



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

UN experts write to China on Panchen Lama, Dalai Lama

Read online: <https://savetibet.org/un-experts-write-to-china-on-panchen-lama-dalai-lama>

August 4, 2020

Five UN human rights experts and expert bodies have raised concerns with the Chinese government about Tibet's "disappeared" Panchen Lama and Beijing's reincarnation rules, expressing fears about Chinese interference in the succession of the Dalai Lama.

In a statement to the Chinese government, the experts "express grave concern at the continued refusal by the Government of China to disclose precisely the whereabouts of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima," the 11th Panchen Lama, and call for an independent monitor to visit him.

The Panchen Lama, one of the most important figures in Tibetan Buddhism, has been missing since the Chinese government kidnapped him and his family in 1995 just days after the Dalai Lama identified him as the reincarnation of the previous Panchen Lama. Gedhun Choekyi Nyima was only six years old at the time.

The Chinese government's rules on the appointment of Tibetan Buddhist leaders "may interfere and possibly undermine[s], in a discriminatory way, the religious traditions and practices of the Tibetan Buddhist minority," the statement from the UN experts says.

The experts appeal to the Chinese government "to ensure that Tibetan Buddhists are able to freely practice their religion, traditions and cultures without interference," as freedom of religion includes the right of Tibetan Buddhists "to determine their clergy and religious leaders in accordance with their own religious traditions and practices."

The statement was made public on August 1 and submitted by the mandates of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances; the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights; the Special Rapporteur on minority issues; and the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief.

Dalai Lama succession

The International Campaign for Tibet welcomes the statement by the UN experts. "The abduction of the Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, 25 years ago is an open wound in the hearts and minds of Tibetan Buddhists," ICT said. "The Chinese government, after years of bluntly ignoring UN bodies and international criticism, must finally allow free access to him."

The organization added: "The UN experts also underline that any state interference with the appointment of Tibetan Buddhist leaders stands in clear contravention of international human rights law. As they rightly acknowledge, this would be the case with Beijing's stated intention to appoint a future Dalai Lama. The international community should therefore double its efforts to safeguard the rights of the Tibetans to choose a future Dalai Lama without interference by the Chinese government."

The Chinese government has repeatedly claimed the right to choose the successor to the current 14th Dalai Lama and has passed rules and regulations to support this claim, despite criticism by Tibetan Buddhists, especially the Dalai Lama himself.

Recently, the high representative of the European Union, Josep Borrell, stated that the “selection of religious leaders should happen without any government interference and in respect of religious norms. The implementation of any legal provision should take these principles into account. The Chinese revised regulations on Religious Affairs pose serious questions in this respect and it will be therefore important to monitor their implementation ... China needed to respect the succession process of the Dalai Lama.”

Tibetan Policy and Support Act

Last year, the US Congress introduced the bipartisan Tibetan Policy and Support Act, a comprehensive bill that will dramatically upgrade US support for Tibetans, including by making it official US policy that only Tibetan Buddhists can decide on the Dalai Lama’s succession.

If Chinese officials attempt to name their own Dalai Lama in the future, they will face sanctions under the act. The House of Representatives passed the bill by an overwhelming majority in January. ICT is now working to get the bill passed by the Senate and signed into law by the president this year.



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