



## INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

### **State Department 2018 Human Rights report exposes “severe” and “significant” restrictions in political participation and freedom of movement in Tibet**

<http://www.savetibet.org/state-department-2018-human-rights-report-exposes-severe-and-significant-restrictions-in-political-participation-and-freedom-of-movement-in-tibet/>

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The people of Tibet face immense discrimination under Chinese rule, severe restrictions on their most basic rights and increasing isolation from the outside world, according to the US State Department’s [Human Rights Report for 2018](#).

In the report, released March 13, 2019, the department “documents substantial interference with the rights of peaceful assembly and freedom of association; severe restrictions of religious freedom; significant restrictions on freedom of movement; and restrictions on political participation” for the people of Tibet.

The report highlights several areas of discrimination faced by Tibetans. It says the top Communist Party positions in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), as well as in all other Tibetan areas, are held by ethnic Chinese.

The report says, “Within the TAR, ethnic Chinese also continued to hold a disproportionate number of the top security, military, financial, economic, legal, judicial, and educational positions. The law requires Party secretaries and governors of ethnic minority autonomous prefectures and regions to be from that ethnic minority; however, ethnic Chinese were party secretaries in eight of the nine TAPs [Tibetan autonomous prefectures] located in Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan, and Yunnan Provinces.”

“The 2018 State Department human rights report details once again the widespread human rights violations suffered by the Tibetan people under China’s rule,” said Matteo Mecacci, president of the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), a Washington, DC-based advocacy organization. “As this year marks the 60th anniversary of the 1959 Tibetan Uprising and the forced exile of the Dalai Lama, it is important to remember that the Tibetan people continue to live under oppression and as second-class citizens.”

“While it oppresses Tibetans and all sorts of dissidents at home, the Chinese government continues to threaten the very existence of a rules-based international human rights system and other international norms that must be protected,” Mecacci concluded.

The report adds “Many Tibetan monks and nuns chose to wear nonreligious clothing to avoid harassment when traveling outside their monasteries and throughout China. Some Tibetans reported that taxi drivers throughout China refused to stop for them and hotels refused to provide rooms.”

The report lists the case of the Panchen Lama in a section on disappearances, saying “The whereabouts of the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the second-most prominent figure

after the Dalai Lama in Tibetan Buddhism's Gelug school, remained unknown. Neither he nor his parents have been seen since Chinese authorities took them away in 1995 when he was six years old."

The issue of lack of access to Tibet is also highlighted in the report. It says, "The government strictly regulated travel of international visitors to the TAR, a restriction not applied to any other provincial-level entity of the PRC. In accordance with a 1989 regulation, international visitors had to obtain an official confirmation letter issued by the TAR government before entering the TAR. Most foreign tourists obtained such letters by booking tours through officially registered travel agencies. In the TAR, a government-designated tour guide had to accompany international tourists at all times."

The report also touches on the lack of legal safeguards for detained or imprisoned Tibetans. Many Tibetans, particularly those facing politically motivated charges, did not have access to legal representation, the report says. Furthermore, despite China's claim of protecting Tibetan culture, the report says that trials were predominantly conducted in Mandarin, "with government interpreters provided for Tibetan defendants who did not speak Mandarin." It added, "Court decisions, proclamations, and other judicial documents, however, generally were not published in Tibetan."

Similarly, the report highlights the absence of adequate opportunities for Tibetan children to study Tibetan in schools. Chinese policies have forced the closure of many village and monastic schools and the transfer of students, including elementary school students, to boarding schools in towns and cities. The report says many of the boarding schools did not adequately care for and supervise their younger students. "This policy also resulted in diminished acquisition of the Tibetan language and culture by removing Tibetan children from their homes and communities where the Tibetan language is used," the report says.

This report also says that throughout 2018, "no known Tibetan Plateau-based international NGOs operating in the country." This indicated increased restrictions on NGOs during the year.

According to information available in the political prisoner database of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China 2018 report, "there were 303 Tibetan political prisoners known to be detained or imprisoned, most of them in Tibetan areas." In contrast, in its 2017 report, the State Department said there were 507 Tibetan political prisoners. The report does not explain whether the difference in the number of Tibetan prisoners since the previous year is on account of release or other factors. ICT has no information about 204 Tibetans having been released between 2017 and 2018.