

TIBET BRIEF

NOVEMBER 2019

A REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

DELEGATION OF TIBETAN PARLIAMENTARIANS VISITS EUROPE

ON 24 NOVEMBER, FOUR MEMBERS OF THE TIBETAN PARLIAMENT IN EXILE CONCLUDED AN ADVOCACY TOUR THAT TOOK THEM TO FRANCE, BELGIUM AND THE NETHERLANDS.



The four members of the delegation and ICT's EU Policy Director Vincent Metten at the European Parliament with MEPs Isabel Santos and Manuel Pizarro on 19 November.

The visit, co-organized by the Office of Tibet in Brussels and the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), gave the four Tibetan parliamentarians - Tsering Lhamo, head of the delegation, Ven. Kunga Sotop, Lobsang Dakpa and Ven. Gowo Lobsang Pende - the chance to raise awareness of the situation in Tibet and seek support from the parliaments and governments of the countries visited.

During its week-long tour the delegation met with EU and governments' officials,

members of the European and the French, Belgium and Dutch parliaments - including MEPs Isabel Santos, Manuel Pizarro, Martin Horwood, Mikulas Peksa and Fabio Massimo Castaldo, French Senators Guillaume Arnell and Maurice Antiste, Belgium MP Samuel Cogolati and Dutch MPs Martijn van Helvert and Bram van Ojik - as well as Tibetan communities and civil society groups. The discussions focused on three main topics: the repression of

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Tibetan Buddhism (namely the control of monasteries, the detention and torture of Tibetan monks and nuns and the succession of the Dalai Lama); the assaults against Tibetan culture and identity, with a special focus on the Tibetan language; and the environmental situation in Tibet, including global warming, Chinese water management policies, threats against biodiversity on the Tibetan Plateau and the forced settlement of nomads. In addition, they highlighted the difficulties in getting access to Tibet, in particular for Tibetan citizens in Europe, and called on members of parliaments to adopt legislation similar to the US Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act.

“The visit of Tibetan parliamentarians represents a great opportunity for direct interactions between the Central Tibetan Administration and national as well as European institutions,” said ICT Europe’s Executive Director Tsering Jampa, who added that European interlocutors recognized the urgency of the messages delivered by the delegation.



The delegation meets with the Tibetan Community in Amsterdam on 24 November.

More details about this visit in our full article [here](#).

CHINA SETS PRECONDITIONS FOR TIBETAN COLLEGE GRADS TO CRITICIZE THE DALAI LAMA TO GET PUBLIC JOBS

NEW JOB POSTINGS REVEAL THAT CHINESE AUTHORITIES ARE NOW REQUIRING COLLEGE GRADUATES FROM THE TIBET AUTONOMOUS REGION (TAR) APPLYING FOR JOBS IN PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS TO “EXPOSE AND CRITICIZE THE DALAI LAMA” AND “HAVE CLEAR AND FIRM POLITICAL PRINCIPLES.”



A classroom in a school in Tibet's regional capital Lhasa shown in a 2015 photo. (Photo: AP)

Beginning in April 2019, TAR authorities announced the recruitment of college graduates for various public positions, including civil servants, teachers and grassroots workers. But in a series of recent announcements and recruitment notices, TAR officials have introduced new repressive conditions for job candidates, who must “expose and criticize the Dalai Lama” and display loyalty to the ruling Chinese Communist Party.

The requirements for Tibetan graduates go far beyond the language in a general [college graduate recruitment announcement](#) posted by the People’s Republic of China’s Ministry of Natural Resources in 2019, which applies to people across China and requires only that applicants “*resolutely support the Party’s line, principles, and policies, comply with the law, and behave properly.*” The general announcement also refers to a “qualification review” candidates will have to go through.

The [TAR announcements](#), in contrast, are more explicit and state that candidates also have to pass a political review, and that those deemed insufficiently loyal to China’s authoritarian rule in Tibet may not be hired.

