

TIBET BRIEF

JULY 2019

A REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

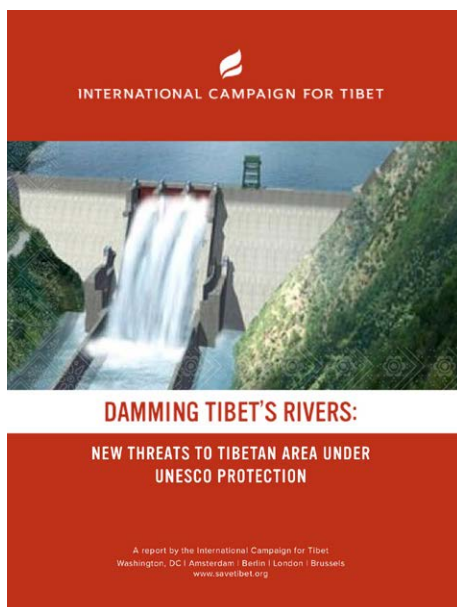
NEW ICT REPORT REVEALS HOW DAMS WILL HARM A UNESCO-PROTECTED AREA OF TIBET

A NEW REPORT FROM THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET (ICT) REVEALS THE CONSTRUCTION OF DAMS AND INFRASTRUCTURE IN TIBET THAT WILL POTENTIALLY FORCE THE RELOCATION OF THOUSANDS OF LOCAL PEOPLE. THE REPORT ALSO EXPLAINS HOW THE DAMS MAY IMPACT THE BIODIVERSE AREA OF TIBET KNOWN AS THE “THREE PARALLEL RIVERS,” WHICH IS UNDER UNESCO PROTECTION.

The report, *Damming Tibet's Rivers: New Threats to Tibetan Area under UNESCO Protection*, released on 30 May, features research and analysis showing that several new dams are either under construction, or in the planning stage, around the unique location where the Yangtze, Mekong and Salween rivers run parallel to one another, in violation of environmental protection practices and norms.

The region, known as the “Three Parallel Rivers” area, is one of the world’s most biologically diverse temperate regions, and was named a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2003. But Chinese development projects in the region — which also include new mining, major infrastructure construction and mass tourism projects — threaten to erode its landscape and worsen the spiraling environmental crisis in Tibet.

To make matters worse, Chinese sources say thousands of people will be forced to relocate as a result of the dam construction, including possibly as many as 100,000 people because of the Longpan/Tiger Leaping Gorge dam over the Yangtze River, and more than 58,000 people because of hydropower projects in Qinghai Province.



As yet UNESCO has not seriously confronted these worrying developments near the Three Parallel Rivers area, and its sensitive relationship with organizations closely linked to the Chinese state should be of great concern. In a [statement](#) ahead of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee session in Azerbaijan last month, ICT expressed its worries about the UN body’s [draft decision](#) on the state of this unique landscape that largely displays indifference toward the

impact of these damaging projects. Drafted with UNESCO’s backing and support from its expert bodies, the decision in principle surrenders to the Chinese government’s strategy of claiming UNESCO protection for the region while exploiting its natural resources at the same time.

Click [here](#) to download the report.



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RIGHTS GROUPS RAISE CHINA'S SYSTEMATIC HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN TIBET AT UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

CHINA'S ONGOING AND SYSTEMATIC HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS IN TIBET WERE ONCE AGAIN RAISED AT THE LAST SESSION OF THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL IN GENEVA, BY BOTH STATES AND HUMAN RIGHTS GROUPS.

Speaking on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights during the session's general debate on 3 July, Vincent Metten, EU policy director of the International Campaign for Tibet, stressed the continued importance of referring expressly to the human rights situation in Tibet, particularly because of China's efforts to isolate and silence Tibetans. Once again he urged for unfettered and independent access to Tibetan areas to be given to UN experts.



