



ICT Special Report  
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# "A policy alienating Tibetans"

*The denial of passports to Tibetans as China intensifies control*

<http://www.savetibet.org/policy-alienating-tibetans-denial-passports-tibetans-china-intensifies-control/>

# 1. Summary

- The Chinese authorities have intensified control over Tibetans' movements by denying and recalling passports, in contravention of Chinese law, and connected to the Chinese authorities' political agenda of undermining the Dalai Lama and seeking to assert their control over Tibetan people.
- Very few Tibetans in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and in many other Tibetan areas have been issued passports in the past three years, and many people had their passports confiscated. Restrictions have been tight in areas outside the TAR where there has been unrest, such as Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) in Sichuan, where the wave of self-immolations began. In contrast, more and more Chinese are travelling both abroad and freely in Tibetan areas.
- Denial of the ability to travel outside Tibet legally is used as a form of collective punishment; the family and friends of certain individuals such as former political prisoners, or people associated with Tibetans who have self-immolated or participated in protest, can also have passports denied or recalled. The denial of passports is accompanied by restrictions on movement in Tibetan areas linked to intensified militarization and security particularly in areas where there has been protest or self-immolations. Tibetans in the Tibet Autonomous Region have been particularly impacted.
- The Chinese authorities have imposed sweeping new measures in order to prevent Tibetans travelling to teachings by the Dalai Lama outside Tibet, and to punish those who do. For the first time at a major Buddhist teaching by the Dalai Lama in 2014, the Kalachakra in Ladakh, there were more Chinese Buddhists present than Tibetans from inside Tibet. The restrictions threaten the survival of Tibetan Buddhist teachings in Tibet by making it nearly impossible for monks and nuns who wish to travel outside the PRC to receive instruction from teachers who are in exile, and difficult for exiled teachers to get permission to travel within Tibet to give teachings.

Matteo Mecacci, President of the International Campaign for Tibet, said: "Not only are Tibetans subjected to intense controls and surveillance in their everyday lives, but they are also discriminated against in one of their most basic rights: the ability to travel domestically and internationally. Even though Beijing considers Tibetans to be Chinese citizens, in practice, Tibetan passport applicants are treated differently to Chinese."

## Recommendations

The International Campaign for Tibet is concerned about the discriminatory denial of passports for Tibetans in contravention of the PRC's own laws and international law and as a means of sanctioning religious, political or cultural expression that is viewed as incompatible with Chinese government policies. ICT calls upon the PRC to allow unhindered domestic travel for Tibetans and to issue passports to Tibetan applicants in accordance with China's Passport Law and international law.

## 2. 'Unfair and discriminatory': The restrictions on passports

From 2012, following the imposition of tough new measures restricting travel in Tibetan areas since the 2008 protests, Tibetans began to face tightening restrictions on the issuance of passports, limiting their travel outside Tibet- for instance to teachings of the Dalai Lama, or to study abroad. This is in contrast to the increasing number of Chinese citizens being granted a passport. According to the state media, the issuing of ordinary passports to Chinese nationals increased in the mid-1990s from one million to 10 million, with an annual increase of around 20% since then.<sup>[1]</sup>

The Chinese authorities used the opportunity of a PRC-wide transition to electronic passports in 2012,<sup>[2]</sup> when Chinese nationals were required to submit outdated passports for replacement, to single out both Tibetans and Uyghurs for more severe restrictions and punitive measures. Regulations issued in 2012 in the Tibet Autonomous Region required all Tibetans in the Tibetan region to surrender their old passports, even when their validity had not expired, ostensibly to be replaced by the electronic version. But in numerous cases, the passports were not replaced.

The issue has become a subject of intense debate on social media in the PRC, with many netizens challenging the discriminatory policies against Tibetans. One Tibetan posted: “This year, both Tibetan New Year and Chinese Spring Festival will be within the same period, and only the Han Chinese nationality can travel outside the country for holiday [...] But the government of TAR has confiscated and taken away private passports for almost three years from the local Tibetan people. Why can we not go to travel outside for holiday, and why can our children (the new generation) not go to study abroad? The local government in Tibet has taken away our legitimate passports from us. It is an illegal action in terms of legal procedure as well as national constitution, it is intentional violation of law.”<sup>[3]</sup>

Unlike Chinese nationals – with the exception of outspoken critics of the Party state<sup>[4]</sup> - Uyghurs in East Turkestan (Chinese: Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region) face similar difficulties to Tibetans that have escalated recently with the blanket withdrawal of passports across the prefecture of Ili (Chinese: Yili), in a more formalized approach to what had been an *ad hoc* process by the police.<sup>[5]</sup> Research published by the Uyghur American Association states that the Chinese government has denied Uyghurs the right to a passport from 2006 onwards.<sup>[6]</sup>

Measures published in the TAR on April 29, 2012 detailed the importance of “earnestly strengthening management work” over the issuance of passports, using the ePassports as an opportunity for recalling passports of TAR residents, to be followed by political investigation before a new passport is issued. This investigation involves every application for a passport going through multiple departments and requiring scrutiny from numerous individuals. The measures, sent to prefectural and county government departments as well as the TAR Military District Political Department, represent a shift in emphasis towards political and security concerns, stating that the initial application must first be made to the prefectural-level Public Security Bureau where the individual’s household is registered.<sup>[7]</sup>

The individual’s full registration details<sup>[8]</sup> and identity card have to be submitted as part of the process. The PSB has access to the applicant’s entire background, including any participation of the individual in any political activity, or activity that could be construed as political. The 2012 measures also state that individuals who are granted a passport must also sign a declaration “guaranteeing that on leaving the country they will not engage in any activities that threaten national security or national interests, or other illegal criminal activities.” According to a translation into English by Human Rights Watch, “The Public Security Exit and Entry Administration must seek out

a visit with the passport holder on their return and conduct a face-to-face interview, and if any illegal activities are discovered, the passports without exception shall be canceled or declared invalid.”<sup>[9]</sup>

In Tibet today, campaigns directed against the Dalai Lama’s influence, Tibetan culture and religion, mean that almost any expression of Tibetan identity not directly sanctioned by the state can be branded as ‘criminal’ and ‘separatist’, and penalized by a prison sentence, or worse.<sup>[10]</sup>

“Endangering national security” is an opaque term that can be used to penalize Tibetans, encompassing a broad category of criminal offences in Chinese law, including separatism and interfering with national sovereignty, among many others. It can carry a prison sentence of around 15 years.

Counter to China’s passport law, the 2012 measures do not give any indication of the commitment of the state to grant a passport after this process, and nor does it mention that it has to provide a reason for refusal or provide a means of appeal.<sup>[11]</sup>

In one prominent case involving the well-known Tibetan writer Woesser, a reason was given for the denial of a passport – which was that her departure would “endanger the national security of the People’s Republic of China”.<sup>[12]</sup> This followed the refusal of her passport application made in Lhasa, her home city, and the removal of her household registration from Lhasa to the Chinese city where her husband Wang Lixiong was born. Woesser had been waiting to hear about her passport application for seven years before its refusal.

