

# Tibet Brief

A report of the International Campaign for Tibet



September 2015

## 17<sup>th</sup> EU-China Summit held in Brussels

The European Union and China held their 17<sup>th</sup> Summit on 29 June, 2015, in Brussels.



Tibetans demonstrate on the sidelines of the EU-China Summit

The **International Campaign for Tibet (ICT)** called upon Member States to reach a common position on human rights concerns in Tibet, and to raise them with the Chinese government during this exchange.

*"The lack of co-ordination among Member States in dealing with China on human rights issues, particularly in Tibet, is of great concern to us," said Vincent Metten, ICT's EU Policy Director. "Today, China and the EU are key partners in many areas and we greatly value this important diplomatic relationship. However, the EU should no longer tolerate the gross human rights violations occurring in China and Tibet on a daily basis, which*

*will now be legitimized by Chinese law."*

The Belgian Tibetan Community organized a demonstration on the margins of the Summit, calling on the Chinese leadership to resume the Sino-Tibetan dialogue process.

The Summit, held on 29, June, 2015, was led by President of the European Council **Donald Tusk** and Chinese Prime Minister **Li Keqiang**. Many issues were on the agenda, including defence and security, co-operation on trade, climate and development. Regional and foreign policy issues such as the situations in Ukraine and South East Asia were also discussed.

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The most significant and appreciable development was the mention of Tibet by the European Council's President **Donald Tusk** during the [joint press conference](#) that followed the Summit. He expressed the EU's "concerns on freedom of expression and association in China, including the situation of the persons belonging to minorities such as Tibetans and Uighurs". Tusk also said: "In that context, I have encouraged China to resume a meaningful dialogue with the **Dalai Lama's** representatives". ■

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The **International Campaign for Tibet** welcomes this clear stand taken by the European Council President, which reflects the EU's growing concerns about the critical situation in Tibet and its support to find a long term solution through a negotiation process between

the two parties.

**ICT** is now looking forward to a continued engagement of the EU on Tibet, including at the next round of the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue and during the second visit of the EU Special Representative for

Human Rights, Mr **Stavros Lambrinidis**, (who visited Tibet in 2013), which are both supposed to take place in November 2015 according to the joint [EU-China statement](#) adopted during the Summit. ■

## Tibet at the UN Human Rights Council's 29<sup>th</sup> Session

The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) participated in the 29<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Human Rights Council, which took place in Geneva from 15 June until 3 July, 2015.



Under Secretary and U.S. Special Co-ordinator for Tibetan Issues Sarah Sewall with former Tibetan political prisoner Golog Jigme and ICT Europe's Executive Director Tsering Jampa at the side event in Geneva.

At the start of the session, **ICT** made a statement on freedom of expression in Tibet, urging the UN to ensure freedom of expression and opinion in Tibet. The [statement](#) highlighted that in Tibet "almost any expression of cultural or national identity can be characterized as 'splittist' and 'criminal' with harsh punishments imposed".

On behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, **the International Campaign for Tibet** also organized

a side event during the session of the UN Human Rights Council. The event, called "Lockdown in Tibet", took place in the Palais des Nations on 15 June.

The speakers included the U.S. Ambassador to the Human Rights Council, Mr. **Keith Harper**; the Under Secretary of State and Special Co-ordinator for Tibetan Issues, Dr. **Sarah Sewall**; the President of the International Campaign for Tibet, Mr. **Matteo Mecacci**; Ven. **Golog Jigmy**, a former Tibetan political prisoner recently arrived in Europe; and Mr. **Juan Pablo Cardenal**, a journalist and writer as well as former China correspondent for the Spanish press.

Delegates from over 10 countries participated at the event. A representative from the European Union called on the Chinese Authorities to "ensure free access to all Tibetan regions to diplomats" and called to "resume a meaningful dialogue" between both parties.

Speakers focused on several fundamental human rights issues facing Tibet today, namely restrictions on freedom of expression and movement. These have a significant impact on the ability of Tibetans to exercise other fundamental human rights.

The U.S. Special Co-ordinator for Tibetan Issues, **Sarah Sewall**, said, "Tibetans have an inalienable right to be stewards of their unique cultural, religious and linguistic heritage". She urged members of the UN Human Rights Council "to join the United States in encouraging the Chinese government to live up to its international obligations to respect Tibetans' distinct culture, identity, and fundamental human rights." She said Beijing should also "respect international protocols on diplomatic relations and reciprocal access among states." ■

## High-profile Tibetan monk Tenzin Delek Rinpoche dies in prison

Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, an influential and popular Tibetan lama who was one of Tibet's most well-known political prisoners, died on 12 July in his 13<sup>th</sup> year in prison.

