



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

ICT statement: China's White Paper fails to address Tibetan grievances

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May 23 this year marks the 70th anniversary of the controversial 17-Point Agreement between representatives of the Chinese and Tibetan governments, through which the Chinese government claimed to have achieved the “peaceful liberation” of Tibet.

Over the years, the Chinese government has launched propaganda campaigns using this agreement to legitimize its occupation of Tibet. This year, China issued a White Paper on May 21 titled, “Tibet Since 1951: Liberation, Development and Prosperity,” claiming to “present a true and panoramic picture of the new socialist Tibet.”

The White Paper says that following the 17-Point Agreement, “The people of Tibet broke free from the fetters of invading imperialism for good, embarking on a bright road of unity, progress and development with all the other ethnic groups in China.”

The 17-Point Agreement was not voluntarily accepted by the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government. Rather, it was forced on the Tibetan people. While in Tibet, the government had no option but to accept the agreement after China had already decided on it.

However, soon after going into exile in India, the [Dalai Lama](#) issued a statement on April 18, 1959 in which he said, “In 1951, under pressure of the Chinese Government, a 17-Point Agreement was made between China and Tibet. In that Agreement, the suzerainty of China was accepted as there was no alternative left to the Tibetans.”

Violating its own agreement

China's White Paper says, “Following the peaceful liberation, all the ethnic peoples of Tibet, united under the strong leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC), have worked together in implementing the 17-Article Agreement...”

However, the truth, as evidenced by the situation in Tibet today, is that China violated its own forced agreement rather than implementing it. The agreement stated that Tibet would enjoy full autonomy, and that there would be no interference by the Chinese government with Tibet's religion and customs and internal administration, including the role of the Dalai Lama.

While the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government tried their best to adhere to the Agreement, the invading Chinese authorities were bent on interfering in all aspects of governance in Tibet. “In fact, after the occupation of Tibet by the Chinese armies, the Tibetan government did not enjoy any measure of autonomy even in internal matters, and the Chinese government exercised full powers in Tibet's affairs,” the Dalai Lama said in his 1959 statement.

Reality of the situation today

The reality of the situation in Tibet today underscores how far China's policies have departed from its own forced agreement. In the seven decades since the agreement, the Chinese government has unilaterally instituted increasingly hardline policies that undermine Tibetan culture and religion; deny freedom of expression to the Tibetan people; downgrade the use of Tibetans' language; and appropriate their economic resources to the Chinese state, with increasing numbers of Chinese migrants moving to Tibet.

The White Paper in fact refers to the agreement, which says that China "will not alter the established status, functions and powers of the Dalai Lama" and that the "religious beliefs, customs and habits of the Tibetan people shall be respected."

Today, leaving aside the fundamental issue of interfering in the powers of the Dalai Lama, China is implementing a campaign that persecutes any Tibetan who express any reverence to the Dalai Lama.

Tibet's history of independence

China's White Paper falsifies Tibetan history by saying Tibetan independence "was no more than a product of imperialist aggression against China." In fact, historical records written in Chinese and published by the Chinese government show Tibet's independent status in the past.

For instance, in 822 AD, envoys of the Chinese Emperor Muzong and Tibetan Emperor Ralpachen met and concluded a peace treaty after the Tibetan army invaded the then-Chinese capital of Chang'an (present-day Xian). The text of the treaty was carved on three pillars that were erected in the Tibetan capital of Lhasa, Chang'an and the Tibetan-Chinese border region.

The pillar in Lhasa can still be seen before the sacred Jokhang temple. The treaty clearly indicates Tibet's independent status by declaring, "This solemn agreement has established a great epoch when Tibetans shall be happy in the land of Tibet, and Chinese in the land of China."

China-Tibet negotiations

Finally, on the most important issue of negotiations, the White Paper impedes the path to resolving the Tibet problem. Rather than acknowledging China's mistakes and working to address the underlying grievances of the Tibetan people, the White Paper falsifies the Dalai Lama's position on resolving the Tibetan issue through talks based on his [Middle Way Approach](#).

The White Paper says during China's talks with his envoys, "the Dalai Lama has refused to relinquish his political demands." The [Dalai Lama's position of seeking genuine autonomy for all Tibetans](#) within the framework of the People's Republic of China has not only been presented by his envoys to the Chinese government, but also subsequently made public. China cannot fool the international community about the Dalai Lama and his commitment to resolve the Tibetan problem through a mutually satisfactory solution.

Therefore, this 70th anniversary of the controversial 17-Point Agreement should be an occasion for reflection by China, not an occasion to spread propaganda.



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@savetibet.eu