According to ICT research, exceptions seem to have been granted to some Tibetan officials, businesspeople, or others with good connections to the Chinese Communist Party whose travel may be in the interests of the Party.

Some ordinary Tibetans who do manage to receive passports have to wait years for applications to be processed and pay thousands of yuan. While the official cost for a passport in China is 220 RMB (\$35), in many areas substantial bribes are necessary, and Tibetan sources have given examples of individuals paying several thousand yuan in associated procedures, which they can also lose completely if their application is finally turned down by security personnel. One Tibetan posted on social media: “Many applicants have been waiting six months or even a year to get passports, and still haven’t gotten it. You need to book a travel agency before a trip, which requires a 10-20 thousand yuan (\$1613-3227) deposit in addition to any expenses over your travel, but still the government may not issue you a passport.”

This is in contrast to the situation before 2008, when Tibetans were sometimes able to obtain passports after applying to the county-level Public Security Bureau, after their political record had been checked and with payment of between RMB 300-500 (approx. \$36-60).<sup>[13]</sup>

A Tibetan source who lives in exile and who knows Tibetans who have had their passports taken away, including a family member, said: “There is no formal document stating that this is central policy. But it seems that the authorities want to prevent the Dalai Lama’s influence on Tibetans by stopping them from travelling to his teachings outside. There is also another intention, which is to punish those connected with people who have self-immolated or been involved in any demonstrations protesting Chinese rule.”

The measures are linked to the political climate in Tibet, in which the Chinese authorities are implementing a more systematic ideological approach based on undermining the Dalai Lama and ensuring allegiance to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

The internet has provided a space for Tibetans to vent their frustrations and exchange views and information about how the denial of passports affects their lives. In one moderate but anguished posting on social media, a Tibetan wrote: “My passport application was refused just today; I have been working for several years in a foreign company and completely met the requirements but it still wasn’t issued. I won’t interpret it as ethnic discrimination, but as a distortion of the policies that rule the country. This policy will only deliberately and slowly alienate Tibetans. For instance, if you are always told that you are one of the family, but parents always treat you as someone from outside, denying your rightful freedom. I hope the government should reform this policy; otherwise citizens will lose their interests and faith toward the country”.

### **3. Prevention and punishment of Tibetans attending Dalai Lama teachings in exile**

A further set of measures issued in the Tibet Autonomous Region are evidence of this approach, detailing ‘punishment’ for “Chinese Communist Party Members and Public Servants who Exit the Border to Participate in Such Splittist Activities as the Dalai clique’s ‘Kalachakra’” [a major Tibetan Buddhist religious teaching]. The regulations, dated April 29, 2012, were disseminated by the TAR CCP Discipline Inspection Committee General Office, a department associated with the ongoing investigation into corruption, which has been conflated with ‘anti-separatism’ in Tibet.<sup>[14]</sup> According to a translation into English of the document by Human Rights Watch, the ‘punishments’ were in order to “uphold the unification of the Motherland and the unity of the nationalities, to strictly enforce Party discipline and government discipline, and to strictly forbid Chinese Communist Party members and public servants from exiting the border to participate in such splittist activities as the Dalai clique’s ‘Kalachakra’.”<sup>[15]</sup>

Although the document refers only to Party officials and government cadres, it follows the imposition of a more systematic approach in seeking to prevent any Tibetans travelling into exile for teachings by the Dalai Lama, and punishment of those who do.

Three months before the measures were disseminated, in January, 2012, the Chinese authorities mounted an major operation to track and detain Tibetans who had attended a Kalachakra teaching by the Dalai Lama in Bodh Gaya, India. At least 7-8000 Tibetans from inside Tibet attended this major teaching at the place where the Buddha achieved enlightenment, a place of pilgrimage for Buddhists worldwide. Chinese agents operating on Indian soil even gathered information about Tibetan pilgrims prior to their return.

Returning Tibetans were detained and compelled to undergo intensive ‘patriotic education’ sessions. Some were kept in prison or forced to do hard labor for longer periods, for instance if they were caught with photographs of the Dalai Lama or mementoes of the teaching.<sup>[16]</sup> Those who possessed passports had their passports taken from them, and not returned.<sup>[17]</sup>

The scale of the security operation had not been seen before following a Dalai Lama teaching in India, and it indicated the authorities’ concerns about a spread in unrest and Tibetan solidarity following a series of self-immolations and protests in eastern Tibet.<sup>[18]</sup>

The detentions after the Kalachakra in 2012 followed a dramatic decline in Tibetans arriving in exile without papers from Tibet via Nepal since 2008. Although some analysts believed that the crackdown following the protests would lead to a significant rise in refugee numbers, heightened security across the Tibetan plateau, including along the border with Nepal, has made the already perilous journey increasingly dangerous.



Prior to 2008, between 2,500 and 3,500 Tibetans – without documentation - fled into exile each year. In 2008, less than 700 made the journey into exile via Nepal, with the number declining to less than 300 last year (2014).

A large number of those Tibetans escaping into exile without valid documentation prior to 2008 were children, whose parents wished them to receive an education based on Tibetan cultural values in exile schools and monasteries. Education inside Tibet can be unavailable and unaffordable. But measures issued in 2008 were an indicator of the authorities' imperative to prevent influence from the Dalai Lama, in a similar way to the passport regulations, as they stated that all of the Tibetan children studying in exile were "lured" abroad by the "Dalai Clique" "so that they can be infiltrated [back into Tibet] in a conspiracy aimed at undermining our future capacity." The regulations also stated that children returning must confess not only to any participation in "splittist and terrorist activities" abroad, but also to what they thought and believed while in India, and that they may face punishment for the latter.<sup>[19]</sup>

The April 2012 measures are consistent with harsher official language on the Dalai Lama's teachings in exile than before. Last year, prior to the Kalachakra in Ladakh, the authorities linked their attempts to prevent Tibetans from attending the Dalai Lama's teachings in exile with 'counter-terrorist' work in the 'frontline' border areas of Tibet, including Ngari (Chinese Ali) in the Tibet Autonomous Region, which borders India and is the location of the sacred pilgrimage site, Mount Kailash. A Xinhua article published on July 7 (2014) said that the teachings, which attract thousands of Buddhists from all over the world including China, were "used by separatists for political ends", and that the "[Kalachakra] ceremony incited hatred, terror and extremist action".<sup>[20]</sup>

As a result of this more systematic approach, in July, 2014, there were fewer Tibetans from Tibet than Chinese Buddhists attending the teachings by the Dalai Lama in India. It was the first time this had happened since the Dalai Lama started giving major teachings in exile, and was evidence of the difficulties of Tibetans, comparing to Chinese, in obtaining passports, as well as of the tighter controls on movement imposed by the authorities in Tibet.<sup>[21]</sup>

Less than 200 Tibetans from inside Tibet attended the Kalachakra in Ladakh last year, compared to around 500 Chinese from China and Taiwan.<sup>[22]</sup> The Dalai Lama's religious teachings previously attracted many thousands of Tibetans from inside Tibet, who would travel either using Chinese passports or without official documentation, by leaving Tibet across the mountains into India via Nepal to attend.

