Franken



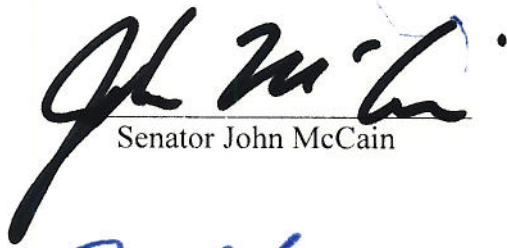
Senator Mike Johanns




Senator Mark Kirk




Senator Patrick J. Leahy

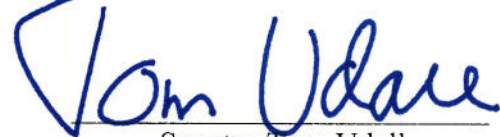
  
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Senator John McCain

  
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Senator Bernard Sanders

  
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Senator Elizabeth Warren

  
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Senator Susan M. Collins

  
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Senator James E. Risch

  
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Senator Tom Udall

  
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Senator Ron Wyden

  
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Senator Jeff Merkley