These new requirements emphasize how Tibetans are being forced to perform acts of loyalty to the Chinese state and to disavow any allegiance to their spiritual leader – in total violation of their right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, as protected in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. *“Being forced to denounce the Dalai Lama – a Nobel Peace Laureate, who for Tibetans is a source of pride and great inspiration – to get a job, is an unnecessary humiliation and discrimination,”* said ICT’s President Matteo Mecacci. He added that it *“only hardens the Tibetan spirit of resistance, and certainly does not provide legitimacy to Chinese rule in Tibet.”*

TIBETANS LOSING SAFETY IN NEPAL AFTER NEW TREATIES WITH CHINA

AN UNPRECEDENTED SECURITY CLAMPDOWN TOOK PLACE IN THE NEPALESE CAPITAL KATHMANDU PRIOR TO A VISIT BY CHINESE PARTY SECRETARY AND PRESIDENT XI JINPING'S IN OCTOBER, RAISING ALARM AMONG NEPALIS AND INCREASING CONCERN ABOUT THE FUTURE OF TIBETANS IN THE COUNTRY.



The Nepalese and Chinese foreign ministers exchange an agreement text in the presence of President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister K.P.Oli.

An estimated 27 people, mostly Tibetans, were detained prior to Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Nepal in mid-October. The Nepali human rights organization HURON reported that two were Tibetan shopkeepers whose merchandise included items with Tibetan flags or logos, with police describing their detentions as a "threat to security." HURON also reported that in the days leading up to Xi's arrival and during the visit, many streets in Kathmandu where Tibetans live were deserted as people stayed home for fear of arrest, and police were stationed outside almost all the monasteries in the Kathmandu valley. Even Tibetan homes for the elderly were kept under close watch, and the Tibetan refugee settlement of Jawalakhel was put under virtual lockdown. In addition to the pre-emptive detentions of Tibetan refugees, Nepali citizens and other foreigners were detained. A 14-year-old Nepali schoolgirl wearing a shirt with the slogan "Free Tibet" and a 65-year-old woman carrying a bag with Tibetan lettering were also detained.

According to sources in Nepal, all have now been released.

Tibet and Nepal have a long history of cultural and religious exchange, intermarriage and trade across the Himalayas, with more than 10 per cent of Nepalese citizens practicing Tibetan Buddhism. Nepal's communities along the northern border share with many other Himalayan people a spiritual devotion to the Dalai Lama.

But where Tibetan refugees in Nepal were once safe from China's reach, the Chinese government's new, deeper and more complex engagement with Nepal renders Tibetan refugees increasingly vulnerable.

The situation could indeed worsen after the signing, during Xi's visit, of a Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters between China and Nepal. Nepalese lawyers have warned this enables the signatories to serve subpoenas and collect evidence and could be used by China to

target and punish Tibetan refugees in Nepal. Indra Prasad Aryal, chairperson of HURON, told the Nepali newspaper The Himalayan Times that the Treaty was a prelude to the signing of an extradition treaty with China. "China wants to take Chinese political and religious dissidents from Nepal and punish them in their own country," he said. "Our government, which has entered a gentleman's agreement with [the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees] to provide safe passage to Tibetan refugees, needs to tread carefully."

DESPITE DAMNING UN CLIMATE REPORT, CHINA REFUSES TO MAKE CHANGES IN TIBET

IN SEPTEMBER, THE UNITED NATIONS INTERGOVERNMENTAL PANEL ON CLIMATE CHANGE (IPCC) RELEASED AN ALARMING NEW REPORT FOCUSING IN PARTICULAR ON THE PLANET'S OCEANS AND THE ICE LOCKED AROUND THE POLES AND IN MOUNTAIN AREAS. BUT WHILE PRESIDENT XI JINPING SEEKS TO PRESENT CHINA AS AN "ECOLOGICAL CIVILIZATION", CHINESE POLICIES, INCLUDING ON THE TIBETAN PLATEAU, CONTINUE TO EXACERBATE THE DETRIMENTAL IMPACTS DETAILED IN THE DOCUMENT.

The IPCC report, which offers the most authoritative statement on the critical

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12TH UN FORUM ON MINORITIES HELD IN GENEVA

ON 28 AND 29 NOVEMBER, THE UNITED NATIONS HELD THE 12TH SESSION OF ITS FORUM ON MINORITY ISSUES IN GENEVA, UNDER THE THEME "EDUCATION, LANGUAGE AND THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF MINORITIES."



