

# Tibet Brief

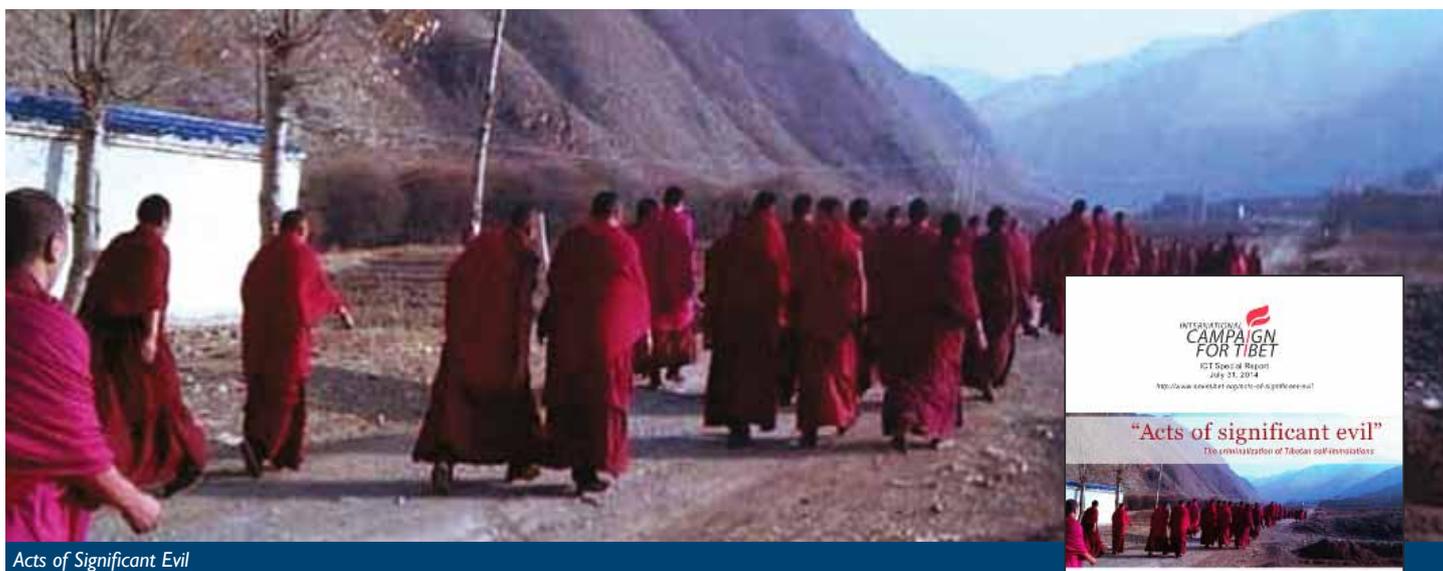
A report of the International Campaign for Tibet



September 2014

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Acts of Significant Evil

## New ICT report: “Acts of Significant Evil – The Criminalisation of Tibetan Self-immolations”

On July 31, 2014, the **International Campaign for Tibet (ICT)** published its new report *Acts of Significant Evil – The Criminalisation of Tibetan Self-immolations*. The report focuses on the intensified repression, which has led to convictions, detentions and disappearances of at least 98 Tibetans as a response to self-immolations by the Chinese Communist Party using a quasi-legal framework to criminalise them.

The new report by **ICT** documents the impact of rulings announced in December 2012, a month after **Xi Jinping** became head of the Chinese Communist Party. The new measures, adopted in response to self-immolations across Tibet (now totaling 132), have resulted in a spike in political imprisonments, including one instance of the death penalty, and numerous cases of Tibetans being 'disappeared'.

As a result, their family and friends are unaware whether or not they are still alive, often for weeks or months.