A monk who attended the teaching in Ladakh last year told ICT that he had sought to get a passport for several years in order to attend, and had only managed to do so because he transferred his registration status to that of a lay person, assisted by sponsors with Chinese connections.<sup>[23]</sup>

Over the years, many Tibetans who have attended teachings by the Dalai Lama in exile have been forced to travel into exile without documentation, because they have been unable to obtain passports. According to Tibetan sources, a number of young people from areas of Nagchu (Chinese: Naqu) in the TAR crossed the mountains on foot in order to attend the Kalachakra in India in 2012. Most of them had attempted to obtain Chinese passports in order to travel, but had been denied. When they returned to Tibet, they were detained and tortured.<sup>[24]</sup>

In contrast, more Chinese are being encouraged to travel to Nepal, which has been given the "Approved Destination Status". More Chinese hotels and shops have been opened in Kathmandu, and advertisements are run on many Chinese travel websites with the following text: "If your monthly salary is RMB 3000, you should go once to Nepal. Goods are cheap and a visa is easy to obtain". This may lead many ordinary Chinese people to travel to Nepal.<sup>[25]</sup>

## 4. Restrictions on passports across Tibet

Restrictions on passports vary in different areas of Tibet. They are particularly stringent in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), but also in areas outside the TAR where there has been unrest and resistance.

The tightened new procedures mean that it is virtually impossible for monks and nuns to obtain passports, according to Tibetan sources. Monks and nuns have traditionally been those who have led protests, and the self-immolations were begun by monks from Kirti monastery in Ngaba (Chinese: Aba). The Chinese Party state has taken a tough line against Tibetan Buddhist religion because it is strongly connected to Tibetan national identity.<sup>[26]</sup>

In some areas, monks and nuns have sought to change their household registration to that of a layperson in order to obtain a passport, often without success. In order to do this, the monk or nun would have to go to the Public Security Bureau and inform them that they have disrobed, and embark upon the process of registration as a layperson.

According to the same sources, who tracked social media and numerous anecdotal accounts, it is also extremely difficult if not impossible for younger generation, single Tibetans to obtain passports. This appears to reflect the Chinese authorities' objective in targeting the sector of the population which is most likely to travel into exile and to experience a culture and environment beyond the control of the Party state.

It also appears to be used as punishment following protests and self-immolations, and to give the message that the Chinese Party state controls people's movements. Tibet Autonomous Region Party Secretary Chen Quanguo has spoken of the need to "ensure the absolute security of Tibet's ideological and cultural realm," and to effectively purify the public opinion environment ... and strike hard at separatist elements entering Tibet to carry out reactionary propaganda."<sup>[27]</sup>

Tibetan sources say that it is sometimes possible for married couples with families or older generation Tibetans to obtain passports, which they say is because they are less likely to stay away from Tibet in exile or to cause problems when they return.

In 2013, a group of young Tibetans staged a protest outside a government office when their passport applications were rejected, although they had received approval for study in Japan and the U.S. The students, mostly from nomadic families in Qinghai, had been selected to attend schools overseas after verbal and written tests at their schools. One group of 42 students from the Girls' School of the Tibetan Pastureland was selected to attend an American school in the state of Washington, while a second group of 34 from the school and from the Qinghai Institute of Nationalities was selected to study in Japan.

Of the latter group, some were allowed to leave for Japan, but passports were denied to the rest. On September 2, 2013, some members of the group protested at the unfair treatment in front of the provincial capital of Xining's government offices.<sup>[28]</sup>

The prominent Tibetan writer and commentator Tsering Woesser has been unable to collect various awards in person – including the U.S. State Department's high-profile 'Women of Courage' award in 2013<sup>[29]</sup> – because her application for a passport is denied. Upon receipt of the award, Woesser faced increased restrictions on her movements, and explained that she has been denied a passport by the Chinese government. "The U.S. Embassy officials in Beijing tried hard, but China would not issue me a passport...I am not the only person. Many Tibetans can't get a passport to travel abroad...I have never been overseas to receive any award," she told Radio Free Asia in 2013.<sup>[30]</sup>

## Passport restrictions in specific regions of Tibet

Since the major Tibet Work Forum in January 2010, an important meeting that set policy for the following decade, there has been an emphasis from the Party authorities that measures applying to the TAR must be implemented across Tibetan areas, not only the Tibet Autonomous Region. Even so there are sometimes differences in policy implementation at regional and local levels, with a more stringent approach in areas where there has been political unrest. For instance in Ngaba, where the wave of self-immolations began in 2009, it would be out of the question to apply for a passport without one's involvement in any peaceful incidents of dissent being thoroughly investigated. In Kardze (Chinese: Ganzi) in Sichuan (the Tibetan area of Kham), individuals have been given passports after waiting for up to five years or more. Generally these are individuals with connections and funding to apply in the first place.

The following is not intended to be an exhaustive list but to give an insight into the differences in passport application in different areas.

### **NGABA (Chinese: Aba) TIBETAN AND QIANG AUTONOMOUS PREFECTURE, SICHUAN PROVINCE (the Tibetan area of Amdo)**

According to Tibetan sources, the Ngaba authorities have restricted the issuing of passports in particular from 2008 onwards. The Ngaba area has a long history of resistance to Chinese rule. At least ten Tibetans were killed when Chinese forces opened fire on a large demonstration on March 16, 2008, and the current wave of self-immolations began in Ngaba after a monk from Kirti monastery, Tapey, set fire to himself in the county town on February 27, 2009. Early self-immolations were dominated by monks and laypeople from Ngaba although they spread from 2011 onwards across Tibet.<sup>[31]</sup>

Ngaba is one of the leading centers for business and entrepreneurial activities in Tibet, and last year a delegation of business people from Ngaba travelled to Lhasa, according to the same reports, to discuss how the travel restrictions in Tibetan areas as well as internationally were impeding business development. A Tibetan source said: "The businesspeople complained that the Ngaba prefectural and county authorities were not supporting business by both restricting passports and impeding travel across Tibet. For instance, local authorities were not even allowing business people to get an exit permit to go to other areas of the PRC. Being able to travel freely is of key importance for businesspeople."

The new restrictions have impacted business with Nepal, as there have been many commercial connections between businesspeople in both countries. Tibetan businessmen who rely on trade with Nepal have been among those particularly concerned about the confiscation of passports, and businesses in Nepal have been affected, according to unofficial Tibetan sources.