Vincent Metten, EU policy director of the International Campaign for Tibet, speaks at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. (Photo: Screenshot from UN Web TV)

Metten's statement followed specific expressed concerns about the situation in Tibet by the European Union, the Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany and Sweden. In particular, the [European Union](#) called on China to respect human rights "most notably in Xinjiang and Tibet" and

said it continued to be "gravely concerned" about the detention of a number of Human Rights Defenders, including Tibetan language rights advocate Tashi Wangchuk. The Czech Republic also called for Wangchuk's release, and Germany pointed to the "systematic discrimination" suffered by Tibetans. The United Kingdom also expressed concerns about the state of freedom of belief in China, including for Buddhists.

One day earlier, Metten also participated in a side event on the issue of religious freedom in Tibet hosted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, where he gave an overview of China's repression of Tibetan Buddhists. He explained how China has "Sinicized" — a term meaning to bring

something under Chinese control — and securitized religion for political purposes and expressed concerns about China's attempts to interfere in the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama. The event, well attended by representatives of several governments' permanent missions and NGOs, also included a presentation by Ven. Lobsang Dorjee, director of the Central Association of Panchen Lama.

As in recent Human Rights Council sessions, China deployed aggressive tactics to counter criticism of its record, including biased statements by the China Society for Human Rights Studies, a group that calls itself an NGO but is backed by Beijing. The organization also sponsored a number of side events aimed at promoting China's human rights "progress" and "protection" of ethnic minorities.

The full statement delivered by Vincent Metten and the comments of states that specifically referred to Tibet are available [here](#).



Over 50 diplomats and NGO representatives attended the side-event on religious repression in Tibet.

US AMBASSADOR TO CHINA GRANTED RARE VISIT TO TIBET

THE US AMBASSADOR TO CHINA, TERRY BRANSTAD, WAS GRANTED A RARE VISIT TO TIBET BETWEEN 19-25 MAY, DURING WHICH HE REAFFIRMED HIS COUNTRY'S THREE FUNDAMENTAL POSITIONS ON THE ISSUE: DIALOGUE TO RESOLVE THE CONFLICT, RELIGIOUS FREEDOM FOR THE TIBETAN PEOPLE AND ACCESS TO TIBET.



The US Embassy in China posted this photo of Ambassador Branstad in Tibet on its WeChat account.

As the State Department's [recent report on access to Tibet exposed](#), Chinese officials twice cancelled the ambassador's visit in 2018 without providing any reason or alternate dates. But following last year's ratification of the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act, and despite [China's response to the legislation](#), Mr. Branstad was finally allowed to enter Tibet - the first visit there by a US ambassador since 2015.

According to a statement released by the US Embassy in China on 25 May, Branstad expressed concerns about the Chinese government's interference in the religious freedom of Tibetan Buddhists, and encouraged the Chinese government "to engage in substantive dialogue with the Dalai Lama or his representatives, without preconditions, to seek a settlement that resolves differences." He further raised American concern about the lack of access

to the Tibetan Autonomous Region.

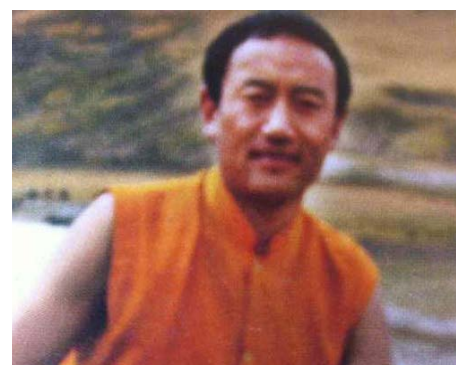
While the US statement did not stipulate how much access their ambassador had been given to visit places, or indeed contact with Tibetans, Radio Free Asia's Tibetan service reported on 25 May that ordinary Tibetans were not aware of Branstad's trip and said Chinese authorities had kept the visit secret. This indicates the ambassador did not have the opportunity to "make his own unbiased observations." On 28 May, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman was nevertheless keen to push the narrative that Branstad "made positive comments on Tibet's economic and social development." The spokesman further stressed China's opposition "to any foreign interference in China's internal affairs and the affairs of the Tibet Autonomous Region," which the media interpreted as a rejection of the call for the resumption of the Sino-Tibetan dialogue.

