



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Code of conduct forbids religiosity by Tibetan CCP members

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A new code of conduct for members of the Chinese Communist Party in the Tibet Autonomous Region explicitly forbids party members from all forms of religiosity in both public and private life.

The six-point code of conduct, currently in trial, is significant for being perhaps the first party regulation that clearly and comprehensively details the specific types of religiosity forbidden for party members in the TAR. Examples of explicitly forbidden conduct include wearing rosary beads or religious imagery, forwarding or liking religious materials online and circumambulating mountains and lakes.

Party members are also required to take on an active role to propagate the party's anti-religion stance by advising relatives to downplay their religious consciousness, not set up altars or hang religious imagery in homes, and seek party approval before inviting religious personnel to conduct rituals for customary occasions such as weddings and funerals.

The International Campaign for Tibet obtained the code of conduct document, which has been in internal circulation among party members since April 2021. ICT believes that the "Code of Conduct for Communist Party Members in the Tibet Autonomous Region for Not Believing in Religion" is specifically aimed at Tibetan members in the CCP, despite the document being formally titled as applicable to all Communist Party members in the TAR.

According to state media, a study campaign to promote strict compliance to the code of conduct by party members is currently underway in various parts of the TAR. For example, on May 14, the party branch of Tsamchu (Chinese: Cangqu) Village in Nyima County, Nagchu City, held a study meeting for 32 branch party members. Two other study meetings were held for party members at the Singe Khabab (Shiquanhe) Seismic Station (May 19) and at a primary school in Yakra (Yare) Township in Drongba County, Shigatse (May 20). Similar study meetings have also been conducted in Lhasa, Nyingtri and Metok counties in May and June.

In addition to studying the code of conduct, the campaign stresses ideological conformity and political responsibility from all the party members in the TAR.

Study session on the Code of Conduct in progress in Tsamchu Village in Nagchu City on May 14 (left) and Yakra Township in Shigatse City on May 20 (right). Source: Chinese state media

Several regulations, such as "Regulations on Disciplinary Measures of the Communist Party of China," "Regulations on Inner-Party Supervision of the Communist Party of China," "Several Provisions on Political Life within the Party" and "Regulations on the United Front Work of the Communist Party of China," apply to all Communist Party members in China, emphasizing ideological conformity, discipline and political responsibility.

The code of conduct for the TAR, however, appears to be unique as no equivalent code on religion is found for party members in other Chinese provinces and "autonomous" regions. Xinjiang, with a Muslim majority, is the nearest comparable region to the majority-Buddhist TAR; however, ICT has not found an equivalent code of conduct forbidding Islamic religiosity for party members in Xinjiang. The unique nature of the code of conduct

points to the TAR party leaders exercising their latitude in focusing on Tibetan Buddhist religiosity in implementing the central party directives against religion and party building in the TAR.

Against the backdrop of a growing number of new laws on controlling and limiting Tibetan Buddhist practices and containing the spread of Tibetan Buddhism in the Chinese heartland, the newly issued code of conduct for the TAR party members uniquely defines what is not permissible for Tibetan party members in the TAR. The code not only forbids party members from all forms of religiosity (both subtle and overt) at an individual level, but it also extends their obligation as party advisors to their family and society at large. By obligating party members to advise their family members and relatives not to participate in religious activities, the party seemingly aims to make a direct impact on over 50% of the Tibetan society in the TAR to not believe in Tibetan Buddhism. For instance, 57,000 party members in the Tibetan capital of Lhasa constitute around 10% of the Lhasa population. Assuming a family of three—although an average household size in the TAR is 4—with two relatives in the city, the party can percolate its ideal directly onto at least 50% of the Lhasa population.

Religiosity forbidden for the party members in the TAR and their obligation as party advisors in the code of conduct are as follows:

1. Not wearing beads and statues on your body
2. Not tattooing religious scriptures or signs on your body
3. Not placing religious signs on office premises or official vehicles
4. Not participating in group religious study and religious chanting
5. Not donating money and materials to monasteries
6. Not going for religious ritual visits, pilgrimage
7. Not receiving ordination, making religious offerings
8. No religious or spiritual retreats
9. No circumambulation of mountains and lakes
10. Not inviting monks and nuns and performing divination for family members or performing prayers or providing names to children
11. No forwarding or liking religious audio, video, religious information or scriptures
12. Not sending children to monasteries as monks and nuns, not sending them to places of religious worship or schools run by religious believers
13. No to the 14th Dalai Lama

The obligations of Tibetan party members toward family members and the society are:

1. Guide religious family members and relatives to downplay their religious consciousness
2. Advise them not to set up altars, place religious objects or hang religious pictures or photos of religious personalities at home
3. Advise family members and relatives not to participate in religious activities or do so as little as possible

4. In case of customary activities (such as weddings and funerals) permission must be sought from the party branch before inviting religious personnel to carry out religious activities
5. Promptly stop family members and close relatives on trips abroad from having audience with the 14th Dalai Lama or participate in various religious ceremonies and activities organized by the 14th Dalai Lama and the “Dalai clique.” Report to the party if they could not be stopped.
6. Instruct the religious public to treat religion consciously, change their customs and reduce the influence of religion

Party leaders in the TAR demand strict performative compliance from Tibetan party members, who often face conflicts between their faith and party discipline. Unlike party members in other parts of China, Tibetans not only join the party for pragmatic reasons (such as for personal advancement), but they also join the party to work within the regime to make a difference in the lives of their fellow Tibetans, despite not being trusted with important and strategic leadership positions. Overturning the Buddhist faith in their homeland was not an ideal for joining the party, nor was erasing their Tibetan identity in favor of a Communist or Chinese identity.