Towards the end of last year (2014), the Ngaba prefectural and county authorities slightly loosened the restrictions on issuing Chinese passports, according to the same sources, but religious personnel were still subject to the same pressures, even if they submitted full documentation towards a Chinese passport.

Given the sums of money required for obtaining a passport and for foreign travel, it is often unclear whether the restrictive climate is being used as an opportunity to charge higher sums in exchange for processing documentation.



A Tibetan source who has spoken to Tibetans in the area said: “It is clear that Tibetans who have enough funding and good contacts with officials may well be able to get Chinese passports. Sometimes it is hard for individuals to tell whether they have only been able to obtain a passport because of local corruption or a central or regional policy approach.”

## **QINGHAI**

According to a source from one area of Qinghai, between 2011-13, Tibetans with a good local network and the financial means were able to obtain Chinese passports, although with some important exceptions. Now, however, restrictions have increased. Monks, nuns, and young students in Qinghai are now finding it almost impossible to obtain Chinese passports.

According to other Tibetan sources, some monks and nuns in Qinghai are changing their household registration to be a lay person in order to apply for passports, with limited and varying success.

The passport issue is a major topic of online conversation, with many netizens challenging the denial of passports in the context of PRC law. One netizen wrote: “Owning a passport is a legitimate right of every citizen of the People’s Republic of China. But why is the government implementing a different approach to issue passports for citizens in Qinghai compared to other cities? Chinese citizens can easily apply for a passport with Residence Proof, Householder Registration, Identity Card, Passport Photo and only 200 yuan (\$32) fees, and the actual passport is received within 15 working days in major cities in China as Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing and many more. Why is it so difficult and stressful for local people to apply for a Passport at the immigration Office in Xining City?”<sup>[32]</sup>

## **NAGCHU (Chinese: Naqu) PREFECTURE, TIBET AUTONOMOUS REGION**

There has been an intensified crackdown in Nagchu, particularly following a drive to enforce loyalty to the CCP through compelling the display of the Chinese flag as part of the Party’s strategy to intensify control across the TAR as the answer to political ‘instability’.

While some individuals from the Nagchu area travelled into exile using Chinese passports for the Dalai Lama’s Kalachakra teaching in January, 2012, according to Tibetan sources from the area it is now ‘impossible’ to obtain a passport for Tibetans from the restive areas of Driru (Chinese: Biru)<sup>[33]</sup> and Sog (Chinese: Suo) counties in Nagchu. Even to go on pilgrimage to Lhasa, Tibetans from these areas require signed documentation from the Public Security Bureau stating that they have not been involved in any ‘separatist’ activity.

This is in the context of a harsh new ‘rectification’ drive in Driru that states that monasteries deemed ‘illegal’ will be torn down and Tibetans who possess images of the Dalai Lama or place traditional prayer (mani) stones will be severely punished.<sup>[34]</sup>

### **SERTHAR (Chinese: Serta) COUNTY, KARDZE (Chinese: Ganzi) TIBETAN AUTONOMOUS PREFECTURE, SICHUAN PROVINCE**

According to sources from the area in contact with Tibetan exiles, some Tibetans are receiving passports after waiting around five years from submission of their application. The applications of monks and nuns are automatically rejected by the Public Security Bureau. Letters inviting Tibetans to visit them can help speed up the process, but not if they are from Nepal or India, the countries that the Chinese government does not wish Tibetans to visit.

Serthar has also been a center of peaceful political protest. In January, 2012, images have emerged from Tibet of a violent police response to a protest by Tibetans in Serthar (the Tibetan area of Kham). The images, which show a Tibetan man being beaten and dragged along the ground by armed police, were taken on the day that police opened fire on Tibetan demonstrators, killing one Tibetan man.<sup>[35]</sup>

### **DECHEN (Chinese: Diqing) TIBETAN AUTONOMOUS PREFECTURE, YUNNAN PROVINCE**

In general, there are fewer restrictions on passport applications in Yunnan Province, with those Tibetans who apply often being granted passports. Requirements too are less onerous than in other areas, and even monks and nuns can be granted a passport.

## **5. Tightening controls on movement in Tibet and their implications for Tibetan Buddhism**

The difficulties for Tibetans in obtaining passports are in a context of tighter restrictions on movement in Tibetan areas generally. As a result, there are serious implications for the survival of Tibetan Buddhist teachings, where are based on oral transmission, as well as individual freedoms.

In 2008, Tibetans from the areas of Amdo and Kham (the Tibetan areas now largely incorporated into Qinghai, Yunnan, Gansu and Sichuan) were targeted by the authorities in the Tibet Autonomous Region, and blamed for involvement in the protests and rioting in March. As part of a major 'Strike Hard' campaign, the authorities targeted Tibetans without some form of official identification, such as a work permit or national identity card and targets in the wide-ranging sweep were those from Kham and Amdo.<sup>[36]</sup>

The authorities intensified this approach after two self-immolations by Tibetans from eastern Tibet took place in Lhasa on May 27, 2012 outside Lhasa's holy Jokhang temple. In a security drive that followed the self-immolations, several hundred Tibetans from eastern areas of the Tibetan plateau were expelled from the city, and armed troops carried out comprehensive identity checks. Tibetans from areas where protests have recently taken place, in eastern Tibet, were ordered to leave not only the capital, but the Tibet Autonomous Region as well.<sup>[37]</sup> Many were detained.

These restrictions are believed to have been dropped in 2014, but there is still intense surveillance and difficulties for Tibetans in travelling to Lhasa.

Tibetan writer Woesser wrote about experiencing the arrival in Lhasa by train for Tibetans compared to Chinese in an article as follows: “When our train, packed full of so many living things, arrives at Lhasa station, the majority of non-Tibetan passengers breeze easily through, so very excited to be heading off to various parts of Lhasa, and looking quite perky; even those who are immediately hit by altitude sickness. The dozen or so Tibetan passengers, on the other hand, are stopped by armed police and their identity cards checked with a device similar to those used to swipe credit cards. When I hand my card over, I am stopped with the words, ‘Woesser, stay behind!’ What can the Tibetans who were stopped do about it? We are all taken into the police station next to the railway station.”<sup>[38]</sup>

Kirti monks Lobsang Yeshe and Kanyag Tsering, both based in Dharamsala, India, highlighted the danger to religious institutions of these expulsions and the restrictions on movement. They told ICT: “After the 2008 uprising, monks from eastern provinces were expelled and now the three great monasteries near Lhasa are virtually empty.”<sup>[39]</sup>

Prior to 1959, it was common for monks and nuns to leave their home monasteries and travel to receive teachings from a particular lama or to stay in another monastery for an extended period of study. The larger monasteries in and around Lhasa, for example, admitted numerous monks from Amdo and Kham. This was important for monks from smaller monasteries where there were no senior teachers in permanent residence; it would allow them access to teachings and provide them with the necessary qualifications to teach in their own monastery on their return. But it was also important for even the most senior lamas, who might need instruction from particular lamas as part of their religious training. Although restrictions on freedom of movement eased following the end of the Cultural Revolution, they have now been tightened to a much greater degree. It is now almost impossible for monks and nuns to obtain a complete religious education due to factors including restrictions on movement, the increased regulation of religious personnel and tightening administration of monasteries.