POLITICAL PRISONER FOCUS

RELEASE OF NGAWANG GYALTSEN

ACCORDING TO [A REPORT BY RADIO FREE ASIA \(RFA\)](#), A TIBETAN MONK DETAINED ON SUSPICION OF ACTIVITIES THAT OPPOSE CHINESE RULE IN TIBETAN AREAS WAS FREED FROM THE INFAMOUS DRAPCHI PRISON ON 7 MARCH AFTER SERVING HIS FULL SENTENCE IN CHINESE CUSTODY.

Ngawang Gyaltzen had been arrested by Chinese police on 24 February, 2015, in Sog county in the Nagchu prefecture of the Tibet Autonomous Region, and according to a report by the Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) at the time, was initially considered "disappeared". He was later tried and sentenced to four years in prison on unclear charges.



According to sources, Gyaltzen had confronted Chinese government workers involved in "patriotic education" programs on several occasions while living in Nagchu's Shag Rongpo monastery, which he was subsequently forced to leave. He was also subjected to tight restrictions on his freedom of movement and communications before eventually being taken away by police "late at night".

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News of his discharge from prison was delayed for almost three months due to

intense monitoring of communication networks and harsh penalties that await those revealing any information that the Chinese authorities want suppressed.

News of his release only became known in a 26 June press release from the London-based *Free Tibet* after the organization received confirmation of his release.

MONKS AND NUNS EXPELLED FROM YACHEN GAR FORCED TO UNDERGO “POLITICAL REEDUCATION”

A NEW PHASE OF THOUSANDS OF EXPULSIONS OF NUNS AND MONKS HAS BEGUN AT THE WELL-KNOWN RELIGIOUS INSTITUTE OF YACHEN GAR IN EASTERN TIBET, WITH REPORTS THAT THOSE EVICTED ARE NOW BEING SUBJECTED TO “POLITICAL RE-EDUCATION” IN DETENTION IN EXTRA-LEGAL FACILITIES WHERE THERE IS A HIGH RISK OF TORTURE.



An excavator sits atop a recently razed residential area of Yachen Gar in Sichuan's Kardze prefecture in August, 2017. (Photo courtesy by an RFA listener)

According to a Tibetan source speaking to Radio Free Asia, the Chinese authorities have ordered that the number of religious practitioners at Yachen Gar should not now exceed 4,700 – compared to an estimated 10,000 monks and nuns at any one time who have been studying religious texts and meditation practice there. As many as 3500 may have been expelled since May in a highly systematic official operation focusing on those who arrived at Yachen Gar from outside Sichuan Province.

The same Tibetan source said: “Those monks and nuns who were forcefully returned to their birthplaces have now been rounded up by local Chinese police and made to attend political re-education classes [at detention centers] in their hometowns.” Once there, the monks and nuns were forced to take off their religious robes, to denounce the Dalai Lama on a daily basis, and to memorize communist propaganda phrases on which they were later tested. Their mobile phones were also confiscated to prevent them from communicating with friends and families

outside. “These monks and nuns could be held for political re-education for several months before they are released to their families,” said RFA’s source. “After that, they will be restricted from re-enrolling with any other monasteries or relocating elsewhere.”

According to a Tibetan source, after political re-education during the day, nuns in one of the centers have been compelled to watch Chinese propaganda films showing Chinese soldiers winning victories in battle during the war between China and Japan. Due to the combined stress, some of the nuns had broken down and wept. Believing the nuns’ tears to be evidence of disloyalty to China, guards then physically attacked the women, “beating them black and blue,” the source told Radio Free Asia’s Tibetan service. “Afterward, the nuns could hardly stand up because the torture was so severe.”

