

Tibet Brief

A report of the International Campaign for Tibet



May 2014

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Official launch of ICT's '2014 for Tibet' campaign in the European Parliament, February 19, 2014

Update on ICT's EU elections Campaign and Post-Election Analysis

Although many have viewed the results of the European Parliament elections with mixed feelings, the **International Campaign for Tibet (ICT)** is looking forward to working with a number of friends and supporters of Tibet. Some 27 of 76 signatories to the pledge "2014 for Tibet" have been elected to the European Parliament.

"Among the elected MEPs, who will start their mandate at the beginning of June, there are many long time champions of the Tibetan people," said ICT's EU Policy Director **Vincent Metten**. *"We are very glad to be working with MEPs, who have clearly stated their commitment to defending human rights in Tibet."*

However, **Vincent Metten** regretted

that a number of MEPs dedicated to the Tibetan cause retired from the European Parliament or were not re-elected. *"ICT is very grateful for all their years of campaigning and efforts they made to raise the issues relating to the non-violent struggle of the Tibetan people,"* he affirmed. *"I am quite sure that many of them will continue their important work in another capacity."*

Signatories to the **ICT's** pledge "2014 for Tibet" promised to stand up for the rights and freedoms of the Tibetan people, subscribing to a list of detailed measures that they can take as MEPs. "More important than the number of elected MEPs, who signed the pledge, is their unwavering commitment to the Tibetan cause," Vincent Metten explained. *"We can be rest assured that*

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Illegal detentions of pro-Tibet protestors in Belgium



Belgian plainclothes police on the point of arresting two members of Tibet Support Group (Vrienden Van Tibet), Inge Hermans and Georges Timmermans, on April 1, in Bruges.

On April 1, 2014, Chinese President Xi Jinping was invited to give a speech on EU-China relations at the College of Europe in Bruges, Belgium.

Tibetan and Belgian Tibet-supporters organized a demonstration, permission of which had been granted earlier by the Mayor of Bruges.

However, several demonstrators seeking to protest peacefully on that day were detained for hours, in one case partially strip-searched, and had Tibetan flags confiscated.

The following human rights violations have been documented:

- The detention of at least 13 Tibetans and three Belgian citizens, either *en route* to a peaceful protest or near a venue where **Xi Jinping** was speaking.
- **Inge Hermans**, a musician at the Anvers Opera and President of *Vrienden van Tibet*, was held in a "cold, damp cell" for several hours after being arrested near where **Xi Jinping** was speaking in Bruges. She was told by the police that during the visit of **Xi Jinping**: "There was no democracy" in Belgium as "the rules had changed."
- The forceful confiscation of small Tibetan flags from demonstrators' bags by police.
- A Tibetan protester who was wrestled to the ground by police had a wad of tissue paper stuffed into his mouth by a plain-clothes officer to prevent him

from shouting that Xi should talk to the Dalai Lama. (The incident can be viewed on video [here](#))

- Some Tibetans en route to a demonstration were locked into a police van and told that "only Chinese" were allowed to be there, not Tibetans.
- A Belgian journalist was told by Bruges' chief of police that, on the request of the Chinese security forces, all windows on the route of the Chinese president had to be inspected to ensure that they did not display any Tibetan flags or photos of the **Dalai Lama**. The police chief told the journalist: "The orders were clear: that President **Xi** should not see or hear any Tibetan protest."

In response to the event of April 1, 2014, in Bruges, **Vincent Metten**, EU Policy Director at the **International Campaign for Tibet** (ICT), said: "*The Chinese government should not be allowed to export their repressive measures against freedom of assembly and speech to Belgium. Everywhere he has travelled in Europe, Xi Jinping has been met by Tibetans peacefully protesting the oppression in their homeland, but as far as we know nowhere else have the security forces responded to these protests the way they did in Bruges. We strongly denounce these violations of freedom of expression and assembly by*

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Tibetan people, as well as human rights activists, can rely on those MEPs."

According to preliminary results, the following "2014 for Tibet" signatories were elected to the European Parliament: **Evelyn Regner** and **Ulrike Lunacek** from Austria; **Bart Staes** and **Philippe Lamberts** from Belgium; **Tunne Kelam** from Estonia; **Heidi Hautala** from Finland; **Nathalie Griesbeck**, **José Bové**, **Robert Rochefort**, **Michèle Rivasi**, **Karima Delli**, **Isabelle Thomas**, **Yannick Jadot**, **Pascal Durand** and **Eva Joly** from France; **Thomas Mann**, **Michael Cramer**, **Gesine Meissner** and **Stefan Bernhard Eck** from Germany; **Jaroslav Walesa** and **Lidia Joanna Geringer de Oedenberg** from Poland; **Monica Macovei** and **Csaba Sógor** from Romania; **Ramon Tremosa i Balcells** from Spain; and **Keith Taylor**, **Catherine Stihler** and **Jill Evans** from the United Kingdom.