ICT Brussels' Policy and Advocacy Officer Mélanie Blondelle in Room XX of the Palais des Nations in Geneva, where the Forum took place.

The Forum – which has taken place every year since 2008 – aims to provide a platform for promoting dialogue and cooperation on issues pertaining to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. Around 600 participants from all over the world attended this year's session, including minority representatives, academics and experts on minority issues, states, NGOs and UN bodies and agencies. Together, they discussed practices, challenges, opportunities and initiatives in addressing education in, and teaching of, minority languages, in line with the principles and rights enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities and other relevant international instruments.

ICT participated in this session, and delivered a statement on the difficulties that Tibetans in China face to learn in their mother tongue and the negative human rights impacts of Tibetan language discrimination. *"The lack of possibilities for Tibetans to study in their mother tongue place them at an educational and economic disadvantage."* said ICT's Policy and Advocacy officer Mélanie Blondelle, who delivered the statement. *"Native-language instruction leads to higher academic performance, which can better equip Tibetan*

students when competing with Han students for tertiary and career opportunities. The devaluation of the Tibetan language is also a clear violation of their cultural rights, as the Tibetan language – one of Asia's four oldest and most original languages – is fundamental to Tibetan identity, culture and religion."

The recommendations on how to address effectively the issue of education in minority languages identified during the Forum will be compiled in a report, which will be presented by the UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues at the 43rd session of the Human Rights Council in March 2020.

[Read ICT's full statement at the 12th Forum on Minority Issues.](#)

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issues facing the planet, was released on 25 September as world leaders met at the UN Climate Action Summit in New York. During the summit, China, the world's largest greenhouse gas emitter, failed to make any concrete commitments to reduce its emissions – the main step required of all governments to prevent runaway climate change from occurring once temperatures rise beyond 1.5 degrees C – pretexting it was up to developed countries to lead on this front.

One of the most alarming aspects of the new IPCC report is the issue of runoff from melting glaciers on the Tibetan Plateau, which could lead to a water crisis in the region. Despite the dangers posed to this fragile, high-altitude ecosystem and a looming water crisis, earlier this year China announced a massive expansion of hydro dams and power grids on Tibet's rivers, especially on the Drichu (Chinese: Yangtze) and its tributaries, to impound, divert and extract more water.

Highlighting the importance of local and indigenous knowledge, the IPCC report cites the example of the people of Ladakh—an Indian region that borders Tibet— who create ice stupas that are used as ice melt in the spring when young crops need watering well before the summer monsoon arrives. In Tibet, in contrast, China's policies continue to exclude rather than embrace the specialist knowledge of pastoralists in helping to rehabilitate degrading areas, contrary to worldwide experience in community-based landscape restoration.

SWEDEN AND THE NETHERLANDS ADOPT STRATEGIES ON CHINA

IN RECENT MONTHS, THE GROWING ROLE OF CHINA ON THE GLOBAL STAGE HAS SEEN A NUMBER OF EUROPEAN COUNTRIES ADOPT STRATEGIES IN THEIR APPROACH TO DEALING WITH THE COUNTRY. ONE FOCUS IS THE NEED TO ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES THAT LIE AHEAD.

One such strategy, a [communication from the Swedish government entitled “Approach to matters relating to China”](#) presented in early October to the *Riksdag* - Sweden’s national parliament - addresses the spectrum of bilateral and multilateral relations between Sweden and China in the fields of security and defence, trade and economics, climate and environmental issues, development issues, new technologies, education and research, culture and media, as well as human rights. On this issue in particular, the document refers to the Swedish Government’s June 2019 report on human rights, democracy and the rule of law confirming the civil and political rights situation in China as “serious”, and states that “China is challenging international human rights efforts to an ever increasing extent.” It also mentions Tibet, highlighting the disproportionately tough penalties given to Tibetans in cases of national security crimes and to the Chinese intelligence activities on Swedish territory, which “also target Chinese refugees and organizations working for Tibet, Xinjiang and Taiwan, for example, and political decision-making”. More importantly, the communication presents three guiding principles of the Swedish approach to the human rights situation in China: to raise the issue of these serious human rights abuses in a clear and consistent manner; to continue to work for a strong and common EU approach as the most effective instrument in the dialogue with China; and to work to ensure that the human rights situation in China is highlighted in relevant multilateral contexts.