**Matteo Mecacci**, President of **ICT**, said: *“These chilling new measures have resulted in the imprisonment of innocent Tibetans and should serve as a wake-up call to the world’s governments. The Chinese government is resorting to unacceptable*

*forms of collective punishment to stifle dissent in Tibet. It uses pseudo-legal language without legal basis, and instead utilises propaganda, misinformation and denial of reality to punish friends and relatives of the self-immolators.”*

The new report, *‘Acts of Significant Evil – The Criminalisation of Tibetan Self-immolations’* finds that:

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- Tibetans can be sentenced on homicide charges based on their alleged ‘intent’ and presumed ability to influence a Tibetan who has self-immolated, according to guidelines announced in 2012;
  - At least 15 Tibetans have been sentenced to prison terms on “intentional homicide” charges because they have allegedly “aided” or “incited” others to self-immolate. This is despite an apparent lack of a formal legislative process having properly established the basis for such a charge;
  - Since 2010, at least 98 Tibetans have been sentenced, detained or disappeared due to an alleged association with a self-immolation;
  - Chinese authorities are seeking to penalise families and the broader community when a Tibetan self-immolates, according to a set of April 2013 regulations in one of the areas where several self-immolations have occurred.
- In response to these new measures and their questionable legality under international and Chinese law, **ICT** recommends that:
- The Chinese government releases those imprisoned for being associated to self-immolators, e.g. for alleged “aiding” or “inciting” them, and to disclose fully the whereabouts of the individuals disappeared. It also recommends an end to all measures of collective punishment for families and entire communities;
  - The international community raise with Chinese officials the inconsistency of the relevant measures with international and Chinese law;
  - The Chinese government to address the underlying grievances of Tibetans by means of respecting their universal rights and by entering into meaningful negotiations with them. ■

## Tibetans injured after police opened fire in Kardze, Tibet

On August 12, around 10 Tibetans were injured in Sershul, Kardze, Sichuan, after paramilitary police opened fire on a crowd of Tibetans protesting about the detention of a respected village leader, according to Tibetan sources. According to Tibetan sources in exile, the area, in the Tibetan region of Kham, is now under tight control, with local Tibetans including the elderly and children subject to interrogation.



Village leader **Wangdak**

[Images](#) (GRAPHIC!) from the area circulating on social media depicted Tibetans with what appear to be serious head and body wounds following the incident in Loshu (Chinese: Luoxu) Township in Sershul (Chinese: Shiqu) county in Kardze (Chinese: Ganzi).

The concerned village leader, named as **Wangdak**, had expressed his support for a traditional gathering at the beginning of a local horse festival, in which Tibetans would burn incense and make prayer offerings. His support came after it appeared that official restrictions were likely.

According to some sources, **Wangdak** may also have raised concerns over further tensions about demands from officials over a welcoming ceremony, and possible harassment of local Tibetan women by these same officials.

When locals heard that **Wangdak** had been detained, they gathered to protest his detention and called for his release. Paramilitary police were deployed, and according to several exile sources, used teargas and opened fire on the crowd. Full details of the circumstances of the shooting are not known. The wounded were believed to have been taken to hospital in Jyekundo (Chinese: Yushu). Details of their identities and injuries are not known. The sources said that **Wangdak's** son and another relative were among those shot.

Tibetans in Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (in the Tibetan region of Kham) are known for their strong sense of identity and nationalism, and the political climate in the region has been deeply oppressive, particularly since 2008. The Chinese authorities have noted that their loyalty

to the **Dalai Lama** and strong resistance has made the work of “*maintaining public order and safeguarding stability... very arduous.*”

However, it has emerged that Chinese authorities have denied medical treatment to the wounded and detained numerous other Tibetans in a sweeping crackdown in the area. One Tibetan committed suicide in custody on August 17, while another died apparently due to untreated wounds, according to Tibetan sources in exile. Tibetan males over the age of 12 or 13 have been detained from their homes in the village of Shugba, leaving only older people, women and young children in many houses in the area, according to the same sources.

Subsequently, three more Tibetans died of untreated wounds at the detention centre in Loshu (Chinese: Luoxu) in Kardze (Chinese: Ganzi). They were identified by exile Tibetan sources as **Tsewang Gonpo**, 60; Yeshe, in his early 40s forties, and Jinpa Tharchin, who was 18. Their bodies were returned to their families. ■

## New EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and European Council President appointed

After several discussions and disagreements between Member States, on August 30 the remaining two of the three top EU jobs were filled.