On 2 July, 2015, relatives of **Tenzin Delek Rinpoche**, who was serving a life sentence for alleged involvement in bombings that took place in Chengdu, in China's Sichuan province in 2002, went to the Prison Management Bureau of the county that administers Chuandong Prison, where he was held, to request a visit. The visit was continually postponed until they were informed of his death on 12 July.

While the authorities refused to allow the body to be returned to his family for traditional prayer ceremonies, it was negotiated for some members of his family to visit the body on 15 July. Relatives were taken to a high-security detention facility in an isolated area several kilometers from Chengdu – not Chuandong Prison where they had thought he was being held. **Tenzin Delek Rinpoche's** body, still in prison uniform, lay in a bed in a cell. His mouth and nails were reportedly stained black, and details of the circumstances of his death are still not clear.

Chinese authorities violently responded to peaceful protests near his monastery in his home area of Nyagchuka (Chinese: Yajiang) county in Kardze (Chinese: Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan (the Tibetan area of Kham), deploying armed police to fire tear-gas and use physical violence against Tibetans. While it is not known if live ammunition was used, one report said that gunfire was aimed 'over the crowd', and sources said that an elderly woman was shot in the leg and is currently in hospital.

Tenzin Delek Rinpoche was imprisoned in December 2002. He was convicted amid concerns he had been tortured to extort a confession, in a trial that was condemned around the world for falling far short of minimum fair trial standards. His death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment

treatment, urged the Chinese authorities to investigate and make public the circumstances surrounding his death. The revered lama's body was however cremated on 16 July, without an autopsy and despite protests from his family, who had urged the authorities not to rush a cremation.



A Tibetan community demonstration for Tenzin Delek Rinpoche in front of the Chinese Embassy in Brussels (28 July 2015)

following a statutory two-year period of suspension. In 2013, his relatives learned that he was suffering from a heart condition, frequent unconsciousness and uncontrollable shaking. It is not known whether **Tenzin Delek Rinpoche**, who was 64, had received any medical treatment in prison.

Following the revered lama's death, many governments, including the [European Union](#) and the [United States](#), who had consistently called for his release or adequate medical

The worldwide outpouring of grief about **Tenzin Delek Rinpoche's** death, which follows prayer ceremonies, vigils and protests over years of his imprisonment, demonstrates his influence and popularity –among both the Tibetan community and many Chinese Buddhists. Recognized by the **Dalai Lama** as a reincarnated lama in the 1980s, **Tenzin Delek Rinpoche** was a community leader, and for decades had been a staunch advocate for the protection and preservation of Tibetan culture, religion, and way of life. ■

## Photo exhibition in the European Parliament on the occasion of the Dalai Lama's 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday

On 30 June, 2015, the **International Campaign for Tibet (ICT)**, joined forces with MEPs **Thomas Mann** (Germany, EPP) and **Csaba Sógor** (Romania, EPP), the Office of Tibet in Brussels and the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), to hold a special event to mark the 80<sup>th</sup> birthday of the **Dalai Lama**.



President of the European Economic and Social Committee, Mr Henri Malosse, speaking at the opening of the photo exhibition on the Dalai Lama in the European Parliament. Mr. Thomas Mann, MEP is on his left.

A photo exhibition – *Ways of Wisdom: Celebrating the Dalai Lama's 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday* – recalled the most important phases of the **Dalai Lama's** life dedicated to the promotion of non-violence and celebrating his message of dialogue, reconciliation and inter-religious harmony. The photographs were

displayed in the European Parliament in Brussels from 30 June – 3 July, before the exhibition moved to the building of the European Parliamentary Association in Strasbourg.

The opening ceremony, which was held in the European Parliament in Brussels

on 30 June, mixed politics, human rights and a rich cultural programme, including a Tibetan prayer, dances and musical performances.

Alongside the two co-hosts, MEPs **Thomas Mann** and **Csaba Sógor**, who opened the ceremony, introductory statements were made by the co-organizers – Mr. **Tseten Samdup**, Representative of **His Holiness the Dalai Lama** to the EU and Western Europe, and Mr. **Matteo Mecacci**, President of the International Campaign for Tibet. Guest speaker Mr **Henri Malosse** (who has met the **Dalai Lama** on several occasions, including in his official capacity as President of the European Economic and Social Committee), highlighted the importance of defending core EU values in its external policies.

Hosting this photo exhibition in the European Parliament was of high symbolic importance, as this institution has always been at the forefront of the battle for human rights worldwide as well as for Tibet specifically through the constant and committed work of its Tibet Interest Group. ■

## New ICT report: “A Policy Alienating Tibetans - The Denial of Passports to Tibetans as China Intensifies control”

On 13 June, 2015, the **International Campaign for Tibet (ICT)** published a new report focusing on the systematic denial of passport to Tibetans.

