



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Congress will “never” recognize Chinese-appointed Dalai Lama, Senator says

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- Sen. Cory Gardner today said Congress would never recognize China’s choice of the next Dalai Lama.
- The Chinese government recently claimed it would determine the Tibetan spiritual leader’s reincarnation.
- The 83-year-old Dalai Lama has said his reincarnation might be found outside Chinese-occupied Tibet.

A US Senator today strongly rejected the Chinese government’s claim it will decide the reincarnation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the exiled spiritual leader of Tibet.

“Let me be very clear: The United States Congress will never recognize a Dalai Lama that is selected by the Chinese,” Sen. Cory Gardner (R-Colo.) said at hearing of the Senate Foreign Relations Asia Subcommittee, a key Congressional body that oversees US policy in Asia. Gardner is the subcommittee chairman.

Gardner added: “His Holiness has laid out [his] succession. Only then will the US follow that succession.”

Dalai Lama reincarnation

The issue of choosing the next Dalai Lama has been in the news lately since the current Dalai Lama, now 83, said last month that he might not reincarnate at all or that his reincarnation might be found in India, where the Dalai Lama has lived since Chinese troops forced him to flee Tibet 60 years ago.

According to Reuters, His Holiness also cautioned China against trying to appoint its own Dalai Lama, saying, “in case you see two Dalai Lamas come, one from here, in free country [India], one chosen by Chinese, then nobody will trust, nobody will respect [the one chosen by China].”

In response to those remarks, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson absurdly claimed that the Dalai Lama’s reincarnation must follow China’s laws and regulations.

China’s goal is to name its own Dalai Lama in the hopes of splintering the Tibetan Buddhist community and gaining soft power over Buddhists worldwide.

Stronger rejection

Gardner had previously said that Congress would reject China’s choice of a Dalai Lama during a hearing in December 2018 at which Laura Stone, a senior official in the State Department, said the

Dalai Lama's reincarnation is "the kind of issue that we are watching very closely and at very senior levels."

During today's hearing, Gardner was even more direct, saying the US will follow the Dalai Lama's 2011 statement about his succession, which was introduced into the record at the hearing by Bhuchung K. Tsering, vice president of the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT).

Tsering discussed the Tibetan people's continuing loyalty to the Dalai Lama and urged the US government to make Tibet a key element in its strategy for the Indo-Pacific region.

During the hearing, Sens. Edward J. Markey (D-Mass.) and Chris Coons (D-Del.) also spoke in support of the Tibetan people.

ICT quote

"China's plans to control the Dalai Lama's reincarnation will not be accepted by Tibetan Buddhists inside or outside Tibet. It will also be rejected by the international community. By attempting to select the next Dalai Lama, China aims to control Tibetan Buddhism and its many institutions in the Indo-Pacific region with clear geopolitical implications. If China is not challenged vigorously by free countries, its plan will affect not only the religious freedom of millions of Tibetan Buddhist followers worldwide, but also the national security interests of the United States and countries in the region." — Bhuchung K. Tsering, ICT vice president