



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Dalai Lama's translator talks to ICT

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Geshe Thupten Jinpa smiled at the camera.

“It’s a real joy and privilege to be part of this Tibet Talks series,” he said, “particularly remembering this beautiful day some 31 years ago in December when His Holiness received the Nobel Peace Prize.”

Jinpa, the primary English translator for [His Holiness the Dalai Lama](#), was speaking to a live audience last week on [Tibet Talks, a virtual discussion series](#) hosted by the International Campaign for Tibet.

Jinpa, who’s also a Buddhist scholar, joined the program to help celebrate the 31st anniversary of the [Dalai Lama receiving the Nobel](#) in Oslo, Norway on Dec. 10, 1989.

Special day

The event began with ICT Director of Outreach Tencho Gyatso playing a clip of the Dalai Lama accepting the award.

[Watch the Dalai Lama receives the Noble Peace Prize »](#)

“I get a lump in my throat every time I watch that,” Gyatso said.

Jinpa, who was there in Oslo that day, remembered it as “really truly magical.”

The Dalai Lama “showed his true color, which is really humility,” Jinpa recalled. “He said, ‘I receive this award on behalf of all the people who are bringing compassion into the world.’ So in a sense he really took it as not an award to him as a person, but basically for an ideal and a service that he has been championing.”

Resonating with the world

Jinpa said the Dalai Lama has been able to resonate with so many people around the world in part because he reminds them of their shared human condition.

“Many of the people in the modern world are so caught up in their own identity of who they are: members of a particular nation, particular tribe, particular language community, particular religious community,” Jinpa said. “There were very few figures like His Holiness who really has this power to remind them, first and foremost, of their humanity.”

One of the reasons for that power is the Dalai Lama's unparalleled knowledge of [Tibetan Buddhist teachings and psychology](#).

"He has this wealth that he can draw from," Jinpa said. "But when it comes out, and when it's presented to the general public, it comes out in a very practical insight that people can immediately relate to."

Resonating in Tibet

Even though the Dalai Lama has lived in exile since China's [conquest of Tibet more than six decades ago](#), Jinpa said he remains an essential figure to the millions of Tibetans living under [China's repressive rule](#).

"Emotionally and spiritually, he's the anchor," Jinpa said. "And that cannot be changed. It doesn't really matter how much power Chinese authorities, Communist Chinese authorities, may use to suppress that. I think that reality, that fact, just simply cannot be erased."

Jinpa noted that China's authoritarian leaders would be wise to work with the Dalai Lama, who advocates for a [nonviolent resolution](#) to the Tibetan struggle and a [pragmatic Middle Way Approach](#) that would leave Tibet as part of China in exchange for meaningful autonomy for Tibetans.

"The fact that the Tibetans inside Tibet still challenge and question the legitimacy of Communist China's rule in Tibet, means the modern China, the Communist Chinese nationhood, is not fully complete," Jinpa said.

Climate change, global responsibility

The Dalai Lama was the first Nobel laureate whose commitment to the environment was given as a reason for his award.

Jinpa said the Dalai Lama has used the Buddhist concept of interdependence to [understand and address the climate crisis](#).

"One of the problems of a modern, Western approach to issues like the environment is that our resources for moral language becomes quite impoverished," Jinpa said. "We're reduced to using concepts like individual freedom and choice and avoidance of harm."

In contrast, the [Tibetan concept of global responsibility](#), or *chisem*, is "to really kind of call upon us that we are not a single individual living our life alone, unconnected to the rest of the world," Jinpa said.

"When we bring concepts like interdependence and global responsibility," he said, "it really enriches the whole vocabulary and thinking resources around this, so that we can bring a much more robust language around moral responsibility."

"In the end, it's about our responsibility and moral responsibility to others and the world we live in."

Tibet Talk

After his discussion with Gyatso, Jinpa fielded several questions from ICT members and others who watched the Tibet Talk live.

During the Q&A session, Jinpa addressed how to preserve the Tibetan language and culture, why suffering is a prerequisite for compassion, and what people from other countries can do to help Tibetans.

[Watch Geshe Thupten Jinpa's Tibet Talk »](#)

[Listen to a podcast of the Tibet Talk »](#)



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