



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

US China commission calls for reciprocal access to Tibet, dialogue between China and Dalai Lama

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United States lawmakers and the Trump Administration should push for reciprocal access to Tibet and renewed dialogue between China and the Dalai Lama's representatives, according to a new report by the Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC).

The commission's Annual Report 2018, released today, documents the deteriorating human rights situation inside China—including in Tibet, a historically independent nation that China annexed in the 1950s.

The report was discussed at a press conference today in the US Congress led by the commission's chairs, Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) and Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ).

"The International Campaign for Tibet welcomes the release of the 2018 CECC report, which not only sheds light on and clearly documents the authoritarian rule imposed by China in Tibet and beyond, but also provides concrete recommendations to the US government on how to effectively counter the efforts by Beijing to consolidate its power, completely disregard the rule of law and avoid being held accountable to its own citizens," said ICT President Matteo Mecacci.

Dalai Lama

The report notes that no formal dialogue has taken place in nearly nine years between the Chinese government and the representatives of the Dalai Lama.

The Dalai Lama has repeatedly made it clear that Tibetans are not seeking independence from China but, rather, a meaningful level of autonomy. Despite this, Chinese officials punish Tibetans who show support for their 83-year-old religious leader.

In May 2018, public security officials in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) detained a father of two for possessing books and audio recordings of the Dalai Lama.

In addition, Radio Free Asia reported that Chinese authorities threatened the families of Tibetans who traveled to Bodh Gaya, India to hear the Dalai Lama's teachings.

The CECC report refers to the issue of religious freedom in Tibet and says the Communist Party and the Chinese government “continued to regulate Tibetan Buddhism and its practices in an effort to strengthen their control over Tibetan Buddhists.”

The report recommends that members of the US Congress and Administration officials encourage China to respect, as a matter of religious freedom and as recognized under Chinese and international law, that the decision regarding the Dalai Lama’s succession or reincarnation must be reserved for the current Dalai Lama, Tibetan Buddhist leaders and the Tibetan people.

Repressive tactics

Repressive tactics have become commonplace under Chinese rule. According to the commission’s report, Tibetans who made a pilgrimage on foot to Tibet’s capital of Lhasa allegedly faced a fine of \$440 per day.

China is also trying to restrict Tibetans’ freedom of movement in neighboring Nepal. China has stationed its police on the Nepali side of the border to capture Tibetan refugees.

China also continues to jail Tibetans for peaceful protests. In May 2018, [Tibetan businessman Tashi Wangchuk was sentenced to five years in prison](#) after he appeared in a New York Times video advocating for Tibetan language classes in schools in his hometown. Several foreign governments expressed concern at this development.

A few months later, [Wangchuk’s appeal was denied](#), prompting a strong rebuke by the [Foreign Correspondents’ Club of China](#).

The CECC report says the US should urge “the Chinese government to withdraw the charges against Tibetan language rights advocate Tashi Wangchug and stress that peacefully advocating for genuine bilingual education—a right recognized under Chinese and international law—is not a crime.”

Police state

Wangchuk’s protest was driven by China’s language policies, which promote Mandarin Chinese instead of Tibetan as the main language of instruction in Tibetan areas.

China silences Tibetans in other ways too. Over the past year, Chinese security officials have introduced new forms of censorship and even offered large financial rewards to Tibetans who report their fellow citizens to the police. Between 2007 and 2016, domestic security spending in the TAR grew by more than 400 percent.

Although China has taken to boasting about its economic development of Tibet, the commission’s report notes that there is no evidence that China has sought systematic input from the Tibetan people on its economic plans.

The CECC report says the US should encourage “the Chinese government to respect the right of Tibetans to travel domestically as well as internationally, and to allow access to the Tibetan

autonomous areas of China to international journalists, representatives of the United Nations and non-governmental organizations, U.S. Government officials, and members of the Tibetan diaspora living around the world.”

Self-immolations

Given the degree of repressive control the Chinese government exercises over the lives of Tibetans, it is tragic but unsurprising that at least another three Tibetans lit themselves on fire in protest over the past reporting year.

The three were Tenga, a 63-year-old monk; Konpe, a former monk in his thirties; and Tsekho Tugchag (or Tugchak), another former monk. All three died.

Rather than address the root cause of self-immolations, China has harassed and arrested the families of those who self-immolate. In addition, Chinese officials detained seven Tibetans in October 2017 for posting a video about the lives of self-immolators to the messaging service WeChat.

Calls for reciprocity and dialogue

The CECC report includes a list of recommended changes to US policy toward China. One of these recommendations is to prioritize reciprocity in America’s relationship with the Chinese government.

The report specifically mentions the [Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act, which would deny entry to the US for Chinese officials who prevent Americans from entering Tibet](#). The bipartisan bill has passed the House of Representatives (H.R. 1872) and now needs to be approved by the Senate (S.821).

During the press conference to release the CECC report earlier today, Rubio said he believes that the Senate would pass the bill unanimously before the end of this year and that President Trump would sign it into law.

But, Rubio said, for that to happen, the bill would need to make it out of a Senate committee onto the floor of the Senate.

“I’m confident that if we can get it onto the floor of the Senate in some form, it would pass without even a vote,” Rubio said, adding “We want to get it there, we believe there’s support for it, and we’re working hard to get it accomplished.”

ICT has launched a campaign for Americans to [tell their Senators to pass the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act](#) and show support for the bill using #AccessToTibet.

The CECC report also calls for renewed dialogue between Chinese leaders and the Dalai Lama’s representatives.

The report says Trump Administration officials, including the President, should meet with the Dalai Lama in his capacity as a spiritual leader and with leaders of the Central Tibetan Administration.

The report also highlights the issue of the Panchen Lama and recommends that the US continue “to request that the Chinese government invite an independent representative of an international organization to meet with Gedun Choekyi Nyima, the 11th Panchen Lama, whom the Dalai Lama recognized in 1995, and who has been held incommunicado, along with his parents, since May 17, 1995.”

[View the text of the Tibet section of the report »](#)

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