



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Pelosi, Trump pray for Tibetans, other religious prisoners, at Prayer Breakfast

<https://savetibet.org/pelosi-trump-pray-for-tibetans-other-religious-prisoners-at-prayer-breakfast/>

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Top US leaders prayed for religious prisoners in Tibet this morning at the National Prayer Breakfast while a Tibetan monk who escaped torture and imprisonment raised awareness of China's ruthless oppression of Tibetan Buddhists.

With President Trump sitting nearby, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., took to the podium at the event at the Washington Hilton in Washington, DC and led the gathering in a prayer for "the poor and the persecuted."

The first group she mentioned: Tibetan Buddhists.

"Let us pray for the Panchen Lama and all the Tibetan Buddhists in prison in China or missing from following their faith," Pelosi said as Trump closed his eyes and bowed his head in prayer.

Panchen Lama and Dalai Lama

The Panchen Lama, one of the most important figures in the Tibetan Buddhist faith, has been missing since 1995 when the Chinese government abducted him and his family. He was only six years old at the time.

In his place, China—which has brutally occupied Tibet, a historically independent country, for more than 60 years—installed its own, fake Panchen Lama, who parrots Chinese government propaganda.

China plans to use the fake Panchen Lama to help appoint an illegitimate Dalai Lama in the future once the current Dalai Lama, now 84, eventually passes away.

Last week, Pelosi played a leading role as the House passed the Tibetan Policy and Support Act, a bipartisan bill that will make it official US policy that only Tibetan Buddhists can determine the succession of the Dalai Lama and will sanction Chinese officials who attempt to appoint a future Dalai Lama on their own. The TPSA will also dramatically upgrade US support for Tibetans.

Tibetan political prisoners

US leaders have also criticized China for continuing to hide the whereabouts of the true Panchen Lama.

Vice President Pence spoke about the Panchen Lama during his speech at the Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom last year. During the same event, Nyima Lhamo—whose uncle, a Tibetan lama, was allegedly murdered in prison by Chinese officials—spoke directly to Trump in the Oval Office about the plight of the Tibetan people.

Rep. James McGovern, D-Mass., chair of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, has also “adopted” the Panchen Lama as a prisoner of conscience.

The Panchen Lama is a high-profile case, but he is hardly Tibet’s only political prisoner. According to the Congressional-Executive commission, there are more than 500 Tibetan political prisoners currently in detention.

Escaped prisoner attends breakfast

Golok Jigme (also known as Jigmy Gyatso Golok), a Tibetan Buddhist monk, is a former political prisoner. He was arrested in 2009 and 2012 for his role in helping to create “Leaving Fear Behind,” a gripping documentary that shows ordinary Tibetans discussing China’s oppressive rule in their land.

Golok Jigme managed to escape custody and eventually fled Tibet in 2014. Since then, he has helped tell the world about the ongoing suffering of the Tibetan people, including by speaking with Pence and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in 2018.

Golok Jigme also attended the prayer breakfast this morning and was featured in a video that played during the event.

He met with the co-chairs of the breakfast, Rep. John Moolenaar, R-Mich., and Rep. Thomas Suozzi, D-NY.

Golok Jigme also spoke with Harvard Professor and Washington Post contributor Arthur Brooks, who delivered the event’s keynote address. Brooks has collaborated in the past with the Dalai Lama.