In some small nunneries or monasteries in Tibet today, there is no teacher in residence and monks or nuns must travel to other monasteries to receive teachings, or wait for teachers to visit their monastery. Large numbers of monks and nuns are left to study on their own without ever receiving the traditional education the monasteries were intended to provide.

Similarly, many Tibetans who have escaped into exile say that they have done so in order to have a proper religious education and to gain access to teachers who are living in exile. Both the restrictions on movement, intensified security in the border areas and inability for monks and nuns to obtain passports, make this increasingly difficult, if not impossible, and threatens the survival both of the religious culture in Tibet and its institutions.<sup>[40]</sup>

## 6. Prevention of pilgrimage

Pilgrimage to holy sites is a prominent feature in Tibetans’ popular religious devotional practices. Pilgrims in the past and today endure great hardships while traveling across the vast plateau to visit holy sites such as monasteries, hermits’ caves, and sacred mountains that have been consecrated and inhabited by past meditation masters and Buddhist scholars.<sup>[41]</sup>

Restrictions on pilgrimages to one of the most holy of Tibet’s pilgrimage sites, Mt Kailash, have been imposed at different times over the past ten years, and intensified last year.<sup>[42]</sup> Tibetans were no longer able to obtain permission to travel in border areas of Tibet such as Purang (Chinese: Burang) where Mount Kailash is located. One Chinese visitor was only able to obtain the document because he applied in Guangzhou. Another Chinese netizen said the restrictions were likely to continue.<sup>[43]</sup>

Pilgrimage to Mount Kailash is of profound importance to Tibetan Buddhists, particularly during the holiest month of Saga Dawa.<sup>[44]</sup> Tsering Woeser wrote: “I know a Tibetan exile who has been living in Switzerland for years, 60 years of age and in poor health. Long ago he made a wish to visit Mount Kailash on pilgrimage three times in his life, so he longed to circumambulate the mountain on the 15th day of the fourth month of the Tibetan calendar [June 13]. Even if he died walking the kora [pilgrimage circuit], it would be seen as the greatest liberation. His family is ready to help him fulfill his wish, but will he be able to do it?”<sup>[45]</sup>

As documented in this report, it is even more difficult for Tibetans to make a pilgrimage to holy sites beyond Tibet’s borders in Nepal and India, the location of many of Buddhism’s holy sites including the place where the Buddha was enlightened (Bodh Gaya) and of his birth (Lumbini, Nepal), even though Chinese Buddhists are encouraged to go.<sup>[46]</sup>

Tibetans also face barriers when checking into hotels in the Nyingtri area of southern Tibet, which borders India and Burma. According to a May 2015 Radio Free Asia report, guesthouse workers reached by phone told reporters that Tibetans aren’t allowed to check in. “We can’t accept Tibetans,” one told RFA. “It’s clearly stated in the police regulations.”<sup>[47]</sup>

## 7. Recommendations

The International Campaign for Tibet urges the government and the National People’s Congress of the People’s Republic of China and authorities in the Tibet Autonomous Region and relevant provinces to:

- Refrain from confiscating valid passports of Tibetans who return from foreign travel; also refrain from confiscating valid passports from Tibetans as a means of sanctioning religious, political or cultural expression that is viewed not to be compatible with the Party state’s official policies.
- Allow for unhindered domestic travel for Tibetans and refrain from sanctioning expression of religious, political and cultural beliefs and activities.
- Abolish all discriminatory practices against Tibetans that are perceived to be root causes of Tibetan discontent and grievances, such as the unlawful denial of passports.
- Allow foreign travel for Tibetans; issue passports to Tibetan applicants in accordance with Article 6 of the Passport Law. In particular, when denying the issuance of a passport, explain the relevant decision in accordance with Article 6 of the Passport Law and allow for unhindered judicial review of relevant decisions. Issue passports within the time periods as prescribed in the Passport Law, i.e. 15 or 30 days.
- Repeal Article 13 (7) of the Passport Law that allows for the refusal to issue a passport to a person who may “cause major losses to the interests of the State”, as it is not in accordance with Article 12 of the U.N. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which has been signed by the People’s Republic of China.
- Ratify the U.N. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

## 8. 'The government is afraid that Tibetans will leave and never return': the debate on social media

The inability of Tibetans to obtain passports has been a topic of much discussion on social media in both Chinese and Tibetan languages. ICT has included some postings below without identification, taken from a range of social media sites over a period of several months.

### **Posted in February 2015**

"I hereby request friends online to kindly help us and urge the government to return passports to Tibetan and to simply allow Tibetans to exercise the same rights of the citizens in Mainland China in going aboard for travel and education."

"Happy New Year and Tashi Delek! Have you lost your mind? Those leading cadres and officials leaders are going to abroad for official matters with official passport and government money. But you are a non Party member, non executive cadre and non-officials from executive law enforcemnt organs [and so you can't.]

### **In response to a question about how to get a passport in Tibet-messages posted in 2013**

"In theory, Tibetans are allowed to apply for passports, but the TAR Public Security Bureau decided to shut down the issuance of passports for Tibetans, and the current situation remains very complicated. Also, I believe it depends on specific locations and areas. Sometimes, Tibetans in Lhasa are allowed to apply for and receive passports, but it is not allowed elsewhere. Therefore, it is very difficult to give you the correct answer for this issue, the best option is to approach the local PSB in person".

"It should be OK, but it can be complicated, there are tight restrictions in terms of checking the files".



### Posted in 2014

“Of course it isn’t discrimination, passport application has conditions and procedures, most citizens in eastern China, coastal cities and large mainland cities also needed to go through such procedures to apply passport. Actually, those sensitive applicants such as Tibetan people and people in the Tibet Autonomous Region can apply, but whether or not it will be approved is another issue, especially if you don’t have any backdoor connections. Everyone knows why the issue is so difficult – the government is afraid that Tibetans will leave and never return. If it was easy, why would so many people leave, why would so many people walk across the snow mountains? Regardless, I hope you will find success.”

“There was another category of people who cannot apply for passports: Xinjiang’s Uighur people. If I’m from Xinjiang, they won’t issue me a passport. I’d need to contact the local tourism department and open a fully trip paid travel invoice to assist the passport issuance from the government, but still the tourism department would not give the actual passport directly to holder, but you can travel through travel agency.”

### Posted in 2013

“I am a Tibetan, I cannot obtain a passport, is there any way to smoothly obtain one? People from the Chinese mainland only need their householder registration and a valid identity card to obtain a passport, but they require many more things from us. I can’t even travel overseas on for my honeymoon. Can any good-hearted people please help me figure out how to apply?”