The report, “[A Policy Alienating Tibetans](#)” shows how the Chinese authorities have intensified control over Tibetans' movements by denying and recalling passports, in total 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.

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Few Tibetans in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and in many other Tibetan areas have been issued passports in the past. The report, "A Policy Alienating Tibetans" shows how the Chinese authorities have intensified control over Tibetans' movements by denying and recalling passports, in total 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.



Tibetans celebrating the Kalachakra in Gangya Labrang in June 2015

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 have 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 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.

These restrictions threaten the survival of Tibetan Buddhist teachings in Tibet, making it nearly impossible for monks and nuns who wish to travel outside the PRC to receive instruction from exiled teachers, and difficult for these teachers to obtain permission to travel within Tibet to give teachings. ■

## Major policy meeting on Tibet in build-up to sensitive anniversary

The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) is concerned that the EU policy on China will be weakened due to the summit of Heads of Government of China and Central and Eastern European countries that took place on December 15-17 in Belgrade, Serbia.

A major policy meeting on Tibet presided over by China's top leader **Xi Jinping** concluded in Beijing, as security is tightened in Lhasa in advance of a political anniversary on 1 September.

The Tibet Work Forum on 24-25 August, set out Tibet policy for the coming years, and was the sixth such strategy meeting on Tibet to be held since the Chinese takeover of Tibet in 1949-50.

Attended by the entire Politburo, the Party leadership, the emphasis of the Work Forum was on 'stability', a political term associated with a dramatic expansion of military and police powers. According to the [Chinese state media](#), the meeting also emphasized the struggle against 'separatism', above economic development, in contrast to the last Tibet Work Forum in January 2010. The official [Global Times](#) reported: "Stressing that national unity, consolidating ethnic unity, and

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realizing long-term and comprehensive social stability should be regarded as the primary task for the region, **Xi** said that the country should “firmly take the initiative” in the fight against separatism, and adhere to the principle of governing Tibet under the rule of law”. The Chinese authorities state that the **Dalai Lama** is a prime cause of Tibetan ‘separatism’.

There has been an intensification of security in the Tibet Autonomous Region, including an increased number of checkpoints, stepping up of surveillance and controls, and large-scale movement of troops in July. This is likely to be a part of the renewed emphasis on political ‘stability’ but also in the build-up to the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment by the Chinese authorities of the Tibet Autonomous Region. ■



Troops moving through Rebkong (Chinese: Tongren) in Qinghai in July 2015.

## Two more self-immolations in summer 2015

Two self-immolations took place in Tibet this summer, bringing the number of Tibetan self-immolators since February 2009 to 143.

**Tashi Kyi**, a 55-year-old mother of five from Ngura Village, a Tibetan nomadic settlement located in today’s Sanchu county, Gannan Prefecture, Gansu Province, died on 28 August, a day after she set herself ablaze. Sources said that Chinese security forces arrived at her home in the morning, and forcibly took her body away, despite appeals to let the family perform the last religious rites.

While the reasons for her protest are not yet clear, a possible catalyst could have been an incident that occurred on 27 August, when over 100 officials and security personnel arrived in Ngura village to claim official rights on a house and demolished the property. “A number of the house owners protested, with some physically hanging on to the demolition equipment,” Free Tibet said in a statement. “Ngura residents believe **Tashi Kyi**’s self-immolation was motivated by witnessing the destruction of her village.”



A framed photo of Tashi Kyi is placed on an altar following her death

According to Jayang Jinpa, a nephew of **Tashi Kyi** who now lives in India and spoke to the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, **Tashi Kyi** was a kind-hearted and pious woman who studied the Tibetan language on her own. She had visited India twice to receive teachings and blessings from the **Dalai Lama**.

Earlier this summer, a Tibetan monk in his late twenties set fire to himself in the main square of Kyegudo (Yushu), in an atmosphere of heightened security imposed around the period of the **Dalai Lama**’s 80<sup>th</sup> birthday on 6 July.

**Sonam Topgyal**, who self-immolated on 9 July, and died later in hospital, left a note tucked into his prayer book, saying that China’s policies are aimed at eradicating Tibet’s religion, culture and traditions, and destroying the environment.

According to information pieced together from different sources, **Sonam Topgyal** had directly experienced the impact of such policies. He had been imprisoned and witnessed the demolition of his family home in 2012, and intended his self-immolation to be seen as a sacrifice in “witness to the truth”.