Federica Mogherini (third from left) with ICT's President Matteo Mecacci (second from left) meeting representatives of the Central Tibetan Administration in the Italian Parliament in 2012

During a special summit convened on that day, the key post of President of the European Council was offered to the Polish Prime Minister **Donald Tusk**. He had emerged as a clear favourite for the post a few days ahead of the summit. His appointment represents a victory for the 10 former communist Central and Eastern European countries. The majority of them joined exactly a decade ago and have demanded that one of the top jobs should go to a candidate from their region. Politically this choice also confirms Poland's rise as one of the major players in the EU.

There have been more difficulties encountered with the appointment of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy by the European Council in agreement with the President of the European Commission **Jean-Claude Juncker**. The appointed candidate was the Italian Foreign Affairs Minister **Federica Mogherini**, who emerged as a frontrunner for the post very early on in the process but had been in the center of high-heated debates between Member States. In fact, several Eastern European Member States, such as the Baltic States, Poland and Bulgaria, were strongly opposed to her candidature, as she was deemed too Russia-friendly, and threatened to block her appointment.

Moreover, many expressed concerns that, at a time of serious challenges and international crises, a candidate with a stronger background would have been more appropriate, as she lacked foreign policy experience, having only been in her position since January.

As the High Representative is at the same time a Vice-President of the European Commission, **Ms. Mogherini** – as all other Commissioners-designate – will be considered by the European Parliament before it votes on the entire College. This hearing will take place on October 6.

On September 5, European Commission President **Jean-Claude Juncker** sent the list of Commissioners-designate to Italian **Prime Minister Matteo Renzi** in his capacity as President of the Council of the European Union.

The **International Campaign for Tibet (ICT)** welcomes the new High Representative. If confirmed by the European Parliament's vote in October, **ICT** plans on actively collaborating with **Ms. Mogherini** and hopes that she will adequately incorporate the issue of Tibet in all her relations and exchanges with the Chinese government.

In her previous political life as a Parliamentarian in Italy **Ms. Mogherini** has actively shown her support for the Tibetan cause by participating in the World Parliamentarians' Convention on Tibet, which was held in Rome in 2009, and meeting with the **Dalai Lama**. Moreover, in 2012 and 2013 she met with several representatives of the Tibetan movement, including the first Tibetan Prime Minister, **Dr. Lobsang Sangay**, elected in 2011 after the **Dalai Lama** relinquished his political power. ■



## Chinese Party official promotes interracial marriages in Tibet to create 'unity'

A senior Chinese official has urged intermarriage between Tibetans and Chinese in order to promote 'ethnic unity'. At a ceremony in Lhasa, the Party chief of the Tibet Autonomous Region congratulated 19 mixed families for their contributions to "the happiness and harmonious nature of our motherland".

The move is unlikely to influence whom Tibetans or Chinese marry in practice, and appears to indicate official insecurities over a lack of genuine unity in Tibet. This new statement indicates the level to which the Chinese Party state seeks to interfere in people's private lives, and could indicate a shift in approach on ethnic minority policy following recent statements by Chinese leader **Xi Jinping**.

Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) Party Secretary Chen Quanguo's enthusiasm for "**fraternal ethnic intermarriage**" was promoted on the front page of Tibet Daily, the official Party newspaper, and given prominence elsewhere in the state media in the past few weeks.

Presiding over a gathering of families of intermarried nationalities on June 18, 2014, **Chen Quanguo** asked the gathering "to promote fraternal ethnic intermarriage as an important starting point to promote the great unity of all ethnic groups in Tibet," according to Chinese state media.

**Chen** even spoke about the need for Party officials and departments to set themselves up as 'matchmakers' for introducing couples to each other, "building a bridge to connect [singles from all ethnic groups] to their soul mates."

To reinforce this mixed marriage message, the state media evoked the marriage

of Chinese Princess **Wencheng** to a Tibetan king in the 7<sup>th</sup> century - the main story used officially in modern China to describe the Sino-Tibetan relationship. In re-telling this story, the Chinese authorities rewrite history by using the symbolism of this marriage in an attempt to convey there is harmony between Tibetans and Chinese, underline their dominance over Tibet and prove the Chinese brought 'civilisation' to Tibet. A year ago, on August 1, 2013, the first performance of a multi-million dollar spectacle about Chinese Princess **Wencheng** was staged in a replica Potala Palace in Lhasa, in an ambitious show that will also be staged elsewhere in the PRC. ■

## ICT highlights extra-legal detentions in Tibet on UN International Day on Enforced Disappearances and delivers a statement at the UN Human Rights Council

On the International Day of the victims of Enforced Disappearances on August 30, 2014, the **International Campaign for Tibet (ICT)** called for an end to a wave of enforced and extra-legal disappearances across Tibet, following intensified repression after the self-immolations began in 2009.