### Posted in 2010

“Does the Constitution have any regulations stating that Tibetans and Hui [Muslims]<sup>[48]</sup> aren’t allowed to apply for a passport? The entire process of applying for a passport is extremely stringent, your passport may not be issued even if you successfully submit the entire requirements to the county and prefectural administration – your application may be trapped within the provincial departments. It’s believed that the application has to go through the ethnic affairs commission, and officially it will take three to five months to receive a passport, but many applicants have been waiting six months or even a year to get passports, and still haven’t gotten it. You need to book a travel agency before a trip, which requires a 10-20 thousand yuan deposit in addition to any expenses over your travel, but still the government may not issue you passport. What is wrong with this? Is there any effective approach? Isn’t it said that all 56 ethnicities are equal?”

### **Posted in 2014**

“My passport application was refused just today; I have been working for several years in a foreign company and completely met the requirements but it still wasn’t issued. I won’t interpret it as ethnic discrimination, but as a distortion of the policies that rule the country. This policy will only deliberately and slowly alienate Tibetans. For instance, if you are always told that you are one of the family, but parents always treat you as someone from outside, denying your rightful freedom. I hope the government should reform this policy; otherwise citizens will lose their interests and faith toward the country.”

### **In response other netizens wrote the following**

“China is like this, the equality of ethnicities is only the words from mouth, but in practice it’s a different issue. It is the actual reflection of China’s feudal nature, and closed character.”

“I have submitted everything for my passport, but still wasn’t given one. This government is really depressing.”

“I am a Tibetan student going to study abroad, I have worked very hard for the last two years to gain this opportunity to pass the examination. Since then I have been working hard again to apply for a passport, and have been many times to the local government, but it has refused each time, which really infuriates people.”

“Not just that it’s discrimination, but that the world doesn’t care.”

“I’ve lived in in Qinghai for 20 years.<sup>[49]</sup> My family doesn’t have a high background, nor do I have the money to buy a proper job, so all I can do is go out to do labor. I’ve been a laborer for almost ten years, slowly improving my work, and the company has asked all of us to get passports so that we can go abroad for company business and education opportunities. So I’ve been back to my lovely hometown no less than three times to try to get a passport, and each time there’s one problem or another. The bar is set so high. The first time it was the photo – I took it in Beijing, and when I went to the Xining office they immediately said it wouldn’t do, and that I had to get a picture taken in a designated place in Xining. So I did that, took the picture, and showed it to them while filling out the forms with no problems. Then they started to ask me about why I wanted a passport and what I was going to do with it. I told them I wanted it so I could travel outside the country, because that’s all you can do with a passport. I was angry about their attitude- this is where I grew up, but now I’m moving my hukou registration to another place. I recommend that anyone with the ability move their hukou<sup>[50]</sup> as soon as possible.’

“Yes, the problematic issue is that there is a large population of Hui [Chinese Muslims] in Ningxia and the regional government is acquiescing in controlling people’s travel abroad. The main reason that the government is preventing those local people is connected to people from Xinjiang (Eastern Turkestan) [Uyghurs]. There has been a huge demand for passports and some officials and police are using this opportunity to make money, which means that ordinary people are hardly able to obtain a passport. Many local people travel to Xinjiang to find work, and for those people it is impossible to get a passport. The above answers mean that this account will probably be closed<sup>[51]</sup> but I still wanted to share this message.”

## Note on Methodology

This report was researched and written by ICT staffers in London, India, Washington and Berlin. It draws from a variety of official and unofficial sources, including documentation published online in Chinese, documents obtained in Chinese, interviews with a range of Tibetans in exile who are in contact with Tibetans in Tibet. Three documents cited were translated into English by Human Rights Watch, which kindly made these translations available to ICT before publication. The Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy also translated documentation from 2012 on this issue. ICT Tibetan researchers tracked numerous postings on social media on this topic and in many cases captured references to the issue before they were taken off-line, presumably given the sensitivity of the postings. These were translated from Chinese into English by ICT. In one case, ICT identified an official who was posting comments critical of government policy, but these postings were taken off-line and ICT has not identified the official in this report. ICT maintained the anonymity of the postings in this report, even when the identity of the person posting online was known.

## Footnotes

[1] According to the Chinese state media. In 2012 a state media article reported that 38 million Chinese citizens held ordinary passports. <http://www.chinanews.com/gn/2012/05-16/3891803.shtml>. There are three types of passport in the PRC; ordinary, official and diplomatic.

[2] The Chinese authorities began to issue new passports with a digital signature and biometric chip including identification data such as fingerprints in 2012, following a Party conference in Beijing on May 15, 2012. This Xinhua article (in Chinese) announced the new passports after the meeting: <http://www.chinanews.com/gn/2012/05-16/3891803.shtml>. In information technology, biometrics refers to technologies that measure and analyze human body characteristics, such as DNA, fingerprints, eye retinas and irises, voice patterns, facial patterns and hand measurements, for authentication purposes. Naomi Klein wrote about China's use of biometric technology for surveillance in her article, 'China's All-Seeing Eye', May 14, 2008, <http://www.naomiklein.org/articles/2008/05/chinas-all-seeing-eye>. The map in China's newly designed passports created immediate diplomatic dispute, as it claimed ownership of the entire South China Sea – parts of which are also claimed by Taiwan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Brunei and Malaysia – as well as two Taiwanese tourist destinations and disputed areas on the border in India including Arunachal Pradesh. In response, the Indian embassy in Beijing stamped the passports with another map depicting the two disputed Himalayan regions as India's territory. For a summary of the territories claimed, see 'Chinese passport map causes diplomatic dispute, November 27, 2012, The Guardian, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/nov/27/chinese-passport-row-diplomatic-dispute>

[3] Posted online in March, 2015, and translated by ICT from Chinese. See the Methodology section for details of ICT's monitoring of social media.

[4] Chinese writers, artists, dissidents and outspoken critics of the Party state such as artist Ai Weiwei and author Sun Wenguang are also denied passports as political punishment. "It's just another way to punish people they don't like," said Wu Zeheng, a government critic and Buddhist spiritual leader from southern Guangdong Province whose failed entreaties to obtain a passport have prevented him from accepting at least a dozen speaking invitations in Europe and North America', according to a New York Times article: [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/23/world/asia/chinese-passports-seen-as-political-statement.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/23/world/asia/chinese-passports-seen-as-political-statement.html?_r=0). But the impact of denial of passports in Tibet and Xinjiang applies to a broader sector of society and to many ordinary people, not only those who have challenged the Party state.

