



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

ICT testifies at German parliament hearing on China's human rights record

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The German parliament [heard testimonies](#) from ICT's Executive Director for Germany Kai Mueller and other human rights experts at a hearing last week at the Human Rights Committee of the Bundestag. The experts raised grave concerns regarding China's human rights record and called for a proactive approach by the German government towards the Chinese Communist Party's increasingly assertive policies towards Tibetans, Uyghurs, Mongols and other groups, at home and abroad. In a [statement on its website](#), the Chinese embassy in Berlin flatly denounced the hearing, demanding the Committee to stop "intervening with internal affairs", so Sino-German relations may develop "undisturbed". German lawmakers had previously dismissed such statements by the Chinese embassy as "unacceptable."

In his testimony on Tibet, Mueller raised Beijing's sinicization policies that threaten the survival of a self-determined Tibetan culture, of religion and Tibetan ways of life and economic subsistence. Of particular concern were recent reports about coercive labor programs in Tibet. Mueller called for a response by the German government, as public appeals to the Chinese government would be welcome, but not enough. He called for "sanctions against those responsible in the Chinese party and state apparatus, especially those who are responsible for isolating Tibet." He also called on the German government to become more assertive with regard to the issue of the succession of the Dalai Lama saying, "The successor to the Dalai Lama must not be decided by the Chinese Communist Party."

In October, the German government, on behalf of 39 countries, gave a [statement](#) on the human rights situation in China at the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. The statement specifically raised the developments in Xinjiang (East-Turkestan) and Hong Kong, and also referred to Tibet. On 24 November [Chancellor Angela Merkel](#) spoke with Chinese President Xi Jinping about the EU-China investment treaty and climate change, apparently not raising human rights related issues, which drew [criticism](#) by human rights advocates.

Following is the full text of Kai Mueller's statement.

Dear Chairwoman,

Dear members of the Committee,

Thank you for inviting me to this hearing. I would also like to thank the committee for addressing the human rights situation in the People's Republic of China and, within that framework, the situation in Tibet. This is extremely important as the human rights situation in Tibet remains precarious. The Communist Party systematically seals off the country to prevent information from leaking out. Information about the police state that was installed in recent years and information about the instruments of totalitarian rule that the CCP has been increasingly implementing in Tibet for several years.

If information from Tibet reaches the outside world apart from state announcements, it is only after a delay. As in the case of 36-year-old Tibetan, Lhamo, who died in Chinese custody in August. The mother of three was reportedly arrested by the authorities back in June. The reason: money transfers to relatives living in India.

In August, her family was called to the hospital, Lhamo's body was badly bruised and she could no longer speak. Two days later she died. Her body was immediately cremated, which prevented a medical examination. Her tragic death is part of a number of similar cases of apparent torture in state custody in Tibet. Victims are Tibetans who oppose state policies or who stand up for the preservation of their culture, the protection of their religion, for environmental protection or against abuse of power by local authorities. According to the United Nations Anti-Torture Committee, torture and ill-treatment are “deeply-rooted” in China's criminal justice system. Tibet is particularly affected by this.

With the appointment of Communist Party functionary Chen Quanguo as party secretary of the Tibet Autonomous Region in 2011, the party's policy changed significantly, apparently in response to the nationwide protests in 2008, which the authorities violently suppressed. Since then, the Communist Party has apparently no longer relied on the repressive persecution of those who think differently alone, but also pursues an even more active assimilation, control and indoctrination policy, which is having massive effects on the rights of those affected. Essential components: sending tens of thousands of party cadres to the rural regions of Tibet to spread the party's policies and to “befriend” Tibetans, as the party rhetoric says. In addition, the establishment of a dense physical and electronic surveillance network in the cities; or taking over direct administration of Buddhist monasteries.

The party's policy of ‘Sinicization’ is subtler, but probably even more consequential: Tibetan Buddhism must be subordinate to the party's ideological goals; the Tibetan language is being degraded to a colloquial language, authorities are deciding on the appointment of Buddhist leaders, and millions of Tibetan nomads and farmers have been forcibly resettled. And: Reports of coercive “work programs” are of particular concern, according to which more than 500,000 Tibetans are already being prepared - under military drill - for being sent to production facilities in Tibet and China. With no real possibility of contradicting these measures.

It is extremely important that the international community takes note of this reality and exposes the Communist Party's narratives. We cannot speak of sustainable development policies if those affected have no rights. We cannot speak of social policies and poverty alleviation, when millions of people are forced to give up their way of life and means of subsistence. We cannot speak of politics that protect cultural heritage, religion and language when the mother tongue disappears from schools or when a religion has to adapt to the goals of a party. On the contrary. Tibetan culture, self-determined and autonomous, threatens to disappear.

Publicly formulated criticism of the Chinese government's policy in Tibet is indispensable. We welcome the fact that this committee has made repeated statements on the situation in Tibet, most recently in 2019. It is to be welcomed that Tibet was mentioned in October's cross-regional statement on China to the United Nations. But that is not enough.

We advocate for personal sanctions against those responsible in the Chinese party and state apparatus, especially those who are responsible for isolating Tibet. Openness leads to transparency, and this leads to accountability, which can prevent human rights violations. Furthermore, the federal government should work with great emphasis on one of the great questions about the future of Tibet. The successor to the Dalai Lama must not be decided by the Chinese Communist Party.

The precarious situation in Tibet is also the subject of the request of 50 UN human rights experts, who in June called for the establishment of an independent human rights instrument towards the People's Republic of China. This demand should find broad support. To the effect that cases like the one of the Tibetan, Lhamo, are investigated, and to the effect that control, surveillance, indoctrination and Sinicization in Tibet are emphatically countered.

Thank you.



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