The demolitions and expulsions at Yachen Gar, following the same harsh approach at Larung Gar in Sichuan, involve increasingly aggressive measures in order to curb and manage the growing influence and number of monks and nuns – both Chinese and Tibetan – at these important monastic centers of study and Buddhist ethics in eastern Tibet, the largest such institutes in the world.

ICT COMMENDS OUTGOING EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S TIBET INTEREST GROUP

AT A MEETING OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT'S TIBET INTEREST GROUP (TIG) IN BRUSSELS ON 26 JUNE – THE LAST IN THE PARLIAMENT'S 8TH TERM – THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET EXPRESSED ITS DEEP APPRECIATION FOR THE DETERMINED AND SUSTAINED SUPPORT OF ITS MEMBERS FOR THE TIBETAN PEOPLE, AND ITS HOPE FOR THE GROUP TO BE REINSTATED IN THE NEXT TERM.



Participants at the last TIG meeting in the European Parliament in Brussels on 26 June 2019. ICT offered a Thangka to the Chair Thomas Mann in appreciation for his staunch commitment to the Tibetan cause.

The meeting, mainly aimed at highlighting the achievements of the group in the past four years, expressed gratitude for the important efforts of its members to keep the Tibet issue on the European Union's agenda and welcoming new MEPs attending the meeting.

In particular, participants thanked German Member of the European Parliament Thomas Mann, Chair of the TIG since 1999, for his unwavering support and dedication to the Tibet movement. It was his - as well as TIG Vice-Chair Mr. Sogor's - last TIG meeting, as they will not sit in the next European Parliament. Participants also discussed plans to reestablish the TIG in the next parliamentary term, which officially started on 2 July following the European elections held at the end of May. Several newly elected MEPs present at the meeting showed a keen interest

in keeping the TIG active in the future.

Founded at the start of the third European Parliament's legislature in 1989, the TIG has been an essential platform of support for Tibet in Europe. It has done a great deal to create awareness within the European political realm concerning the plight of the Tibetan people – including, for example, by organizing regular conferences, exhibitions and film screenings, and delivering statements on Tibet during parliamentary debates. Its reestablishment following the 2019 EU elections will be crucial, as the group is essential in ensuring discussion at the EU level in support of the non-violent struggle of Tibetans for human rights and justice, and ICT hopes that many new Members of the European Parliament will join it.

READING SUGGESTION

EUROPE, CHINA, AND THE LIMITS OF NORMATIVE POWER,

BY ZSUZSA ANNA FERENCZY



Europe, China, and the Limits of Normative Power is a groundbreaking book, offering insights into European influence regarding China's development, during a period when Europe confronts its most serious political,

social, and economic crises of the post-war period. Considering Europe's identity and its future international relevance, this book examines the extent to which Europe's multi-layered governance structure, the normative divergence overshadowing EU-China relations and Europe's crises continue to shape - and often limit - Europe's capacity to inspire China's development. Combining original research, interviews with EU and Chinese officials and academics, and practical experience of European institutional practice, Ferenczy examines EU-China relations in light of recent EU institutional reforms and the EU's continuous efforts to shape a common external policy vision. Drawing on the assessment of Europe as a 'normative power' this book reflects on the notions of European identity and global influence in the midst of substantial shifts in power. As Europe grapples with internal challenges, and China emerges as a global power, Ferenczy avoids the trap of dismissing Europe as facing inevitable decline on the one hand and uncritical affirmations of China's emergence as a global power on the other. Instead, taking both a constructivist and realist approach, *Europe, China, and the Limits of Normative Power* highlights the power of ideas at the heart of European normative power, as well as the power of interest, which is thoroughly relevant to China's global aspirations.

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Click [here](#) to buy this book.

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UPCOMING EVENTS



> **EARLY SEPTEMBER**

Work starts at the newly elected European Parliament

> **9-27 SEPTEMBER**

42nd session of the UN Human Rights Council

> **21-25 OCTOBER**

FIDH Congress in Taipei, Taiwan