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Golog Jigme, leading human rights defender, briefs European Parliament and high-level officials in Brussels



Golog Jigme testifying before the European Parliament Sub-Committee on Human Rights (16 March 2016).

Tibetan Buddhist monk and former political prisoner Golog Jigme met EU and Belgian policy-makers in Brussels this month, as part of an advocacy round jointly organized by the Office of Tibet in Belgium and the International Campaign for Tibet.

Golog Jigme, also known as Jigme Gyatso, was jailed and tortured for making the 2008 documentary "[Leaving Fear Behind](#)" together with Dhondup Wangchen. He was jailed a total of three times between 2008 and 2012, before he escaped to India. He is now living in Switzerland, where he has been granted political asylum.

Between 14-18 March, he met high-level representatives of the European External Action Service (EEAS), and other senior officials including the President of the Flemish Parliament, members of the Belgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Tibet Interest Group of the European Parliament. He gave them a moving testimony of

his persecution and spoke about the repressive policies of the Chinese government in Tibet. He also called on the EU to put pressure on China to improve the living conditions of Tibetan political prisoners and to release all Tibetans detained for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression. These include

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his friend Shokjang, a young Tibetan writer and blogger sentenced to three years in prison in February (see Political Prisoner Focus).

Speaking at an [exchange of views with the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights](#) on

16 March, Golog Jigme said: "Today, I appeal to you. Please don't pretend as if you don't see and hear the Tibetan people's suffering. Tibet has become like a prison under Chinese occupation. I escaped from this prison. I came to a free country. My body is in a free country but my heart will

always remain with the suffering of my Tibetan brothers and sisters."

To read Golog Jigme's full testimony at the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights, click [here](#). ■

Unprecedented diplomatic action on China's human rights record at the 31st Session of the Human Rights Council

The international community has sent a strong message to China with unprecedented diplomatic action in recent weeks, including the first collective statement at the U.N. Human Rights Council.

On 10 March, 12 countries – Australia, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the UK, and the USA – expressed their collective concerns about human rights in China. For the first time in the history of the Human Rights Council, the collective statement focused on the arrests of lawyers and activists in recent months, and "unexplained recent disappearances and apparent coerced returns" of Chinese citizens and foreigners to China.

U.S. Ambassador Keith Harper read the statement after UN human rights chief Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein gave his main [annual speech to the council](#) on the global human rights situation. In his speech he specifically mentioned the situation in Tibet: "In recent weeks, I have made known my concerns over

China's arrests of lawyers and other activists. In the past I have also raised concerns about human rights in the Autonomous Regions of Tibet and Xinjiang, and these concerns remain. My mandate is to address such issues, and I believe there must be greater space for critical reflection and dialogue." In a [statement](#) to the Council on 15 March, the EU also raised its concerns about human rights abuses in China, specifically referring to Tibet and Xinjiang.

Kai Mueller, Executive-Director of ICT Germany and ICT's U.N. Coordinator said: "This unprecedented diplomatic action sends a strong signal to China that it has crossed a red line and there is serious concern among like-minded countries. It also conveys a message of support to human rights defenders

in China and Tibet for their courageous actions."

The statements in Geneva followed a rare [joint action](#) by the United States, Canada, Germany, Japan and the European Union, who wrote to China to voice concern over the recently passed law on counter-terrorism, and draft laws on cyber security and the management of foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

ICT actively participated in this session of the Human Rights Council, organizing a side event on China's new law on counter-terrorism and its impact on human rights and delivered a statement on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation on 10 March (which also marked the 57th anniversary of the 1959 Tibetan Uprising). ■

Xi Jinping's visit to Czech Republic sparks protests

Chinese President Xi Jinping paid a state visit to the Czech Republic between 28-30 March - the first by a Chinese leader since the countries established diplomatic relations 67 years ago. He was greeted on arrival by supporters, but also by a number of protesters.



A video footage image shows an activist replacing a Chinese flag with a Tibetan one in Prague. Police said they detained a dozen activists.

transport, IT, sciences, tourism, banking as well as a partnership deal between the two countries' capitals. The Czech Republic has become China's second biggest trade partner in the Central and Eastern European region, and China is the Czech Republic's largest trading partner outside the EU.

"I would like the Czech Republic to become (...) an entry gate for the People's Republic of China to the European Union," Zeman said at the welcome dinner. His warm attitude marked a contrast with the Czech Republic's first post-communist president, Vaclav Havel, a Soviet-era dissident and personal friend of the Dalai Lama. While the Czechs maintain the EU line on China, Zeman has made gestures others have not: he was for example the only

Western leader to attend a military parade marking the end of World War II in Beijing last September.

