



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Reciprocal access to Tibet goes global: UK lawmaker introduces legislation inspired by US law

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[View a video by MP Tim Loughton on his Facebook page »](#)

When the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act (RATA) became law in the US in December 2018, its supporters hoped it would spark a global movement to pressure China to end its unjust isolation of Tibet.

This week, those hopes were validated when a UK lawmaker introduced a bill in Parliament calling on Chinese officials to give British diplomats, journalists and ordinary citizens access to Tibet or be denied entry to the UK.

The proposed law “mirrors the legislation that has already been [passed unanimously by the US Congress](#),” Conservative Party MP Tim Loughton said as he [submitted the bill](#) on July 23, 2019 in the House of Commons. “It is time for us, in Europe and the United Kingdom, to take a similar stand to show categorically to China that its continued abuses in Tibet do not go unnoticed or unappreciated, and that we will tolerate them no more.”

Canada Senate motion

Loughton’s bill follows a [Canadian Senate motion introduced in March](#) by Sen. Thanh Hai Ngo calling for Canada to receive reciprocal diplomatic access to Tibet without limitations.

Ngo’s motion also addresses China’s [extreme human rights violations in Tibet](#), a historically independent country that China has brutally occupied for [the past 60 years](#).

According to Ngo’s testimony on the Senate floor, the motion calls on Beijing to respect Tibetans’ linguistic, [religious](#) and other freedoms; release all [Tibetan political prisoners](#); and renew dialogue with Tibetan leaders based on good faith and on the Dalai Lama’s [Middle Way Approach](#) to resolving the crisis in Tibet.

Reciprocity emerging as key tool

The legislations advanced in Canada and UK show that reciprocal access to Tibet—which [went through a process in the US Congress for years](#) before it was passed—is now being seen as a key vehicle for governments to hold China accountable for its policies in Tibet.

Reciprocal access is based on the fact that just as Chinese citizens are free to travel throughout the US and other democratic countries, and so people from those countries should be free to travel in Tibet.

“Chinese authorities take advantage of our freedoms in the west to travel freely and spread their propaganda but routinely refuse to reciprocate,” Loughton said during his testimony this week. “That must stop.”

Chinese intimidation tactics

Loughton, chair of the all-party group for Tibet in Parliament, also discussed his attendance at the [7th World Parliamentarians' Convention on Tibet in Riga, Latvia](#) in May.

According to Loughton, days before the convention, he received a hostile phone call from a senior official at the Chinese embassy in London.

“Basically, I was told, ‘You don’t want to go Riga, Mr. Loughton, do you?’” Loughton recalled. “I responded politely that his entreaties had made me even more determined to attend the convention and I asked why, rather than intimidating parliamentarians, the Chinese government do not sit down to talk to us.”

Loughton said he invited the Chinese ambassador to attend a meeting of the all-party group for Tibet and stated that members of the group would be delighted to be hosted in Tibet to see the situation there firsthand. He did not receive a reply from the ambassador.

“We should not be surprised...by that behavior by the Chinese,” Loughton said. “Their record on human rights, cultural tolerance and the environment is deplorable, which is why they do not want people from outside finding out what goes on in the inside.”

ICT quote

Bhuchung K. Tsering, vice president of the International Campaign for Tibet:

“As MP Loughton noted, the Chinese government cynically exploits the freedoms provided by democratic countries to spread its deceptive propaganda and try to cover up the truth about Tibet, all while isolating the Tibetan people from the rest of the world.”

“The proposed legislations in UK and Canada show that unless China reciprocates and provides access to Tibet, it will impact their bilateral relations. The International Campaign for Tibet commends MP Loughton and Sen. Ngo for advancing their own versions of the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act, and we look forward to seeing other countries take up similar legislations that uphold the interest of their citizens.”