



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

New State Department leadership commits to supporting Tibet

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In its first substantive statements to the media on Tibet, the Biden administration has come out strongly in committing to help the Tibetan people and promote US interests in Tibet.

In comments to Radio Free Asia, a State Department spokesperson said the department will take a number of actions, including pressuring China to resume dialogue with Tibetan representatives after more than 10 years; calling on China to end its interference in the selection of Tibetan Buddhist leaders; and urging China to respect Tibetans' endangered environment, culture, language and religion.

The comments are the first public remarks on Tibet by the Biden administration.

State Department remarks

In the written comments to Radio Free Asia, the State Department spokesperson made several assurances regarding the department's approach to Tibet, which China annexed more than 60 years ago and is now rated one of the least free places on Earth.

According to the spokesperson, the department:

- Will work with US allies and partners to pressure the Chinese government to end its abuses against Tibetans and return to dialogue with the representatives of the Dalai Lama without preconditions. No dialogue has taken place since 2010. The spokesperson noted that the United States supports meaningful autonomy for Tibetans, which the Dalai Lama advocates for.
- Urges China to respect Tibetans' human rights—including the rights and freedoms enshrined in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights—as well as their unique environment and distinct cultural, linguistic and religious identity.
- Calls on China to respect Tibetans' religious freedom, including by ending Chinese officials' attempts to interfere in the selection of Tibetan Buddhist leaders. For years, the Chinese government has absurdly claimed that it must approve the reincarnation of Tibetan lamas, including a potential reincarnation of the Dalai Lama. But under the Tibetan Policy and Support Act, which became law at the end of 2020, any Chinese officials who try to name their own Dalai Lama in the future will face US sanctions.
- Has placed visa restrictions on Chinese officials who deny foreigners access to Tibet. These sanctions have come under the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act, which became law in 2018 and takes aim at China's unfair policy of not allowing US citizens into Tibet, even though Chinese citizens are free to travel anywhere they want in the United States.

The spokesperson also said new Secretary of State Antony Blinken will work with the department's special coordinator for Tibetan issues and ambassador-at-large for international religious freedom to promote religious freedom for Tibetans living under Chinese rule, as well as Tibetans in exile.

Neither the special coordinator position nor the ambassador-at-large position are currently filled.

The spokesperson's remarks add to a September 2020 statement on Tibet by then-presidential candidate Joe Biden, in which Biden pledged that "a Biden-Harris administration will stand up for the people of Tibet."

Quote from the International Campaign for Tibet

"The International Campaign for Tibet commends the State Department's new leadership for focusing on the need for the resumption of dialogue to resolve the Tibetan issue, in its first statement on Tibet to a media outlet. We hope to see this statement followed by concrete actions encouraging the dialogue that has not taken place since 2010.

"The statement sends the right message to China by echoing the commitments on Tibet made by then-presidential candidate Biden during the campaign, including on holding China accountable for its refusal to allow US access to Tibet and its denial of religious freedom to the Tibetan people. Secretary of State Blinken should fulfil the commitments by fully implementing the Tibetan Policy and Support Act and by naming a new special coordinator for Tibetan issues at the undersecretary of state level at the earliest opportunity, so that person has the time, resources and authority needed to be successful in the job.

"Secretary Blinken should implement the TPSA and the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act to enable equal access to Tibet for US citizens, protect the religious freedom of Tibetan Buddhists, including their freedom to select their own religious leaders, and defend the water security of US allies who depend on rivers that originate in Tibet."



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