However, not everyone was happy with this more business-oriented Czech approach to China. Several dozen Chinese flags displayed in Prague ahead of the visit were splattered with a black substance before Xi Jinping's arrival, and some protesters were arrested after they replaced Chinese flags with Tibetan ones along the airport road.

More pro-Tibetan protesters clashed with Xi's supporters when they tried to cover up a large picture of the Dalai Lama with former Czech President Vaclav Havel. Parliamentarians from the Czech conservative opposition TOP 09 also hung two Tibetan flags in the windows of the Chamber of Deputies.

In addition, the behaviour of two police officers, who entered the premises of the Czech Film Academy (FAMU) and demanded to know who had raised a Tibetan flag there, noting that "the Chinese would not like it" had activists ringing alarm bells with regard to freedom of expression in the Czech Republic. Although Police President Tomáš Tuhý has since apologized to the dean of the FAMU for the incident, a group of public personalities filed a legal complaint against the Czech Republic for violations of constitutional and human rights, calling for a clear stance of the parliament and government on the change in foreign policy and human rights and freedoms and for an investigation in the procedure of the police and the City Hall.

Xi's visit to the Czech Republic comes amid a broader push to deepen China's relations with Central and Eastern European countries, seen by the Chinese government as key to its "One Belt, One Road" development plan. Working under the China-Central and Eastern Europe 16+1 platform, China and the CEE states have held an annual leaders' meeting each year since 2012. ■

Exiled Tibetans vote to elect their political leader and Parliamentarians



© Khenrab Tsultrim

A man casts his vote during the Tibetan elections in Brussels.

Thousands of Tibetans around the world cast their votes on 20 March 2016 to elect their 'Sikyong' and Members of their 16th Parliament-in-exile.

Every five years, Tibetans in exile (around 150,000 in over 30 countries) elect both the political leader of the Central Tibetan Administration (Sikyong) and the Members of the Parliament-in-exile (45 seats) in two rounds. These March elections followed preliminary elections that took place in October 2015. This was the second such election since the Dalai Lama retired as political leader of the Tibetan government in-exile in 2011, when he handed over power to a democratically elected leadership.

Two candidates contested the position of Sikyong this year –the incumbent Lobsang Sangay and the Speaker of the Parliament Penpa Tsering. In total, some 94 candidates competed for the seats in the Parliament in exile. According to the [official results](#) announced on 27 April by the Election Commission of the

Central Tibetan Administration, Lobsang Sangay was reelected as Sikyong with a total of 33,876 votes (57.08 % of the total vote share), while Penpa Tsering obtained 24,864 votes (41.89% of the total vote share). The Chief Election Commissioner also declared 45 elected members for the 16th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile. The Tibetan Parliament comprises 10 members each from the three traditional provinces of Tibet, two each from the five religious constituencies, two each from the Tibetan communities in North America and Europe and one from the Tibetan community in Australasia (excluding India, Nepal and Bhutan). A total of 59,353

Tibetans voted at 85 locations around the world. In Dharamsala, the election were monitored by the 2016 Tibetan Election Observation Mission, a delegation of parliamentarians (including Members of the European Parliament) and former MPs set up by the [International Network of Parliamentarians on Tibet \(INPaT\)](#) and coordinated by the International Campaign for Tibet. On 21 March, INPaT issued a [press release](#) praising the competitive Tibetan elections in exile: “We are pleased to see how Tibetans all over the free world have once again strongly embraced democracy as the best way to achieve the aspirations of a better future for the Tibetan people, which unfortunately continues to be denied to six million s Tibetans people in Tibet. We wish to praise the Tibetan people for their commitment and enthusiasm in participating both in the campaign and in the voting process. Voting in these elections, Tibetans in exile are reaffirming their support for a political solution, while the Chinese Government continues to impose severe authoritarian policies, which undermine the very existence of Tibetan identity.” ■



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Matteo Mecacci, President of ICT, and members of the International Network of Parliamentarians on Tibet speaking at a press conference on the Tibetan exile election in Dharamsala on 21 March. Pictured from left to right: Lisa Singh, Senator, Australia; Matteo Mecacci, former MP, President of ICT, Italy; Thomas Mann, MEP European Parliament, Co-Chair, INPaT; Norman Baker, Former MP, Minister, President, UK Tibet Society; Andre Gattolin, Senator, France; Zsuzsa Anna Ferenczy, MEP assistant, Hungary.



