



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Tibetan prayer flags forced down by Chinese authorities

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One of the most beautiful symbols of Tibetan culture and religion is forcibly coming down as part of China's efforts to destroy the traditions and way of life inside Tibet.

According to a June 17 report from Radio Free Asia, Chinese authorities began a campaign this month to remove Tibetan prayer flags.

The campaign started in Golog (Chinese: Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai province and Tengchen (Dingqing) county in Chamdo in the Tibet Autonomous Region.

“Led by the police, local Tibetans are now taking down prayer flags in their villages and on the hilltops,” a source from the area told RFA.

The source added that authorities have even ordered the destruction of the poles that hold the flags.

The source said officials claim the prayer flag removals are part of an “environmental cleanup” campaign and “movement of behavior reform.”

War on Tibetan religion

Prayer flags, which have reportedly been present in Tibet for centuries, are one of the best-known symbols of Tibet's unique culture and spirituality.

But in recent years, China—which has occupied Tibet, a historically independent country, for more than six decades—has taken extreme measures to eradicate Tibetans' traditional way of life and force them to assimilate into Chinese society.

As part of that drive, China has been waging war against Tibetan Buddhism.

In its recent report on international religious freedom, the US State Department documented a wide variety of religious freedom violations, violence and discrimination against Tibetans last year.

Dalai Lama succession

The prayer flag removals mark a new and shocking front in China's campaign against Tibetan religion.

At the same time, the Chinese government is continuing its plans to interfere in the succession of the Dalai Lama, who turns 85 next month.

Chinese officials have made it clear that when the Dalai Lama eventually dies, they will appoint their own Dalai Lama to replace him.

To combat this egregious violation of Tibetans' religious freedom, the House of Representatives in January overwhelmingly passed the Tibetan Policy and Support Act, comprehensive legislation that will dramatically upgrade US support for the Tibetan people.

Among many other things, the TPSA will make it official US policy that only the Dalai Lama and Tibetan Buddhist community can decide his succession.

If any Chinese officials try to name their own Dalai Lama, they will face sanctions under the bill.

Congressional action

The TPSA is now awaiting a vote in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

The TPSA needs to pass the committee and the full Senate, and President Trump needs to sign it into law this year.

Enacting the TPSA will allow the people of the United States to tell Beijing its trampling of Tibetans' religious freedom and human rights will not go unchallenged.

ICT quote

International Campaign for Tibet President Matteo Mecacci:

“The taking down of prayer flags in Tibet is a sad symbol of how Chinese Communist Party rule has descended on Tibet and decimated Tibetans' ancient, beautiful culture. As RFA's report notes, Chinese officials describe this effort as part of a ‘movement of behavior reform,’ but the only behavior that needs reform is that of China's Communist Party.

“At the International Campaign for Tibet, we give prayer flags to our members because we recognize the beauty and inspiration they bring into people's lives. We insist that China immediately stop forcing Tibetans to remove their prayer flags and allow these unique symbols of Tibetan culture to return to their rightful place in the air above the Tibetan Plateau.”



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