



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

China vows to retaliate against US Tibet access law, while European legislators mobilize

Read online: <https://savetibet.org/china-vows-to-retaliate-against-us-tibet-access-law-while-european-legislators-mobilize>

July 8, 2020

As the US announced visa restrictions for Chinese officials under the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act, and a British lawmaker introduced a similar bill in the UK, the Chinese government vowed to retaliate with restrictions of its own.

“In response to the US erroneous act, China decides to impose visa restrictions on US individuals with egregious conducts on Tibet-related issues,” Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian said at a press conference on July 8, 2020.

He added, “We urge the US side to immediately stop interfering in China's internal affairs with Tibet as a pretext, and refrain from going further down the wrong path, lest it should further harm China-US relations as well as exchange and cooperation between the two countries.”

However, RATA specifically aims at protecting the rights of American citizens based on the principle of reciprocity in international relations.

Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act

Zhao was responding to Chinese state media after US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announced the restrictions on Chinese officials under RATA, which became law in late 2018.

The restrictions apply to Chinese “government and Chinese Communist Party officials determined to be ‘substantially involved in the formulation or execution of policies related to access for foreigners to Tibetan areas,’” Pompeo said on July 7, quoting the text of RATA.

Pompeo noted that China “systematically” prevents US journalists, diplomats and ordinary citizens from entering Tibet, which China annexed in 1959 and closes off to the outside world.

In a first for the secretary of state, Pompeo also said international access to Tibet is “increasingly vital to regional stability, given the [People’s Republic of China’s] human rights abuses there, as well as Beijing’s failure to prevent environmental degradation near the headwaters of Asia’s major rivers.”

Pompeo also framed the visa restrictions as part of the US’ desire for a “reciprocal” relationship with China and its support for Tibetans’ basic rights and freedoms.

“The United States will continue to work to advance the sustainable economic development, environmental conservation, and humanitarian conditions of Tibetan communities within the People’s Republic of China and abroad,” he said. “We also remain committed to supporting meaningful autonomy for Tibetans, respect for their fundamental and unalienable human rights, and the preservation of their unique religious, cultural, and linguistic identity.”

Pompeo received support for his actions from several US lawmakers.

And at a press conference on July 8, Pompeo wished a belated happy birthday to the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan spiritual leader who turned 85 on Monday.

Chinese propaganda

In contrast, Zhao claimed RATA violates China's sovereignty in Tibet, the law focusing on the rights of American citizens to enjoy the same privilege of visiting Tibet that Chinese citizens have in visiting the United States.

Zhao also falsely stated that, "there's no problem with foreigners' entry into this region."

His comments conflict with a US State Department report from 2019 that documents several glaring examples of China blocking Americans' access to Tibet.

Foreign journalists also say China restricts them from entering Tibet. In its annual report earlier this year, the Foreign Correspondents' Club of China said the Tibet Autonomous Region is the only region of China that journalists need prior permission to enter. Such permission is rarely given.

A Washington Post article from 2016 also describes the TAR as "harder to visit as a journalist than North Korea."

UK, European calls for reciprocity

The US is not the only country pressuring China to allow access to Tibet. In fact, it was not the only one to do so this week.

On July 6, the Dalai Lama's 85th birthday, British Conservative Party MP Tim Loughton reintroduced his own version of RATA in the UK Parliament.

"Expressions of revulsion at China's leaders are welcome but practical action is also needed," Loughton told ICT. "That is why the Tibet Reciprocal Access legislation which passed Congress with widespread support is so important and sets a strong example of action that other governments can and should be taking too. Adopting a similar approach by the UK Government will send a further strong message to the Chinese regime that their serial flouting of basic human rights must not be tolerated and will bring consequences."

Calls for reciprocity are also growing in other European countries.

Last month, 57 parliamentarians from 19 European countries published an op-ed calling on their governments to enact RATA.

The op-ed followed an opinion piece from Josep Borrell, the EU high representative for foreign affairs and vice president of the EU Commission, who said the focus of the EU-China relationship should be "trust, transparency, and reciprocity."

ICT quote

International Campaign for Tibet President Matteo Mecacci:

“Chinese officials continue to spread lies about the situation in Tibet, while at the same time keeping it closed to external scrutiny. This untenable situation is increasingly questioned and challenged by strong calls for reciprocity from world leaders. Not only has the US implemented the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act by imposing visa sanctions on Chinese authorities, but other countries too are moving toward their own versions of RATA.

“After decades of China’s unjust isolation of Tibet, as well as its unfair treatment of the rest of the world, democratic countries are now saying enough is enough: Reciprocal access to Tibet must be provided. Rather than retaliate, China would be wise to behave like all responsible countries in the world and abide by its international obligations and commitments, and not like a rogue state scared of its own people.”



International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) | 1825 Jefferson Place NW | Washington, DC 20036 | United States of America
Phone: (202) 785-1515 | Fax: (202) 785-4343 | info@savetibet.org

ICT Europe
Funenpark 1D | 1018 AK
Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Phone: +31 (0)20 3308265
Fax: +31 (0)20 3308266
icteurope@savetibet.nl

ICT Deutschland e.V.
Schönhauser Allee 163 | 10435
Berlin, Germany
Phone: +49 (0)30 27879086
Fax: +49 (0)30 27879087
info@savetibet.de

ICT Brussels
11, rue de la linière | 1060
Brussels, Belgium
Phone: +32 (0)2 609 44 10
Fax: +32 (0)2 609 44 32
info@save-tibet.eu