



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

State Dept.'s 2018 religious freedom report calls out China's systematic repression of Tibetan Buddhists

<https://savetibet.org/state-dept-s-2018-religious-freedom-report-calls-out-chinas-systematic-repression-of-tibetan-buddhists/>

June 25, 2019

China continues to intensify its crackdown on Tibetan Buddhism, which last year included such alleged crimes as the sexual abuse of nuns, political re-education of monks and nuns, forced disappearances, torture and prolonged detentions without trial, according to the State Department's latest international religious freedom report.

The International Religious Freedom Report for 2018 states that in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and other Tibetan areas under Chinese rule, "authorities continued to engage in widespread interference in religious practices, especially in Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and nunneries."

During a press conference for the report's release on June 21, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the Chinese government's "intense persecution of many faiths, Falun Gong practitioners, Christians and Tibetan Buddhists among them, is the norm."

Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom Sam Brownback added: "China has declared war on faith."

Attacks on religion

In 2018, officials continued their years-long project of evicting about 3,000 monks and nuns from the Buddhist institutes at Larung Gar and Yachen Gar. Many expelled nuns and monks have been subjected to chilling 're-education' programs.

The report says the Chinese government often cited national security concerns as a pretext for oppressing Tibetan Buddhists. For example, authorities falsely claimed that Buddhist monasteries engage in separatist activities and call for Tibetan independence.

According to the report, the government also repeatedly denigrated the Dalai Lama, whom Beijing accuses of being a 'splittist'—even he though he advocates a Middle Way Approach that would leave Tibet as part of the People's Republic of China but provide genuine autonomy to Tibetans.

The report also says Tibetan Buddhists faced discrimination in hiring and travel.

Extreme extent

Some of the attacks on Tibetan Buddhists cited in the report confirm the extent to which the Chinese government has gone to try to eradicate Tibetan Buddhism from Tibet.

International Campaign for Tibet
1825 Jefferson Place NW | Washington, DC | 20036 | USA
Phone: (202) 785-1515 | Fax: (202) 785-4343
Press Contact: press@savetibet.org

The report notes that nuns were allegedly sexually abused in a re-education camp in the TAR.

Also, Tibetans across many areas of Tibet continued to be forbidden from holding a picture of the Dalai Lama. Children were prevented from attending religious programs or discouraged by the authorities from pursuing monastic education, while the Chinese Communist Party continued to claim the right to select and install the reincarnation of Tibetan Lamas.

The number of restrictions imposed on the practice of Tibetan Buddhism in Tibet make Tibetan religious leaders fear for the survival of this ancient culture in Tibet, according to the report.

Prevented from talking to US officials

China went to great lengths to prevent Tibetan Buddhists from sharing their stories with American officials last year, according to the report.

- In one instance, authorities hurriedly removed the abbot of a well-known Tibetan monastery from a meeting with the US Consul General in Chengdu.
- On at least three other occasions, Chinese officials “threatened Tibetan Buddhist leaders and forced them to cancel meetings with high-level US government visitors to southwest China at the last minute.”
- In April 2018, Chinese authorities interrogated a Tibetan abbot and delayed his return to his home monastery after they learned of his meeting with a US diplomat.

These attempts by China to isolate Tibetans from the outside world are part of why last year the US passed the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act, which pressures the Chinese government to give US diplomats, journalists and ordinary citizens the same level of access to Tibet that Chinese citizens have to the US.

ICT quote

Matteo Mecacci, ICT president:

“The International Campaign for Tibet thanks the State Department for highlighting and detailing China’s systematic repression of Tibetan Buddhists in its International Religious Freedom Report for 2018. We now call on the US government to continue to push China at the highest levels to end its human rights abuses against the Tibetan people and engage with the envoys of the Dalai Lama in negotiations on Tibet’s future, as required by the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002.

“We also demand the Chinese government immediately stop its attacks on Tibetan Buddhism and allow Tibetans to practice their religion freely and safely and respect its international human rights obligations.”