



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Congressional Delegation visits Dharamsala, meets Dalai Lama and Tibetan leadership

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A US Congressional Delegation composed of Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) and Rep. Claudia Tenney (R-NY) and accompanied by staffers from the House Foreign Affairs Committee and the US Embassy in India concluded a three-day visit to Dharamsala, by meeting with His Holiness the Dalai Lama on the morning of April 6, 2018.

The Dalai Lama welcomed the delegation and thanked the United States Congress and government for their decades-long support for the Tibetan cause. This support, he added, provides inspiration not only to the Tibetan people, but also for communities that are battling oppression all around the world. The Dalai Lama reaffirmed his commitment to the preservation of Tibetan culture and identity as they can provide benefit not only to Tibetans, but also to the entire world.

Following the meeting, Representative Ros-Lehtinen expressed her feelings in a tweet saying, “Blessed to meet with His Holiness the Dalai Lama at his home in Dharamsala. It was great to listen to his wisdom, knowledge and compassion. I reaffirmed my support and that of the US Congress for the people of Tibet. Beijing should listen to him too!”

The Congressional Delegation began their visit to Dharamsala on April 4, 2018 with a public meeting at the Central Tibetan Administration, where President Lobsang Sangay welcomed and thanked them and the United States Congress for support for the Tibetan people.

Representative Ros-Lehtinen is the former Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and the most senior Republican woman in Congress. She has undertaken many initiatives in support of the Tibetan people, including cosponsoring the legislation for the awarding of the Congressional Gold Medal to the Dalai Lama in 2007. During this current Congress, Rep. Ros-Lehtinen introduced resolution (H.Con.Res.89) calling for the resumption of dialogue on the issue of Tibet and for the Trump Administration to fully implement the Tibetan Policy Act, including by appointing a Special Coordinator for Tibetan issues.

In his welcome remarks at the reception, President Lobsang Sangay expressed his gratitude to the United States Administration and the Congress for their continued bipartisan support to the Tibet issue. He said the presence of the two US congresswomen at the Central Tibetan Administration lends credence and credibility to the voices of Tibetans inside Tibet. He also mentioned that the Tibetan community was putting the assistance rendered by the United States into good use.

In her remarks, Representative Ros-Lehtinen said that ever since she joined Congress, the issues facing Tibet have been very near and dear to her heart. She said the big part of the reason is the way she grew up, having to flee the Communist Castro regime in Cuba when she was eight years old. She added that experience taught her what it is like to be bullied by a Communist regime like the one in Beijing, and made fighting back against these regimes one of her highest priorities.

She said she had the honor of working with Tibetan officials, including Sikyong Lobsang Sangay, Representative Ngodup Tsering and former Representative Penpa Tsering. She also spoke of working with Matteo Mecacci and Richard Gere from the International Campaign for Tibet, saying, "I want to thank all of them for their dedication in raising awareness of the issues relating to Tibet!"

She also explained the issues raised in the latest resolution (H.Con.Res.89) she has introduced on Tibet and said she is working with Representative Jim McGovern on his Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act (H.R.1872), which she has cosponsored.

Representative Ros-Lehtinen, who is retiring from Congress at the end of 2018, said, "Whether I am in Congress or not, and whatever my next adventure in my life brings me, I want you to know that I am never going to stop fighting back against the kinds of injustices that are perpetrated by the Chinese regime. And I am never going to stop fighting for the Tibetan people, for your culture, for your language, for your heritage, for your tradition, for your autonomy."

In her remarks Representative Tenney, who was elected to Congress in 2016, talked about the American democratic experience and how the American people found solutions to make the situation better. She told the younger members of the audience to continue this fight that the Tibetan elders have started, saying that it is never easy to fight for freedom and to fight for human rights. She added that it is always a challenge. She hoped that the younger generation would be able to take the Tibetans into the future, and "find your destiny, which will be freedom, respect for human rights and respect for the country of Tibet in the future."

Congresswoman Tenney said that meeting His Holiness the Dalai Lama has been her life-long dream and added that although this is her first visit to the Tibetan community, she hoped for many more in the future.

The International Campaign for Tibet has a longstanding relationship with the office of Representative Ros-Lehtinen, and ICT President Matteo Mecacci was part of the delegation, along with Representative Ngodup Tsering of the Office of Tibet in Washington dc

On April 4, 2018, the congressional delegation also visited the Tibetan Parliament meeting with Speaker Sonam Tenphel and his colleagues. Speaker Tenphel briefed them about the current situation in Tibet and thanked the United States for its support. The delegation was informed about the Tibetan parliamentary sessions, its compositions, and procedure.

During their visit, the delegation also visited some of the Tibetan institutes in Dharamsala, Tibetan Children Village and at the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts, before leaving for Delhi in the afternoon of April 6, 2018.