



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

New ICT report documents need for EU reciprocal access to Tibet

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Amsterdam/Brussels, 15 June 2020 — A report published today by the International Campaign for Tibet highlights the dangers posed by China's lack of reciprocity with the European Union in regard to access to Tibet. On this day in 1988, the Dalai Lama spoke before the European Parliament in Strasbourg outlining his vision for a future Tibet. His effort continues to this day.

The report, "Access Denied: New U.S. legislation, the Quest for Reciprocity in Europe and the Lockdown in Tibet," provides an update on China's efforts to restrict access to Tibet in contravention of usual diplomatic practice between countries. These efforts were first documented in a previous report from ICT released in May 2018.

Building on the United States' adoption of the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act — which denies entry to the US for the Chinese officials directly responsible for keeping Americans out of Tibet — and on increasing awareness in Europe of the dangers of an asymmetrical relationship with China, the report argues the need for reciprocal and unfettered access to Tibet for European citizens, diplomats, parliamentarians and journalists.

In addition to the report, 57 parliamentarians from 19 European countries published an op-ed today demanding reciprocal access to Tibet. The op-ed appears in the pan-European news network EURACTIV, the French outlet l'Obs, the Belgian newspaper La Libre Belgique and the Swedish magazine Dagens Arena. Other outlets are also expected to publish the op-ed.

Mounting calls in Europe

As the report shows, government officials, journalists and tourists who seek to enter Tibetan areas are routinely denied, and the few who do get in are forced to stay on strictly controlled official tours, where they are shown Potemkin villages that hide the truth about China's horrific repression of the Tibetan people. Denying unfettered access to Tibet, or threatening to do so, is used by China as a means of shutting down criticism of its atrocious human rights record in Tibet, which China has brutally occupied since 1949. An opening of Tibet would allow for transparency and accountability and therefore help prevent human rights violations.

In recent months, calls for greater reciprocity with China have been mounting in Europe — including EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell's statement that the focus in the EU-China relationship should be on "trust, transparency, and reciprocity." In April 2019, his predecessor Federica Mogherini specifically called on Chinese authorities "to allow reciprocal access to Tibet for European journalists, diplomats, and families." Mogherini's call was recently echoed in an opinion piece published in several European newspapers by 57 Parliamentarians from 19 countries, who urged their governments to pass their own versions of the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act in order to send Beijing a message that its unfair treatment of Europeans — as well as its isolation of the Tibetan people — is no longer acceptable.

Tsering Jampa, ICT Europe executive director, said: "Following the passage of the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act in the United States and based on the diplomatic principle of reciprocity, it is now incumbent upon European governments and the European Union to insist on reciprocity in their dealings with the People's Republic of China. This principle should not be limited to trade and investment but should also include fundamental freedoms in order to address the asymmetry of China's authoritarian influence not only in Tibet, which has been isolated from the rest of the world for the past six decades, but also on our own societies."

What the report says

The new report highlights the following:

- Chinese authorities further intensified their propaganda and promotion of Tibet as “open” in 2019, seeking to obscure their covert and coercive policies while at the same time restricting meaningful engagement with the situation on the ground by foreign journalists and governments.
- As the diplomatic focus on reciprocal access has gained momentum, China has expanded its propaganda on Tibet by sending official delegations that claim to represent Tibet to foreign capitals to attack the Dalai Lama and build support for China’s false narrative about Tibet. Over the past decade nearly three times the number of Chinese Community Party-organized delegations visited Western countries compared to Western government representatives allowed access to Tibet. In 2019, this continued to be a priority of the CCP, with a particular focus on controlling the succession of the Dalai Lama in response to an increasing international pushback on this issue as governments affirm the Dalai Lama’s legitimacy over Beijing’s.
- Mass Chinese domestic tourism and foreign tourism to Tibet have been coexisting with the untrammelled powers of a security state engaged in the most widespread political crackdown in a generation.
- While Chinese tourists are increasingly free to visit the Tibetan plateau, Tibetans themselves face unprecedented restrictions on their movement. Ongoing restrictions imposed by China leave Tibetans locked in virtual isolation from the global community, unable to travel, even when they are able to obtain Chinese passports and scholarships abroad, which is rare. Tibetans also face some of the most severe penalties anywhere for expressing views that differ from those of the CCP, no matter how moderate.
- Increasing numbers of Tibetan exiles who wish to return to see family members, such as elderly parents, are compromised and at risk from the surveillance state, and there are growing efforts to influence a younger generation of Tibetans born to parents in exile in a bid to instill “the red gene” and replace memories or awareness of what their families have lived through over 60 years of Chinese rule.
- ICT’s report also confirms that in Europe, Tibetan exiles are denied the right to visit their homeland and their family members still living there. When they apply for visas to China, Tibetans are subjected to a discriminatory and humiliating process by the Chinese embassy and consulate before their applications are, almost without exception, rejected.



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