ICT will continue reaching out to newly-elected MEPs to secure even wider support in the European Parliament. "*We made it clear during the campaign,*" stressed **Vincent Metten**, "*that we wish our pledge to be endorsed only by candidates who respect human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, and pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men.*" **Metten** added: "*For the integrity of our organisation it is important only to work with MEPs who sign up to these values. We would also be glad to see them closing ranks and re-establishing the Tibet Intergroup.*"

For more information on ICT's EU elections campaign, please see www.2014fortibet.eu ■

the Belgian authorities."

ICT and other organizations have compiled testimonies of Belgian citizens affected by these violations, and intend to pursue the matter through legal channels. ■

The Dalai Lama in Europe

On May 5, 2014, the **Dalai Lama** arrived in Latvia's capital Riga for an 11-day tour of Europe. He then travelled to Norway on May 8 and to the Netherlands on May 10. He wrapped up his European tour with a series of public events in Frankfurt, Germany, on May 14.



International Campaign for Tibet and the Tibet Community Netherlands awards Dalai Lama a medal to mark 25th anniversary of Nobel Peace Prize

The **International Campaign for Tibet** (ICT) co-organized his visit to the Netherlands, which included several political meetings, a seminar on education and a public talk as well as a teaching with 11,000 attendees. For more information [click here](#).

The most controversial of his visits has been the one to Norway, as Prime Minister **Erna Solberg** refused

a meeting with the **Dalai Lama**. In Norway, he was guest of the Nobel Institute to mark the 25th anniversary of his Nobel Peace Prize awarded in 1989. The Norwegian government was harshly criticized for its decision.

However, Prime Minister **Solberg** responded that the government's decision had not been taken due to economic factors, denying that exports

of salmon and other products to China were part of the reason for snubbing the **Dalai Lama**. She added that repairing diplomatic relations with China was the decisive factor in her government's decision. Both **Solberg** and Foreign Minister **Børge Brende** believe it's intolerable for Norway to have no political contact with the world's most highly populated country.

Norway's difficult relationship with China dates back to the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Chinese dissident **Liu Xiaobo** in 2010. China called on other countries to boycott the ceremony where Liu's absence (he has been detained since 2008) was represented by an empty chair.

This episode angered the Chinese government so much that it imposed an unofficial partial trade embargo on Norwegian salmon and froze trade talks. After 2010, Norwegian salmon exports to China fell to 29%.

For more information, read the [op-ed](#) published by the Wall Street Journal co-signed by ICT's President **Matteo Mecacci**. ■



Supporters of the Dalai Lama line the streets waiting for his arrival in Oslo, Norway on May 8, 2014.

Delegation of Tibetan Parliamentarians visits EU Member States with ICT



Delegation of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile with ICT staff meeting MEP Kristiina Ojuland in Tallinn

A delegation of Members of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile concluded a two-week mission to Europe organized by the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT).

The assignment started in Brussels and included visits to Estonia, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. The objectives of this delegation were two-fold: firstly, to brief officials and policy-makers on the current human rights situation and latest developments in Tibet; and secondly, to reinforce already existing ties and establish new alliances in certain EU member states.

The choice of Eastern European member states was not accidental: *"The horrors of Soviet occupation allow people in Eastern Europe to draw parallels with ongoing human rights violations in Tibet, and we are fortunate to have supporters among politicians and civil society representatives in these countries,"* said **Lopon Sönam Tenphel**, Deputy Speaker of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile. *"We would like to see it reflected in their official policies towards the People's Republic of China (PRC). We believe that they have a moral duty to raise issues relating to linguistic and cultural rights of Tibetans with the PRC, as they have been victims of similar policies."*

On May 29 and 30, the delegation consisting of **Lopon Sönam Tenphel**, **Karma Chopel**, **Dawa Phunkyi** and **Sönam**

Gyatso, accompanied by ICT's staff, held meetings with Estonian Parliamentarians and Members of the European Parliament. They also held a public debate in the University of Tartu, organized by the Centre of Oriental Studies, and met with members of Friends of Tibet, Estonia.

Later, on June 2 and 3, the mission continued its visit in Poland, where it held a productive meeting with the Lech Walesa Institute as well as members of the Tibet Support Group of the Polish Parliament and with the Tibetan community in Poland, which organized a discussion at the University of Warsaw.

