



## INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

### **Congress members request strategy from Pompeo after Chengdu consulate closure**

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September 10, 2020

A bipartisan group of 110 US representatives have written to the State Department to raise concerns about China's closure of the US consulate in Chengdu and request plans for continued monitoring of human rights in Tibet and Xinjiang.

“As Members of Congress focused on Tibetan human rights, we are concerned that the Chengdu consulate's closure may constitute yet another impediment to human rights monitoring in the region,” the members say in a letter sent today, Sept. 10, 2020, to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

The members add that they “urge the Department to send to Congress a strategy for continued monitoring of human rights” in Tibet and Xinjiang.

The consulate in Chengdu closed in July under orders from the Chinese government.

Chengdu serves as a main gateway to Tibet, a historically independent country that China annexed more than 60 years ago and continues to rule with an iron fist.

“[T]he Chinese government has long denied the Tibetan people their fundamental human rights and threatened the very existence of their culture,” the Congress members say in their letter.

### **Access to Tibet**

The letter notes that even before the consulate in Chengdu closed, US access to Tibet was heavily restricted. The letter quotes a State Department report from last month stating that China “systematically impeded” travel to Tibet by US officials, journalists and tourists in 2019.

In July, the department announced that it had denied entry to the US by the Chinese officials responsible for keeping American citizens out of Tibet.

The department was acting under the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act, which Congress unanimously passed in 2018 with a goal of pressuring China to open Tibet to the outside world.

### **Xinjiang**

The letter also points out the horrific human rights situation in Xinjiang, where the Chinese government has imprisoned an estimated 1 million Uyghurs, Kazakhs and members of other mostly Muslim ethnic groups in mass internment camps.

Chen Quanguo, the Chinese Communist Party’s general secretary in Xinjiang, previously held the same position in the TAR from 2011-16. Today, many of the repressive systems Chen built in Xinjiang are being replicated in Tibet.

## Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues

Along with providing a strategy for continued human rights monitoring in Tibet and Xinjiang, the Congress members’ letter also urges the State Department to appoint a special coordinator for Tibetan issues, as required by the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002.

The special coordinator position has been vacant since 2016.

## Quotes

*Reps. Andy Levin, D-Mich., member of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and Nonproliferation, and Jim McGovern, D-Mass., co-chair of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission and chairman of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China:*

“The Chengdu consulate was a critical vantage point for monitoring human rights in Tibet, where the Chinese government has long denied the Tibetan people their fundamental human rights and threatened the very existence of their culture, and the XUAR, where Chinese authorities have detained an estimated one million or more Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Hui, and other largely Muslim ethnic minorities. The State Department must not allow the consulate’s forced closure to hinder efforts to address these ongoing crises.

“As Members of Congress who have spent decades—both within Congress and out—fighting for Tibetan human rights, we hope the Department will give this matter the urgent attention it merits and work with us to ensure that, despite this setback, the United States stands firmly on the side of human rights.”

*Matteo Mecacci, president of the International Campaign for Tibet:*

“Today’s letter from the members of Congress is not only an urgent call to action for continued human rights monitoring in Tibet and Xinjiang. It’s also a strong statement of the enduring, bipartisan support for Tibet on Capitol Hill.

“Although China’s closure of the US consulate in Chengdu could make it even more difficult for American officials to have access to Tibet, Tibetan Americans and their allies can rest assured that representatives on both sides of the aisle will continue to speak up no matter how hard the Chinese government tries to stop the outside world from seeing what’s happening inside Tibet.”

Full letter text:

*September 10, 2020*

*The Honorable Mike Pompeo  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, D.C., 20520*

*Dear Mr. Secretary:*

*We write regarding the closure of the United States consulate in Chengdu following the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of China's decision to revoke its license on July 24, 2020. We are concerned that the consulate's closure will impede the U.S.'s ability to monitor conditions in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), and Tibetan areas in Sichuan, Gansu and Yunnan provinces, as well as in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR), often referred to as Xinjiang. As such, we urge the Department to send to Congress a strategy for continued monitoring of human rights in these regions.*

*As you know, the Chengdu consulate is situated further west than the United States' other five consular posts in China, including the embassy in Beijing. As the New York Times reported in July, this renders the Chengdu consulate our "most valuable diplomatic outpost for gathering information on Xinjiang and Tibet." Without this critical vantage point, we are deeply concerned that it will be more difficult for the United States to assess human rights conditions in Tibet, where the Chinese government has long denied the Tibetan people their fundamental human rights and threatened the very existence of their culture, and the XUAR, where Chinese authorities have detained an estimated one million Uyghurs, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Hui, and other largely Muslim ethnic minorities.*

*As Members of Congress focused on Tibetan human rights, we are concerned that the Chengdu consulate's closure may constitute yet another impediment to human rights monitoring in the region. Despite the enactment of the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act (P.L. 115-330) in 2018 and the State Department's efforts at implementation, access to the TAR and other Tibetan areas remains highly limited. As the Department reported on August 5, 2020, "the People's Republic of China (PRC) government systematically impeded travel to the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) and Tibetan areas outside the TAR for U.S. diplomats and officials, journalists, and tourists in 2019."*

*We are also concerned that the consulate's closure could make it more difficult to assess the situation in the XUAR. Earlier this year, Congress passed and the President signed the Uyghur Human Rights Policy Act of 2020 (P.L. 116-145), which mandates reports to Congress on human rights in the XUAR.*

*We recognize that the XUAR lies within the district covered by the Beijing embassy rather than the Chengdu consulate. We are nonetheless concerned that without the consulate, it will be more difficult to communicate with people in the region, and formulate accurate and comprehensive reports about the situation on the ground. We respectfully request that the Department send to Congress a detailed strategy to continue robust human rights monitoring in Tibet and the XUAR. We also hope that a Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, as required by the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-228), will be soon appointed and confirmed.*

*We thank you for your attention to this matter and stand ready to work with you to end human rights abuses in China.*

*Sincerely,*

*ANDY LEVIN  
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