When in conflict with the party ideals and policies, Tibetan party members have had to undergo tumultuous turns in their lives. This is exemplified in the life of the famous Tibetan revolutionary Bapa Phutsok Wangyal, who struggled for the welfare of the Tibetan people throughout his life. Bapa was imprisoned in solitary confinement for 18 years (1960-1978)—during which his vocal cord was damaged for not having spoken at all for six years—for his outspoken criticism of the socialist reforms in Tibet and against Han chauvinism in the early years of the CCP’s revolution in Tibet.

The contradiction between faith and party idealism is an ongoing challenge for the party leadership in cultivating loyal Tibetan party members for the party’s effective governance of Tibet. With no real progress in eliminating the Tibetan party members’ belief in their faith and identity in the “70 years of peaceful liberation,” the Code of Conduct for Communist Party Members in the Tibet Autonomous Region for Not Believing in Religion appears to be the latest attempt at strengthening the party through a region-specific party regulation comprehensively forbidding Tibetan religiosity.

ICT translation of the Code of Conduct for Communist Party Members in the Tibet Autonomous Region for Not Believing in Religion

This is part of the study material being distributed to party members and cadres in the Tibet Autonomous Region from April this year.

Code of Conduct for Communist Party Members in the Tibet Autonomous Region for Not Believing in Religion (for trial implementation)

In order to implement the requirements of strict party governance in all aspects, strengthen the party’s political institutions, and strengthen the political discipline of communists not permitted

to believe in religion, and in accordance with the "Constitution of the Communist Party of China," " Norms of Political Life Within the Party Under the New Situation," and “The Regulations on the Education and Management of Party Members of the Communist Party of China and the Regulations on Disciplinary Actions of the Communist Party of China” and other internal party regulations have formulated this code of conduct in accordance with the actual conditions of our region.

1. Strengthen theoretical arms, firm ideals and beliefs, adhere to Marxist materialism and atheism, firmly establish Marxist religious views, not forgetting the original aspiration, keep the mission in mind, be absolutely loyal to the party, strictly abide by party constitution, rules and discipline, not believe in religion, and not participate in religious activities, not spreading and promoting religion, do not provide support for the holding of religious activities or the construction of religious facilities unilaterally, and resolutely put an end to not

believing overtly, but doing so covertly; not believing in public, but doing so on arrival at home; not believe while in office, but doing so upon retirement.

2. Strictly require yourself to adhere to party member standards, take the initiative to wear party member badges, not wear religious symbols such as beads, statues, not tattooing religious scriptures or religious signs on your body, and not placing religious signs on office premises or official vehicles, not participating in group religious study and religious chanting, not donating money and materials to monasteries, not going for religious ritual visits, pilgrimage, receiving ordination, making religious offerings, and not doing retreats. Not doing circumambulation of mountains and lakes. Not inviting monks and nuns and requesting them to perform divination for family members, perform prayers and provide names to children. Nor forwarding or liking religious audio, video, religious information and scriptures.

3. Categorically draw a clear line with the 14th Dalai and the Dalai clique, and clearly hoist the flag to eliminate the negative influence of the 14th Dalai and Dalai clique using religion. Not believing in rumors, spreading rumors, not using religion to interfere in the nation's affairs, social work, economic, cultural, and social undertakings. Not obstructing national construction projects by seeking recourse to "sacred mountains" and "divine lakes".

4. To send minor children to receive compulsory education in accordance with the law, rather than sending them to monasteries as monks and nuns. Not sending them to places of religious worship, schools or training institutions run by religious clerics to receive education and training.

5. Assiduously guide religious family members and relatives to downplay their religious consciousness, advise them not to set up altars, place religious objects, hang religious pictures and photos of religious personalities at home. Make efforts as best as possible to make them not participate in religious activities or do so as little as possible. Incense-burning ceremonies must be conducted according to best practices to protect the environment. In case of customary activities such as weddings and funerals advance supplication has to be made to the

party branch before inviting religious personnel to carry out religious activities. Family members and close relatives who go abroad to have an audience of the 14th Dalai or participate in various religious ceremonies and religious activities organized by the 14th Dalai and the Dalai clique should be promptly stopped, and if that does not work, then it should be reported to the party organization immediately.

6. Assiduously guide the religious public to treat religion rationally, consciously change customs, and reduce the negative influence of religion. Then, through pursuing a healthy and civilized lifestyle, and depending on hard work and perseverance, create a happy life.



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