The group ended its visit in Eastern Europe on June 6, having held meetings with Parliamentarians and Foreign Affairs Ministry officials as well as with representatives of civil society in Prague and Bratislava. Czech Parliamentarians, who met with the delegation and ICT, voiced their criticism towards, and even apologized for, the recent statement by the Czech Prime Minister **Bohuslav Sobotka** who claimed that the Czech government cannot recognize the Tibetan Government in Exile and endorsing the policy of non-intervention in China's internal policy. ■

UN Human Rights Committee urges Nepal to register Tibetan refugees

The **UN Human Rights Committee (HRCmte)** urged Nepal to register long-staying Tibetans and to ensure that all Tibetans who may have a valid refugee claim are guaranteed access to Nepali territory. This was a part of the concluding observations that the UN HRCmte made when reviewing Nepal's compliance with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).



© US News, April 16, 2014

Nepalese policemen detain exiled Tibetans as they shout slogans during a protest outside the Chinese embassy visa office in Katmandu, Nepal.

The UN Human Rights Committee commended Nepal for hosting a large number of refugees and asylum seekers in its territory but said it was concerned "at the restrictions imposed on Tibetan refugee rights should the State party deem any activity to undermine the friendly relationship with its neighbor." It added that it was concerned that the lack of legislation would not protect against refoulement to China.

These observations come after the **UN Human Rights Committee** reviewed Nepal's second report on its compliance and promotion of the rights in the ICCPR. The Committee reviews all countries, which have ratified the ICCPR

in four-year cycles. The review itself is a yearlong process with the State first submitting a report on what it has done to protect and promote the rights in the ICCPR. Then non-governmental organizations can submit issues with regards the States' non-compliance with the ICCPR.

The **International Campaign for Tibet (ICT)** submitted a [report](#) in April 2013, highlighting the arrest and detention of Tibetan refugees as well as the issues of freedom of religion and association for Tibetans in Nepal.

In its reply Nepal said that, although it was not a party to the Refugee Convention and its protocols, it was "committed to respecting the principle of

non refoulement." The principle of non refoulement is a key facet of refugee law that concerns the protection of refugees from being expelled or returned to places where their lives could be in danger.

ICT calls on the new government in Kathmandu to reaffirm its adherence to Nepal's human rights obligations and implement the UN Human Rights Committee's recommendations on Tibetan refugees. It has an urgent responsibility to investigate the role of its personnel in violating Nepal's international and national obligations to protect those fleeing a credible fear of persecution, and to take measures to prevent future incidents. ■

UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights review of China

The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) urged the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) to review China's policies on the right to housing, education and cultural life of Tibetan people.



On May 5, 2014, ICT Germany's Executive Director **Kai Müller** made a statement in Geneva ahead of the UN CESCR's review of China.

The CESCR reviewed China's compliance

with the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) on May 8, 2014. The Committee monitors the implementation of the ICESCR by its State parties and reviews each State every five years. China was late to submit its second report to the Committee and, therefore, this review comes nine years since the last review.

Among its issues of concern, the Committee mentioned the rights of ethnic minorities, especially concerning unemployment rates and the access to social services and social security. The CESCR also asked China how it viewed

the relationship between the rights in the ICESCR and some civil rights, such as the right to life, the right to associate in a trade union, and the right to a cultural identity, which included freedom of religion.

On May 5, non-governmental organizations, including ICT, were given the opportunity to make statements with regard to China's compliance with the ICESCR. [The full ICT statement can be read here.](#)

For more information read the [UN's official press release.](#) ■

25th Anniversary of the Tiananmen Square Massacre

Statement by Matteo Mecacci, President of the International Campaign for Tibet



"On behalf of the **International Campaign for Tibet (ICT)**, I express solidarity with the Chinese people on the 25th anniversary of the massacre in Tiananmen Square. We mourn those who died that day and remember the suffering of those injured, arrested and tortured, as well as their families.

"The events of June 4 remind us that the march of history towards freedom and justice can take long and dark detours. The civil liberties of the

Chinese people are arguably worse off today than in 1989, given the technological tools of repression vigorously employed by the Chinese state. But we firmly believe that freedom and justice will prevail for the 1.3 billion people, among the many nationalities, within the People's Republic of China (PRC).

"Months before the military crackdown on democracy protestors in Tiananmen Square, the Tibet Autonomous Region was put under martial law, following protests by Tibetans calling for the respect of their fundamental rights. When it passed the so-called Tiananmen sanctions, the United States Congress included conditions relating to Tibet that would have to be met before sanctions could be lifted. These included the release of political prisoners, human rights

improvements and ending bans on the free flow of information. These conditions are far from being met.