The communication from the Swedish government follows the unveiling last May of a China strategy by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The Dutch China note entitled ‘A New Balance’ seeks to find a new balance between economic interests and the negative

effects of Chinese influence in Dutch society. In contrast with the Swedish communication, the Dutch China strategy downplayed human rights issues and omitted Tibet completely.

Following a parliamentary hearing and a motion adopted by a large majority in the parliament during a debate on the strategy with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and of International Trade and Development Cooperation in September asking the government to rewrite the human rights chapter, the Minister of Foreign Affairs addressed a formal communication to parliament detailing Dutch government policy on Tibet.

In the 11 November communication, the Minister confirms that he shares the concern of Parliament about the human rights abuses in China and that the government is “seriously concerned about human rights situation in Xinjiang as well as in Tibet.” In particular, the letter states it is government policy that “it is up to the Tibetan religious community to appoint a future successor to the Dalai Lama” – a welcome move that should inspire other governments in Europe. The government also details three measures it is taking to address human rights violations in China: to mention human rights during all high-level visits and meetings with Chinese leaders (with particular attention given to human rights in Tibet and the rights of Buddhists); to push for an investigative mission to Xinjiang, and mention Xinjiang and Tibet under item 4 of the Human Rights Council and work on bringing surveillance equipment under the EU dual use regulation; and work towards the adoption of an EU sanctions regime for individual human rights violators. The Foreign Affairs Relations Committee decided to hold a separate parliamentary debate with the Minister on the letter.

CHINESE ACADEMIC ACCUSED OF ESPIONAGE BANNED FROM BELGIUM

THE DIRECTOR OF THE CONFUCIUS INSTITUTE AT THE FREE UNIVERSITY OF BRUSSELS (VUB) HAS BEEN BANNED FROM BELGIUM, AFTER SECURITY SERVICES ACCUSED HIM OF ESPIONAGE.



As reported by Belgian media in October, Xinning Song, an academic who lived in Belgium for a decade, told The Associated Press that the Brussels immigration office had informed him that his visa would not be renewed because he “supported Chinese intelligence agencies’ spying and interference activities in Belgium.” He has also been barred from the EU’s passport-free Schengen zone for eight years.

This case once again highlights the true nature and role of Confucius Institutes - tools of propaganda and influence for the Chinese government - and will hopefully push VUB authorities to reflect on the suitability of maintaining its institute and whether it should be closed, as has already been the case in a number of places worldwide.

ICT VISITS TAIWAN FOR FIDH'S 40TH CONGRESS



IN LATE OCTOBER, OVER 400 HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATES, GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS AND EXPERTS FROM 192 NGO MEMBERS, INCLUDING ICT, GATHERED IN TAIPEI FOR THE 40TH CONGRESS OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (FIDH).

The Congress – which this year focused on the threats to the universality of human rights and the possible strategies and responses to such challenges – was held in Asia for the first time in the Federation's history. Taiwan was chosen because of its steady progress in respecting and promoting human rights and democratic values, in stark contrast to

many of its regional neighbors – including, of course, China.

Several resolutions were adopted during the gathering, including one supporting Hong Kong protesters calling for government accountability and political reform. FIDH member organizations also elected their

new president - Botswana activist Alice Mogwe, who will head the federation for the next three years.

As usual, the Congress was an excellent opportunity for ICT to network, exchange views and find common ground with other human rights organizations, in particular with FIDH's Asian members. In the margins of the congress, Vincent Metten, ICT's EU policy director, met with the Representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Taiwan, Dawa Tsering, as well as staff of the Human Rights Network for Tibet and Taiwan, and with members of the Tibetan community in Taiwan. He also briefed Taipei's Mayor Ko Wen-je on the situation in Tibet regarding self-immolations – in direct response to a recent Taipei City Government public safety briefing when Ko made an inappropriate and offensive comment stating that self-immolations were a “trendy” thing to do among Tibetan lamas, adding that their actions caused great trouble for the Chinese government.