[5] A New York Times article detailed how residents of the ethnically diverse prefecture in far northwest China have been asked to hand over their passports to the police by Friday or have the documents canceled, according to a notice circulating online and an interview with a police officer (By Edward Wong, New York Times, May 14, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/15/world/asia/china-passports-xinjiang-ili-kazakh-autonomous-prefecture.html>). The article cited Nicolas Becquelin of Amnesty International as saying the restrictions were part of an array of counterinsurgency measures that have been rolled out by the authorities since Xi Jinping, the Chinese president and head of the Communist Party, began holding a series of meetings on Xinjiang policy since 2013.

[6] <http://docs.uyghuramerican.org/briefing-uyghur-passports.pdf>. ICT has also monitored some social media references to difficulties experienced by some Hui Muslims, who are ethnically Chinese, in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region of the PRC, in obtaining passports. The extent of these difficulties could not be confirmed, although ICT has included some reference to this in the section on social media discussion later in this report.

[7] Human Rights Watch has made a translation of the document, from Chinese into English, available. Also see report by the Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy, 'Discriminatory Chinese passport regulations violate Tibetans' right to travel', May 5, 2015, at: <http://www.tchrd.org/2015/05/discriminatory-chinese-passport-regulations-violate-tibetans-right-to-travel/#more-4082>. According to the Human Rights Watch translation, the review process involves the following: "First, all citizens in the Region without exception and in accordance with the principle of local management, when applying for an ordinary passport shall apply to the prefecture-level (prefecture-level city) public security agency where their household is registered; the Regional Entry and Exit Administration of the Public Security Department shall no longer accept or handle applications. Second, ordinary passport applicants must provide a self-completed application to be delivered in person to their local village (neighborhood) committee, township (town) People's Government (neighborhood affairs office) and police station for initial examination. The police station shall submit the application materials to the township (town) People's Government (neighborhood affairs office) for review by the leaders, and report it to the county (county-level city, district) Public Security Bureau for handling. Following a review by the county (county-level city, district) Public Security Bureau, the application materials shall be sent to the county (county-level city, district) People's Government leaders for examination and approval and for them to provide their opinions. After reporting to the prefecture-level (prefecture-level city) Public Security Exit and Entry Administration, the application materials shall be delivered to the principal leaders of the prefecture-level (prefecture-level city) Public Security Bureau (Office) for examination and approval, and then reported to the principal leaders of the [prefecture] administration (Government) for review and approval. Once all formalities are complete, the prefecture-level (prefecture-level city) Public Security Entry and Exit Administration departments shall report to the Regional Public Security Department Entry and Exit Administration for review and approval, and issuance. Upon returning to the country, passport-holders without exception must hand their passport in to the local prefecture-level (prefecture-level city) Public Security Exit and Entry Administration department for unified safe-keeping."

[8] Every citizen of the PRC has their documentation stored in the form of a hukou, a record in the system of household registration required by law. A household registration record officially identifies a person as a resident of an area and includes identifying information such as name, parents, spouse, and date of birth. The dossiers compiled on every individual are of dizzying scope, encompassing education, work history, political activity of the person or anyone they know.

[9] Human Rights Watch has made a translation of the document, from Chinese into English. Human Rights Watch kindly shared their translation with ICT prior to its publication.

[10] Since protests spread across Tibet in 2008, to be met by a violent crackdown, the Chinese government has adopted a strategy of actively establishing Party presence in rural areas as the answer to 'instability'. This has led to a more pervasive and systematic approach to 'patriotic education' and a dramatic increase in work teams and Party cadres in rural areas of the Tibet Autonomous Region. For further details, see ICT report, 'Storm in the Grasslands: Self-immolations in Tibet and Chinese policy', at <http://www.savetibet.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/storminthegrassland-FINAL-HR.pdf>

[11] Article Six of the law states: "The exit-entry control department of the public security organ shall issue the passport within 15 days from the date it receives the application materials; if it refuses to issue such a passport on the grounds that the application does not conform to the relevant provisions, it shall give the reasons in writing and inform the applicant of his right to apply for administrative reconsideration or to file an administrative lawsuit in accordance with law". Passport Law of the People's Republic of China, which took effect from January 1, 2007. The law in full in English is at: <http://www.china-embassy.org/eng/ywzn/lyw/vpna/faq/t710009.htm>

[12] Radio Free Asia Chinese service, April 27, 2012

[13] ICT reported this in 2004, in the report, 'When the Sky Fell to Earth: The New Crackdown on Buddhism in Tibet', [http://savetibet.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/content/berichte/112004ReligionReport.pdf](http://savetibet.de/fileadmin/user_upload/content/berichte/112004ReligionReport.pdf)



[14] State media reports have made it clear that in the TAR, the Chinese authorities have linked the PRC-wide anti-corruption drive to the political struggle against 'separatism'. At a press conference in January (2015), Ye Dongsong, head of an inspection team of the Communist Party Committee Discipline Commission, said: "Some officials failed to take a firm stand on issues related to the Tibet question and some grass-root officials in the region were found to be seriously corrupt." (Global Times, January 27, 2015, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/904366.shtml>). According to the same article, Ye said that the focus of the Tibetan regional government should be: "On neutralizing separatists and maintaining social stability, cracking down on corruption and strictly monitoring projects in the region." ICT report, January 28, 2015, <http://www.savetibet.org/communist-party-officials-punished-for-supporting-dalai-lama>

[15] The translation was kindly shared with ICT by HRW prior to publication.

[16] For example, a Tibetan businessman was sentenced to two years of hard labor after he was found to be in possession of 'illegal' materials following his return from the Kalachakra: <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/returnee-01172013143623.html>. See ICT report, <http://www.savetibet.org/china-tightens-control-prevents-pilgrimage-before-major-dalai-lama-teaching-in-exile/#5>

[17] According to various sources. Radio Free Asia cited a Tibetan businessman saying that many Tibetans who had attended the Kalachakra festival in India a year ago had their passports seized by the authorities and have not got them back. "Passports for all Kalachakra returnees are confiscated with the assurances that new passports will be issued, but to my knowledge no new passports have ever been issued to them," he said. (RFA report, 'Tibetans face passport dilemma' January 20, 2013, <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/passports-01202013213254.html>)

[18] Also see Human Rights Watch statement, February 16, 2012, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/02/16/china-end-crackdown-tibetans-who-visited-india>, which stated: "The sweep is in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), where there has been almost no unrest in four years. It is 600 miles west of the eastern Tibetan areas in Sichuan and other provinces where there have been at least eight self-immolations and five deaths of protesters so far this year. The mass detentions in the Autonomous Region indicate that the crackdown in eastern Tibetan areas has expanded to the entire Tibetan plateau, and that it involves techniques not used in the region for several decades."