The young monk’s self-immolation took place in the centre of Kyegudo, in the rural county of Yushu, which has been rebuilt as a new tourist city with a Chinese name following a devastating earthquake in 2010. An image of the location shows that virtually none of the Tibetan features of the town remained. Tibetans were excluded from the reconstruction process although Kyegudo is a centuries-old center of Tibetan culture and religion. ■

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Political Prisoners Focus

## Migmar Dhondup



**Migmar Dhondup**, a thoughtful Tibetan who was working for an NGO doing community development work, was arrested shortly after protests broke out in Lhasa in March

2008. Together with a former Jokhang monk and health worker named Wangdu, he was accused of collecting "intelligence concerning the security and interests of the state and provid[ing] it to the Dalai clique... prior to and following the 'March 14' incident" and was sentenced to 14 years in prison. He is assumed to be serving his sentence in the Chushur prison (Qushui in Chinese) near Lhasa, but his exact condition and whereabouts remain unknown.

**Migmar** is a well-educated Tibetan passionate about nature conservation, who worked for the Kunde Foundation in Tibet, an NGO committed to helping marginalized and impoverished communities. He was educated in exile and on his return to Tibet some years later, he began working as a tourist guide for, among others, an American archeologist who has surveyed over 700 ancient pre-Buddhist archaeological sites in upper Tibet.

**Migmar** accompanied him on several field trips traveling for many weeks in the remote northwest. The experience of seeing ancient rock art in caves and learning about Tibet's rich history gave him great pride in his native heritage and in his people, according to friends.

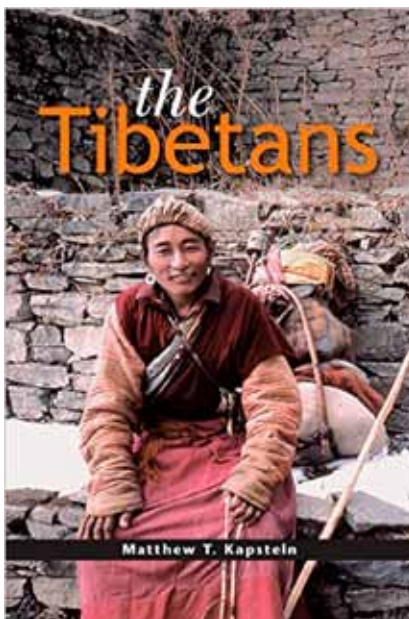
On his trips, however, the increasing levels of poverty in southern and

northwestern Tibet demoralized him. He felt that he could never do enough to help those less fortunate than himself. He also cared a great deal about the preservation of Tibetan culture and encouraged other Tibetans to remember their mother tongue and wear traditional dress.

**Migmar's** travels also opened his eyes to Tibet's unique wildlife and natural environment. He became a conservationist after his 2007 trip to the northwestern region. There, Migmar came across a mass of slaughtered chiru antelopes, which he believed were killed by Chinese poachers. The sight of dead chiru galvanized him to raise awareness about these antelope that are being hunted to the point of extinction. (The soft underbelly fur of the chiru is made into expensive shahtoosh shawls.) ■

Reading Suggestion

## The Tibetans, by Matthew T. Kapstein



Interest in Tibet has developed very rapidly during the past several decades, and numerous texts, artifacts, and records of life in Tibetan communities are now readily available to researchers. "The Tibetans" provides a comprehensive introduction to this intriguing land, orienting the reader to the Tibetan geographical region and its inhabitants. Topics treated here

include Tibetan religious and political history, together with major aspects of Tibetan culture: social institutions, religious and philosophical traditions, literature and the arts. A concluding chapter discusses the fragile position of Tibetan civilization in the modern world, surveying events that have transpired since Tibet's incorporation into the People's Republic of China." ■

**Publisher:**  
**Wiley-Blackwell**  
**1<sup>st</sup> edition, October 2006.**

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NEW - A cartoon by Fifi



by Belgian artist Fifi (Philippe Sadzot), illustrating the UN Human Rights Council Side event « Lockdown in Tibet » © ICT

## Upcoming Events

- ▶ **14 SEPT - 2 OCT:**  
UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL 30<sup>TH</sup> SESSION
- ▶ **7 OCTOBER:**  
NEPAL UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW PRE-SESSION
- ▶ **4 NOVEMBER:**  
NEPAL UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW
- ▶ **17 NOVEMBER (TBC):**  
CHINA'S REVIEW BY THE UN COMMITTEE AGAINST TORTURE
- ▶ **BEGINNING OF NOVEMBER:**  
VISIT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, STAVROS LAMBRINIDIS, TO CHINA
- ▶ **END OF NOVEMBER (TBC):**  
34<sup>TH</sup> EU-CHINA HUMAN RIGHTS DIALOGUE



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