"While there is no talk in the U.S. about lifting Tiananmen sanctions, there remains debate in the European Union about whether to lift the embargo on arms sales to China, imposed at the same time. This reminds us of the need for all democratic governments to adopt a common position on China, and to include human rights conditions and policy on Tibet and the **Dalai Lama**.

"Ultimately change in China and Tibet will come from within. Despite official efforts to repress it, the yearning for democratic rights of citizens in the PRC is no less pronounced today than it was in 1989. Democratization remains the essential pathway to a free China and a free Tibet. The world's democracies should reinvigorate efforts to help all the people in the PRC exercise their fundamental democratic freedoms." ■

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Political prisoners focus

Tenzin Delek Rinpoche



Tenzin Delek Rinpoche

April 7, 2014, marked the 12th anniversary of the arrest and detention of Tibetan Buddhist leader **Tenzin Delek Rinpoche**. Recognized by the Dalai Lama as a reincarnated lama in the 1980s, **Tenzin Delek Rinpoche** has been a community leader, and for decades a staunch advocate for the protection and preservation of Tibetan culture, religion, and way of life.

In 2002, **Rinpoche** was arrested on false charges of exploding bombs and distributing separatist leaflets. The only evidence against him was extracted from a relative during torture. His relative later recanted, clearing Rinpoche of any wrongdoing. **Rinpoche**'s trial was held in secret, and even though he had

no independent legal counsel and the evidence against him was non-existent, he received a death sentence. The sentence was later commuted to life in prison, and he remains there today. Reports say that his health is failing.

Tenzin Delek Rinpoche is widely respected by the people (both Tibetan and Chinese) in his home county of Lithang in eastern Tibet. Over 40,000 of them have signed a petition asking for his release, each attesting to their signature by adding a thumbprint in red ink. Each one of the 40,000 Tibetan signers risks their freedom and perhaps even their life by speaking out for Tenzin Delek Rinpoche.

The **International Campaign for Tibet** (ICT) joins an international effort to call for the release of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche. We have been urging, and will continue our effort to ask, governments to raise his issue with the Chinese authorities. ■

Reading suggestion

Human Rights Watch report: *Under China's Shadow. Mistreatment of Tibetans in Nepal.*



On April 1, 2014, Human Rights Watch (HRW) published its report – Under China's Shadow - Mistreatment of Tibetans in Nepal – documenting the increasing restrictions on Tibetans living in Nepal as a result of strong pressure from China.

The report shows that Tibetan refugee communities in Nepal are now facing a de facto ban on political protests, sharp restrictions on public activities promoting Tibetan culture and religion, and routine abuses by Nepali security forces. These include excessive use of force, arbitrary detention, ill treatment in detention, threats and intimidation, intrusive surveillance, as well as arbitrary application of vaguely formulated and overly broad definitions of security offenses.

Nepal is home to a sizeable Tibetan community and has long played a crucial role as a haven and gateway for Tibetans fleeing repression in China. In 2008, China responded to large-scale popular protests on the Tibetan plateau by initiating a sustained crackdown and ramping up efforts to prevent Tibetans from escaping to Nepal. China also increased efforts to silence Tibetan communities abroad. As a result of a massive security presence in Tibetan areas of China and increased cooperation between Nepalese and Chinese security forces in recent years, China has been able to stem the flow of Tibetan refugees escaping to Nepal. In 2013, less than 200 Tibetans

were recorded as having fled China, as compared to a pre-2008 annual average of more than 2,000.

HRW's new report details how Nepal subsequently signed several security and "intelligence-sharing" agreements with China, and implemented close monitoring of the Tibetan community, its leaders, and real or perceived activists. The Nepalese government has pledged increased cooperation with China's People's Armed Police border forces to "curb illegal activities at the border" and establish "an effective system of repatriation of illegal immigrants," with no mention of protection of asylum seekers and refugees. The report also documents how the deployment of intimidating numbers of armed police in Tibetan neighborhoods on politically sensitive dates, such as the birthday of the Dalai Lama, or when high-level Chinese dignitaries visit, is now standard practice by the Nepali authorities. To read the full report, [click here](#). ■

Upcoming Events

- ▶ **JUNE 10 – 27, 2014:** 26TH SESSION OF THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
- ▶ **JUNE 14 – 15, 2014:** DALAI LAMA'S VISIT TO ITALY AND ICT OFFICIAL STALL DURING HIS LECTURES
- ▶ **JULY 1, 2014:** START OF THE ITALIAN EU PRESIDENCY