There has been a new spike in enforced disappearances since the self-immolations in Tibet in 2009. The authorities' draconian response to more than 130 self-immolations across Tibet has included reprisals against those allegedly associated with self-immolators, including friends, families, witnesses to the act, and even entire communities.

"Enforced disappearance has been used as a tactic by the Chinese authorities in Tibet to spread fear and attempt to ensure allegiance to the Party-state," said **Matteo Mecacci**, ICT's President. "We are highly concerned about the cases of 'disappearances'



UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Al-Husseini

connected to self-immolations – such as friends, family, and individuals who may have simply witnessed a self-immolation," **Mecacci** added.

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As the latest session of the U.N. Human Rights Council opened on September 8, 2014, in Geneva, ICT has urged the new High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Zeid Al-Hussein, to visit China and Tibet during his tenure. In a letter to the new High Commissioner, ICT also pressed for an end to the increasingly widespread use of extra-judicial detentions and torture as a means of silencing Tibetans.

The 27<sup>th</sup> Human Rights Council session was held from September 8-26. Among other matters, the Council reviewed the annual report of the Working Group on Involuntary or Enforced Disappearances (WGIED) on September 12.

ICT delivered a [statement](#) on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation at the Interactive Dialogue with this Working Group highlighting 41 cases of enforced disappearances that it has documented between November 2012 and April 2014.

On September 1, in a letter welcoming the new High Commissioner, Matteo Mecacci said, "ICT believes that sustained international pressure is crucial to the achievement of positive change inside Tibet. We appeal to you to take this matter into consideration and work on the situation in Tibet as one of your priorities during your tenure." ■



ICT Brussels Policy and Advocacy Officer **Elena Gaita** delivering a statement on enforced disappearances in Tibet at the Human Rights Council on September 12, 2014

## South Africa denies visa to the Dalai Lama

The **South African Government's** has denied a visa to Tibet's exiled spiritual leader the **Dalai Lama**, to attend the 14<sup>th</sup> World Summit of Nobel Peace Laureates being held in Cape Town from October 13 to 15. This wholly undermines the legacy of **Nelson Mandela** and sends a wrong message to those who supported peace and reconciliation in the country.

According to media reports, the **Dalai Lama's** Representative in South Africa was informed by the **International Relations and Cooperation** Department that he would not be granted a visa to this annual gathering of the Nobel laureates.

"The **Dalai Lama** is known internationally for his unflinching stand on peace and non-violence and the South African action goes against the thinking of its own late leader **Nelson Mandela**," said **Matteo Mecacci**, ICT's President.

"**Nelson Mandela** showed his solidarity with the **Dalai Lama** by inviting him to South Africa and publicly meeting him twice, in 1996 and 2004," Mecacci added.

When the South African Government denied a visa to the **Dalai Lama** in 2011,

Archbishop Desmond Tutu branded the decision as "a total betrayal of our struggle's history."

If the South African response is a result of Chinese pressure, then it ignores the steadfast efforts by the **Dalai Lama** for dialogue and peaceful resolution of the Tibetan issue. This is something that respected South African leaders, from **Mandela** to **Ela Gandhi** to **Archbishop Tutu**, all supported. It also propagates the Chinese allegation that the **Dalai Lama** is a negative force, playing into the hands of hardliners in China and undermines his efforts for peace and reconciliation between the Chinese and Tibetan peoples.

South Africa should differentiate between the positions of the current leaders in China and those of the Chinese people.

Over the years Chinese people from different levels of society, including party cadres, have appreciated the **Dalai Lama** as a positive figure and hold him in high esteem.

