

Report to Congress on Tibet Negotiations

Section 613(b) of the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002 (22 U.S.C. 6901 note)

Pursuant to section 613(b) of the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002 (22 U.S.C. 6901 note), this report covers: (1) the steps taken by the President and Secretary of State in accordance with subsection (a)(1) to implement the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002; and (2) the status of any discussions between the People's Republic of China and the Dalai Lama or his representatives. The Department of State submits this report to the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives and the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate.

Executive Summary

No formal negotiations between People's Republic of China (PRC) officials and the Dalai Lama or his representatives have occurred since 2010. The United States continues to encourage both sides to engage in meaningful and direct dialogue, without preconditions, to seek a settlement that resolves differences. The U.S. government remains concerned by the lack of meaningful autonomy for Tibetans within China, ongoing abuses of the human rights of Tibetans in China, and efforts by PRC authorities to eliminate the distinct religious, linguistic, and cultural identity of Tibetans. The United States believes the PRC government must address these concerns to create conditions for a sustainable settlement, which is essential to the long-term stability of the region. The U.S. government has maintained close contact with Tibetan religious, cultural, and political leaders to underscore U.S. support, and has expressed its concerns regarding PRC government actions in bilateral, multilateral, and public venues. Due to the PRC government's withdrawal of consent for operation in retaliation for the closure of PRC Consulate General Houston, the United States suspended operations of the U.S. Consulate General in Chengdu (CG Chengdu) on July 27, 2020, which has severely restricted the United States' ability to maintain access to Tibetan areas. The following report describes activities undertaken by senior U.S. officials from May 1, 2020 to April 30, 2021 to encourage dialogue and create conditions for a sustainable settlement.

U.S. Policy on Tibet

The United States recognizes the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and Tibetan autonomous prefectures and counties in other provinces as part of the PRC. The United States' long-standing policy is to encourage meaningful and direct dialogue between PRC authorities and the Dalai Lama or his representatives, without preconditions, to seek a settlement that resolves differences. The U.S. government believes that a negotiated resolution that leads to meaningful autonomy for Tibetans and ensures they are able to practice freely their religion, culture, and language provides the best hope for long-term stability in the region.

The United States continues to urge the PRC government to change its policies in Tibetan areas that have created tensions; respect and preserve the distinct religious, linguistic, and cultural identity of Tibetans; and permit Tibetans to express their grievances freely, publicly, peacefully, and without fear of retribution. The U.S. government continues to call upon PRC authorities to allow diplomats, journalists, tourists, and others to have unrestricted access to Tibetan areas.

The United States remains concerned by PRC government interference in the selection, education, and veneration of Tibetan Buddhist religious leaders.

Due to the PRC government's withdrawal of consent for operation in retaliation for the closure of PRC Consulate General Houston, the United States suspended operations of the U.S. Consulate General in CG Chengdu on July 27, 2020. The consulate has stood at the center of our relations

with people in Southwestern China, including Tibetan areas, for 35 years. The closure of CG Chengdu has severely restricted the United States' ability to maintain access to Tibetan areas.

Information regarding human rights conditions in Tibet appears in the Department of State's annual Human Rights Report and International Religious Freedom Report. Information regarding access to the TAR and other Tibetan areas of China appears in the Department of State's annual report to Congress pursuant to section 4 of the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act (RATA) of 2018 (P.L. 115-330).

Steps Taken by Senior U.S. Officials to Encourage Dialogue and Establish Conditions for a Sustainable Settlement

Senior U.S. officials called public attention to China's abuses of the human rights of Tibetans, including their religious freedom, and called for the Chinese government to respect those rights on multiple occasions, such as the following:

- The Secretary of State issued a statement and tweeted on the 25th anniversary of the Panchen Lama's disappearance in May. He called on the PRC to make public the Panchen Lama's whereabouts and to promote religious freedom for all persons.
- While speaking at the public release of the 2019 International Religious Freedom Report in June, the Secretary of State highlighted the continued PRC state-sponsored repression of Tibetans.
- In September, during public remarks to the media, the Secretary of State called on the PRC government to engage in dialogue with Dalai Lama or his representatives without preconditions to reach a settlement on Tibet.
- In September, the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs spoke about PRC efforts to eliminate Tibetan culture and language in China during a U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations hearing.
- In October, the Secretary of State designated the Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor as the U.S. Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues. He remained in this role until January.
- On International Religious Freedom Day in October, the Special Coordinator met virtually with international NGO activists to discuss meaningful autonomy for Tibetans and advocating for the religious freedom of Tibetan Buddhists everywhere.
- The Special Coordinator attended a virtual event on the anniversary of the conferment of the Nobel Peace Prize to the Dalai Lama in December, when he recognized the Dalai Lama's advocacy for meaningful Tibetan autonomy and the preservation of Tibet's unique cultural heritage.
- The Department's Office of International Religious Freedom and Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor tweeted on February 1 following the release from prison of Tibetan advocate Tashi Wangchuk and expressed concern about ongoing PRC repression of Tibetans' human rights.

Senior U.S. officials continued to promote accountability for the PRC government's restrictions to foreigner access to Tibetan areas:

- Pursuant to the RATA, the Department announced in July visa restrictions on PRC officials who were substantially involved in the formulation or execution of policies related to foreigner access to Tibetan areas. The Secretary of State released an official statement on this.
- U.S. officials engaged with Tibetan leaders and advocates, underscoring the United States' commitment to protect the distinct identity of Tibetans, improve respect for their human rights, and address their humanitarian needs.
- The U.S. Ambassador to India met with the Dalai Lama in January and the New Delhi Representative of the Dalai Lama in July and January.
- The U.S. Ambassador to Nepal and Deputy Chief of Mission met multiple times with likeminded diplomats and Nepali officials about the rights of Tibetan refugees. Senior U.S. officials also repeatedly met with the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) representatives and Tibetan community groups to hear their concerns.
- Multiple senior U.S. officials met with Lobsang Sangay, the Sikyong (President) of the CTA, including the Special Coordinator in October, marking the first time a Sikyong was formally invited inside the State Department.
- The Special Coordinator met virtually with Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) leadership in January to discuss their work in reflecting the interests of the Tibetan diaspora.
- The Special Coordinator met virtually with artisans from the Norbulingka Institute in January to discuss Tibetan culture and traditions.
- The Special Coordinator spoke with women Tibetan journalists in January about the difficulties in freely reporting on news in Tibetan areas of China.
- The Special Coordinator met virtually with the Dalai Lama in January. He reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to supporting the human rights and distinct linguistic, cultural, and religious identity of Tibetans.
- The Department of State held its annual Losar (Tibetan New Year) celebration virtually in February, bringing together representatives from the CTA, community leaders, NGOs, and U.S. government officials. The Secretary of State recorded a message for the event.