



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

United States government commemorates birthday of the Panchen Lama

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In a statement linked to the 11th Panchen Lama's 29th birthday, State Department Spokesperson Heather Nauert [delivered a statement](#) calling on Chinese authorities to release him. The Panchen Lama has not been seen in public since he was taken away by Chinese authorities in 1995 at age six, making him the world's youngest political prisoner. Earlier this week United States Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom Sam Brownback [reaffirmed the commitment](#) of the United States to call on the Chinese government to release the Panchen Lama and provide the truth on his wellbeing and whereabouts, as well as ensuring the respect of religious freedom for the Tibetan people.

The full statement from the State Department is as follows:

On April 25, we marked the birthday of the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, who has not appeared in public since he was reportedly abducted two decades ago by the Chinese government at age six. The United States remains concerned that Chinese authorities continue to take steps to eliminate the religious, linguistic, and cultural identity of Tibetans, including their ongoing destruction of communities of worship, such as the Larung Gar and Yachen Gar monasteries. We call on China to release Gedhun Choekyi Nyima immediately and to uphold its international commitments to promote religious freedom for all persons.

"We welcome the US government statement on the occasion of the Panchen Lama's birthday, and call on the Chinese government to release him immediately," said Matteo Mecacci, President of the International Campaign for Tibet. "The decades-long enforced disappearance of the Panchen Lama is the most blatant example of China's repressive policies in Tibet, which are aimed at destroying the unique cultural and religious identity of the Tibetan people. It is a crime that offends the consciences of all the people of the world."