[19] ICT report, 'Tibetan children due to face forced confessions, punishment for studying in India' September 22, 2008, <http://www.savetibet.org/tibetan-children-due-to-face-forced-confessions-punishment-for-studying-in-india/>

[20] Li Decheng, head of the religious studies at the China Tibetology Research Center, was cited in the same article by Xinhua as saying that the "[Kalachakra] ceremony incited hatred, terror and extremist action, seriously tarnishing the Kalachakra's nature of solemnity and purity, and affecting the healthy development of Tibetan Buddhism." ICT report, October 15, 2014, 'New aggressive "counter-terrorism" campaign expands from Xinjiang to Tibet with increased militarization of the plateau', <http://www.savetibet.org/new-aggressive-counter-terrorism-campaign-expands-from-xinjiang-to-tibet-with-increased-militarization-of-the-plateau/#15>

[21] Government officials were ordered not to take their annual leave in the period before, during and immediately after the Kalachakra. The Central Tibetan Administration, based in Dharamsala, India, confirmed that at around this time, the Chinese authorities had also stopped issuing new or renewing old passports to Tibetans, adding that those who have already obtained their passports in the past had been asked to submit it back to the authorities. June 2, 2014, <http://tibet.net/2014/06/china-steps-up-repression-during-religious-festival-in-tibet/>

[22] According to ICT sources who attended and spoke to some of the Tibetan and Chinese Buddhists there.

[23] Interview by ICT researcher at the Kalachakra in Ladakh, July 2014.

[24] Full details of the number of Tibetans involved is not known due to the dangers of passing on information about such subjects to Tibetans in exile. The Tibetans were from Driru and Sog in Nagchu, two areas where the crackdown has been particularly intense in recent years. The same sources said that three of the young Tibetan men were sentenced to several years in prison.

[25] <http://www.savetibet.org/newsroom/tibet-tidbits/>

[26] For more context, see ICT report, 'The Communist Party as Living Buddha', <https://www.savetibet.org/the-communist-party-as-living-buddha/>

[27] Cited by Human Rights Watch in <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/07/13/china-attempts-seal-tibet-outside-information>

[28] Tibetan sources from Qinghai and RFA report, <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/travel-10042013153826.html>

[29] ICT report, March 8, 2013, <http://www.savetibet.org/women-of-courage-award-to-tsering-woeser-affirms-us-commitment-to-tibet-2/>

[30] Ibid

[31] <http://www.savetibet.org/resources/fact-sheets/self-immolations-by-tibetans/>

[32] Posted on October 30, 2014

[33] ICT report, <http://www.savetibet.org/new-images-of-deepening-crackdown-in-nagchu-tibet/>

[34] ICT report, November 20, 2014: 'Harsh new 'rectification' drive in Driru: nuns expelled and warning of destruction of monasteries and 'mani walls' – See more at: <http://www.savetibet.org/harsh-new-rectification-drive-in-driru-nuns-expelled-and-warning-of-destruction-of-monasteries-and-mani-walls/>

[35] ICT report, February 2, 2012, <http://www.savetibet.org/photos-of-tibet-crackdown-emerge-from-scene-of-recent-shooting/>

[36] See ICT report, 'A Great Mountain Burned by Fire: China's Crackdown in Tibet', for further details and political context: <https://www.savetibet.org/a-great-mountain-burned-by-fire-chinas-crackdown-in-tibet/>

[37] Human Rights Watch report, June 19, 2012, <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/06/19/china-arbitrary-expulsions-tibetans-lhasa-escalate>

[38] 'On the train to Lhasa' by Tsering Woeser, October 16, 2012, <http://www.rfa.org/english/commentaries/lhasa-10162012104608.html>

[39] ICT report, <http://www.savetibet.org/detentions-fear-after-lhasa-self-immolations-prayer-gathering-in-dzamtang>

[40] Tibetan Buddhism places great importance on the transmission of Buddhism through teaching or transmission lineages (Tib: brgyud). Each teaching lineage is believed to be an unbroken chain of spiritual transmission directly from the Buddha, passed on from teacher to student through to the present day. As such, a teacher's lineage is what guarantees the authenticity of the teachings they are passing on to students. Hundreds of such teaching lineages have formed and are taught within the four main schools of Tibetan Buddhism; Nyingma, Gelug, Kagyu and Sakya schools. Within these lineages are highly sophisticated and tested systems of inner development, a rich store of refined philosophical insights and a range of ritual and sacred arts. Tibetan Buddhists refer to the continuity of religious training for monks and nuns as 'becoming a holder of the transmission of the teachings (Tib: brgyud 'dzin).' The continued transmission of lineage today is also impeded by the restrictions placed on both religious institutions and religious practitioners. Public teachings and empowerments given by religious teachers are subject to constrictive regulations, and restrictions have been placed on general Buddhist teachings, beyond the monastic curriculum. Monasteries must often receive official permission before certain types of teaching, initiation, or ceremony are performed and the authorities are particularly wary of any religious event that is likely to attract a mass gathering. Monks and nuns are also restricted or forbidden from performing a variety of traditional rituals in people's home and in other places outside of the monastery. As with other aspects of religious policy, in some areas the restrictions are minimal and in others they are scrupulously enforced.

[41] The Tibetan word for pilgrimage, 'ne khor' literally means 'the circumambulation of a sacred place.'

[42] A new set of restrictions was first introduced in 2002. According to reports received by ICT, to obtain a permit to travel there at that time pilgrims had to obtain a letter from their local PSB first, then from the Ngari prefecture office in Lhasa. Their permit, together with their ID card, was checked at a number of checkpoints on the way to Mt. Kailash and on arrival they were registered by the PSB. Some pilgrims reportedly had to pay a fee in order to do a circumambulation of the mountain, which is sacred to Hindus and Jains as well as Buddhists.

[43] ICT report, June 12, 2014,

<http://www.savetibet.org/china-tightens-control-prevents-pilgrimage-before-major-dalai-lama-teaching-in-exile/#5>

[44] This year, Saga Dawa began on May 18.

[45] Ibid

[46] ICT reported in 2004: "In recent years, some elderly Tibetans and Tibetans living outside TAR have been able to obtain passports from their county level PSB, usually after their political record has been checked and with payment of between RMB 300- 500 (approx. \$ 36-60). Once they have their passport they are able to apply for a visa at the Nepalese Consulate in Lhasa and from there travel by road or air to Kathmandu. For most Tibetans in the TAR it is virtually impossible to obtain a passport without official connections." (ICT report, 'When the Sky Fell to Earth', [http://savetibet.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/content/berichte/112004ReligionReport.pdf](http://savetibet.de/fileadmin/user_upload/content/berichte/112004ReligionReport.pdf))

[47] <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/china/china-minorities-05142015143907.html>

[48] As detailed above, in addition to Tibetans and Uyghurs, Hui Muslims, who are ethnically Chinese have also experienced difficulties in obtaining passports, according to social media postings tracked by ICT. In this social media post, Tibetans and Hui Muslims are mentioned but not Uyghurs. It could be a reference to Hui Muslim Chinese living in parts of Qinghai or Gansu.

[49] The writer says later on in the post that he or she is Tibetan.

[50] Household registration.

[51] Due to sensitivity over critique of policies.