



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

New State Dept. report shows US is serious about ending isolation of Tibet for Americans

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March 25, 2019

A new State Department report denouncing China for “systematically” impeding Americans’ travel to Tibet shows the US government is serious about implementing the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act (RATA). The report also clearly shows that the widespread discrimination, and in some cases amounting almost to harassment, perpetrated by Beijing against Americans to enforce the complete isolation of Tibet from the outside world, won’t be accepted any longer in Washington.

The report, released March 25, 2019, documents outrageous attempts by Chinese authorities to keep Americans out of Tibet in 2018, including repeatedly denying requests to visit from the US ambassador and other US officials, directly threatening to expel journalists and cruelly preventing Tibetan-Americans from seeing their homeland, which has been in the grips of a brutal Chinese occupation for the past 60 years.

The report is the first significant outcome of the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act (RATA), which was [signed into law on Dec. 19, 2018](#) and takes aim at China’s double standard of denying US diplomats, reporters and tourists entry to the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and other Tibetan areas under Chinese control even though Chinese bureaucrats, state media and ordinary citizens are free to travel throughout the US.

The first standalone Tibet legislation to ever make it through Congress, RATA requires the State Department to revoke or deny US visas to the Chinese officials substantially involved in creating and executing policies that keep Americans out of Tibet.

Implementing reciprocity

The department is required to provide a list of banned Chinese officials, and of those who were substantially involved in the formulation or execution of policies to restrict access of US citizens to Tibet by the end of 2019. This report is the first major requirement of RATA.

“The report from the State Department shows that the United States government is serious about implementing the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act, and that systematic discrimination against US citizens won’t be accepted in silence any longer,” said Matteo Mecacci, president of the International Campaign for Tibet, an international advocacy organization based in Washington, DC.

Mecacci added: “The demand for China to respect reciprocity with the US has now moved past the issue of trade to freedom of movement. Such demand should expand to other civil liberties such as freedom of information and academic freedom. Now, unless the Chinese government stops its isolation of Tibet from the outside world, Chinese officials will most likely be denied visas to the

United States by the State Department, and this will happen with the full support of the US Congress and the American people.”

Egregious examples

The report provides many egregious examples of China blocking Americans’ access to Tibet in 2018:

- The Chinese government denied five of nine official requests from the US diplomatic mission in China to visit the TAR, including the US Ambassador’s request to visit. Of the four that were approved, two were for routine consular access and one was to help plan a visit by the ambassador, which Chinese officials cancelled twice without providing any reason or alternative dates.
- US officials who did get into Tibetan regions were subjected to “conspicuous monitoring” meant to “intimidate” them. Chinese-appointed minders restricted the officials’ movement and prevented them from meeting and speaking with local people.
- China heavily restricted access by US journalists to the TAR and directly threatened to expel American media reporting on developments in the TAR.
- The Chinese government organized just one trip to the TAR for international journalists, allowing two US outlets, Bloomberg and NBC, each to send a single journalist. While in the TAR, their movements were monitored and controlled at all times. Besides this one brief trip, China rejected all other American journalists’ requests to visit and report in the TAR, according to the Foreign Correspondents’ Club of China.
- Tibetan-Americans applying for Chinese visas faced a stricter screening process than did other Americans. Also, there were several reported incidents of US citizens of Tibetan heritage being denied entry to China even when they had valid Chinese visas and travel documents.
- Members of the Tibetan-American community reported self-censoring their behavior in the US because they feared retribution against their family members in Tibet and because they were afraid of losing future access to Tibet.
- The report compares the level of access to Tibet provided to Americans in 2018 to 2017, and found that the situation in 2018 worsened with increasing restrictions imposed.

[Read the State Department report.](#)