POLITICAL PRISONER FOCUS SONAM PALDEN



ACCORDING TO [INFORMATION CONFIRMED BY THE TIBETAN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY \(TCHRD\)](#), SONAM PALDEN, A YOUNG TIBETAN MONK, WAS TAKEN INTO CHINESE CUSTODY IN SEPTEMBER. HE WAS DETAINED AFTER POSTING CRITICAL COMMENTS ABOUT BEIJING'S POLICIES IN THE REGION, AND IS CURRENTLY IMPRISONED AT A DETENTION CENTER WHERE HE IS AT HIGH RISK OF TORTURE.

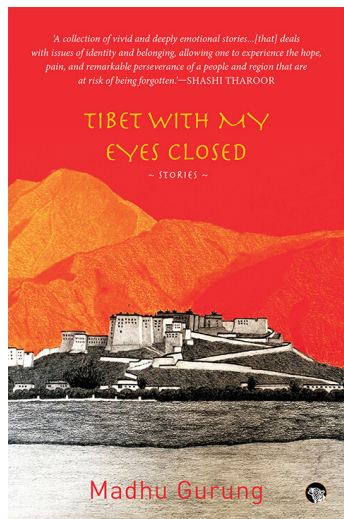
As [reported in October by Radio Free Asia](#), the 22-year-old - who has been a monk at the prominent Kirti monastery in Ngaba since childhood – had been arrested on 19 September in the Ngaba (in Chinese: Aba) Tibetan & Qiang Autonomous Prefecture's Ngaba county (Sichuan Province, in the Tibetan province of Amdo), and had not been heard of since. Tibetan sources said his detention is likely to be related to comments he posted on the messaging platform WeChat, in which he had expressed critical views about China's policy on Tibetan language.

In its 11 November report, TCHRD said it has been able to confirm that Palden was now being held at the Ngaba County Public Security Bureau detention center, where some of his relatives have unsuccessfully attempted to visit him. The group said the prolonged incommunicado detention of the young monk “*will gravely endanger his life given the fact that the worst torture happens during pretrial detention and in the secrecy of Chinese detention facilities.*” His arrest is a clear violation of his right to freedom of expression and opinion, and ICT joins TCHRD's call for Chinese authorities to release him immediately and unconditionally.

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READING SUGGESTION

TIBET WITH MY EYES CLOSED, BY MADHU GURUNG

Editor: Speaking Tiger Books

Publication date: July 2019

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

This collection of short stories chronicles the lives of displaced Tibetans building new lives in India. The 11 stories are divided into the five colours of the Tibetan prayer flag: in Blue (Sky), 'Zinda' is the name of the Tibetan village a child has to escape after Chinese occupation, returning only as a young man to an unfamiliar motherland and bittersweet surprise. Mariko, the former monk protagonist in White (Air), shatters expectations by becoming a beauty icon and dancer. 'In the Footsteps of Buddha's Warriors' from Red (Fire) tells the story of the Chushi Gangdruk, the forgotten Tibetan guerrilla group which fought bravely from Nepal for an independence that never happened. Madhu Gurung writes evocatively and with deep empathy about the Tibetan community's struggles and success, despair and hope, and the fabric of family and identity that stretches, dissolves and knits itself back in new configurations.

"WHY TIBET MATTERS: THE RELEVANCE OF NOW AND WHY WE SHOULD CARE"

A CONVERSATION BETWEEN NANCY PELOSI, JETSUN PEMA AND RICHARD GERE



Why does Tibet matter? This is what the Speaker of the US House of Representative, Nancy Pelosi, the Dalai Lama's younger sister, Jetsun Pema, and ICT's Chairman Richard Gere discussed in San Francisco on 8 October, during an event organized by ICT. Their conversation covered a range of topics, from what motivated them to serve their communities to what life used to be like in Tibet and advice from the Dalai Lama on how to deal with the challenges that China poses. Additionally they took questions from the audience about the Tibetan Policy and Support Act, a new bill in Congress that will upgrade US support for Tibet and protect the right of the Dalai Lama and Tibetan Buddhists to decide how his successor is selected.

Click on the picture to watch the video recording of the event that our US colleagues shared on their Facebook page!



UPCOMING EVENTS

• **3-4 DECEMBER**
21st EU-NGO Human Rights Forum

• **10 DECEMBER**
International Human Rights Day