Two new self-immolations in February 2016

A 16-year-old Tibetan schoolboy, Dorjee Tsering, died after setting himself on fire on 29 February in India. In Tibet, on the same day, an 18-year-old monk, Kalsang Wangdu, set himself on fire and died.

Dorjee Tsering, who lived on a Tibetan settlement in northern India, set himself on fire in Dehra Dun on 29 February after visiting his grandfather. According to some witnesses, he called out 'Free Tibet' as he set himself alight. While he survived the protest, he suffered 95% burns to his body and was taken to a hospital in Delhi, where he died on 3 March. In a video recorded from his hospital bed before he died, he said: *"I have had a strong determination to do something for Tibet since my childhood. Since I did not fare well in my Grade 10 exams this year, I was much saddened that there was nothing else I could do for the Tibetan issue other than self-immolation... It seems the oil that I put on my body was not enough for it to burn completely... Finally I would like to pray:*

May His Holiness the Dalai Lama live long and may Tibet soon gain its independence. Victory for Tibet!"

The Tibetan Service of Radio Free Asia also reported the death of an 18-year-old monk Kalsang Wangdu, who set himself on fire on the same day in Nyarong (Chinese: Xinlong) County in Kardze (Chinese: Ganzi), the Tibetan area of Kham. "[While he burned], he called out for Tibet's complete independence," a Tibetan source told RFA, adding that witnesses to Wangdu's protest "intervened," intending to take him to Sichuan's provincial capital for treatment, but he died on the way. Kalsang Wangdu carried out his self-immolation near his Maretsokha Aryaling monastery. ■

Political Prisoner Focus

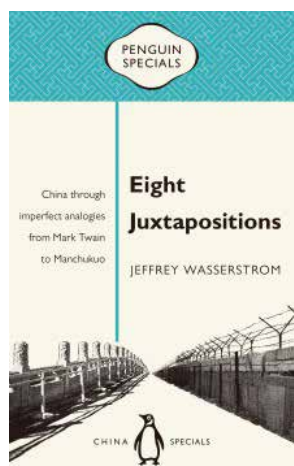
Shokjang



An intellectual, blogger and writer, Shokjang is known for his reflective and thought-provoking articles on issues of contemporary concern such as ethnic policy and settlement of nomads. There was widespread alarm when he was detained by security police in Rebkong (Chinese: Tongren) on 19 March 2015, with scores of netizens expressing their dismay (see [Tibet Brief edition 49](#)). According to Tibetan sources, Shokjang was sentenced on 17 February to three years in prison in a court in Xining, the provincial capital of Qinghai. Details of the charges are not known, although one source in exile said that he believed it was connected to 'separatism'. In the days leading up to his arrest, Druklo wrote a blog post about an intense build up of Chinese security forces in the Rebkong area. The International Campaign for Tibet believes that he has been detained and sentenced solely for exercising peacefully his right to freedom of expression, and calls for his immediate and unconditional release.

On 24 February, Shokjang wrote an eloquent and remarkable letter while in detention, appealing against his three-year prison sentence. A copy of this letter (translated into English by ICT) is available [here](#). ■

Reading Suggestion



Eight Juxtapositions: China Through Imperfect Analogies, by Jeffrey Wasserstrom

**Publisher: Penguin China
February 2016**

What do Pope Francis and Xi Jinping have in common? More than you think. Approaching the red Rubik's Cube from a new angle, Jeffrey Wasserstrom challenges conventional commentary on China through eight experimental analogies, finding fresh and surprising ways to look at the Asian superpower.

'Wasserstrom's Eight Juxtapositions offers more insight into China than many books five times its length. It's fun as well as illuminating, and it not only reports Wasserstrom's thinking, it makes readers think.' Craig Calhoun, Director of the London School of Economics and Political Science.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- ▶ **16-20 MAY 2016**
39th EU-China Interparliamentary Meeting In Beijing & Chengdu
- ▶ **7 JUNE 2016**
ICT Roundtable on counter-terrorism in China at the Clingendael Institute, The Hague
- ▶ **12-13 JULY 2016**
18th EU-China Summit In Beijing
- ▶ **15-16 JULY 2016**
11th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) In Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
- ▶ **SEPTEMBER 2016**
Visit of the Dalai Lama to Europe (Brussels 9-11 September and Strasbourg 17-18 September)

Cartoon by Fifi



A cartoon by Belgian artist Fifi (Philippe Sadzot), illustrating the new Chinese law on counter-terrorism.