When the people of South Africa were experiencing a repressive period in their country's history, supporters of peace and justice all over the world came to their support. Therefore the South African Government's denial of a visa to the **Dalai Lama** sends the message that peace, truth and reconciliation are not priorities to the present government. ■

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## Political prisoners focus

Radio Free Asia reported that **Jigme Guri** ("Labrang Jigme", also known as Jigme Gyatso), who has been missing since detention in Tsoe in August 2011 was sentenced on September 5, 2014 to five years in prison.



Jigme Guri

**Jigme Guri** is renowned for his resistance against Chinese rule in Gansu province and was jailed after the authorities detained him for the fourth time in his campaign for Tibetan freedom.

He was convicted by a Chinese court in Lanzhou, the capital and largest city of Gansu, for allegedly conducting "splittist activities". The conviction on September 5 was confirmed after a second trial following his detention in August 2011.

"Splittism" is a charge often brought against Tibetans who assert their national culture and identity or who protest China's rule in Tibetan regions, where a series of self-immolations and protests have led to a crackdown by security forces and the arrest of scores of Tibetans. It is unclear where **Jigme Guri** is being detained.

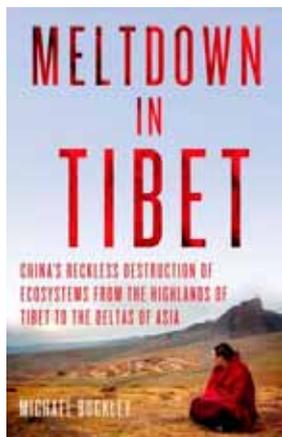
**Jigme Guri's Labrang** monastery in the Kanlho (Chinese: Gannan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture was the scene of major demonstrations against Chinese rule during region-wide Tibetan protests in March 2008. Monks disrupted a government-controlled tour of the monastery for foreign journalists a month later.

Chinese authorities first detained **Jigme Guri** in 2006 following his return to Labrang after he attended a religious ceremony conducted in India by the **Dalai Lama**. He was released without charge after being held and questioned for a month. In 2008, during region-wide protests against Chinese rule, he was held in detention for a year. He was severely beaten, but again was not formally charged. In 2010, he was held for six months in a hotel for political "re-education" before he was once again released, again without charge.

Following his latest arrest in 2011, **Jigme Guri's** friends expressed concern about his health, as he was believed to be ill and not receiving medical treatment while in custody. ■

## Reading suggestion

In November 2014, a new book focusing on the environmental degradation of the Tibetan plateau, written by journalist and travel writer Michael Buckley, will be published.



In his book, which features a preface by the Dalai Lama, Buckley argues that while Tibetans have experienced waves of genocide since the 1950s, they are now facing ecocide. For decades China concentrated on suppressing traditional Tibetan culture, social structure, and religion. However, during the country's market revolution in the 1980s, the Chinese turned their focus on the area's material resources. Although the sources of most great Asian waterways are found in Tibet, Chinese-built mega-dams have caused rivers to dry up and deltas to shrink, while extensive mining operations have polluted other channels. The Chinese government banned logging virgin forest around the Yangtze's Tibetan headwaters after "massive soil erosion" produced a disastrous flood in 1998.

The book's overview says: "Ruthless Chinese repression leaves Tibetans powerless to stop the reckless destruction of their sacred land, but they are not the only victims of this campaign: the nations downstream from Tibet rely heavily on rivers sourced in Tibet for water supply, and for rich silt used in agriculture. This destruction of the region's environment has been happening with little scrutiny until now."

## Upcoming Events

- ▶ **22 OCTOBER 2014 :** EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S VOTE ON THE NEW EUROPEAN COMMISSION.
- ▶ **OCTOBER 2014 :** VISIT OF THE PREMIER OF CHINA, LI KEQIANG, TO EUROPE.
- ▶ **12 - 15 OCTOBER 2014:** ICT'S PARTICIPATION IN THE CONFERENCE "DEMOCRACY AND ITS DISCONTENT. A QUARTER-CENTURY AFTER THE IRON CURTAIN AND TIANANMEN" BY [FORUM 2000](#) (CZECH REPUBLIC).
- ▶ **16 - 17 OCTOBER 2014:** ASIA - EUROPE MEETING (ASEM) IN MILAN, ITALY.