



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Analysis: Blinken meets Dalai Lama's representative

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In a sign of America's enduring support for Tibet, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken held an unannounced meeting with Ngodup Dongchung, representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in New Delhi, during his just-concluded visit to India.

“Secretary Blinken’s decision to meet the Dalai Lama’s representative in New Delhi shows the Biden administration is serious about working to resolve the Tibetan issue, as mandated by last year’s Tibetan Policy and Support Act,” the International Campaign for Tibet said. “We look forward to Secretary Blinken taking the crucial next step of appointing a special coordinator for Tibetan issues in the State Department as quickly as possible.”

“Tibet is a vital interest of the United States in its ties with China and the Indo-Pacific region, so the administration must do everything it can to stand up for the Tibetan people.”

Chinese response

At a press conference today in Beijing, Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian claimed that “Tibetan affairs are purely China’s internal affairs that allow no foreign interference.”

“China firmly opposes any form of contact between foreign officials and the Dalai Lama,” the spokesperson added.

Despite the hypocrisy of China complaining about foreign interference while meddling in US and Indian affairs, the spokesperson’s comments ignore the fact that Tibet is an important interest of the American people.

Americans strongly support the Tibetan cause. For decades, the US Congress has shown consistent, bipartisan support for Tibet, including through last year’s passage of the Tibetan and Policy Support Act, as well as the passage of the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act in 2018.

Americans and Tibetans also align on issues of human rights, democracy, religious freedom and more—all of which the Chinese government opposes.

In addition, the US has not only a significant Tibetan American exile community but also a large number of non-Tibetan followers of the Dalai Lama and Tibetan Buddhism.

The Dalai Lama consistently rates as one of Americans’ most admired people in the world, according to polls.

Meeting with representative

According to the State Department, Blinken met with Dongchung, the Dalai Lama’s representative, in New Delhi on July 28.

A US official who briefed reporters on condition of anonymity said: “The Dalai Lama obviously is a globally revered spiritual leader and so the gesture was gratefully received and appreciated.”

Media reports indicate that Dongchung presented Blinken with a ceremonial scarf from His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Given the Dalai Lama’s public admiration for the United States as a champion of the fundamental values of democracy and freedom, as well as the bearer of responsibility for leading on those issues, it’s possible that he also had a personal message for Blinken.

Meeting with Tibetan Buddhist teacher

Blinken also included a Tibetan Buddhist teacher in a separate roundtable with civil society leaders on July 28.

Among the select group of participants was Tibet House Director Geshe Dorji Damdul, a well-known Buddhist scholar. Tibet House is a cultural center in New Delhi established by the Dalai Lama that has led programs promoting the revival of Buddhism in India.

“The Indian people and the American people believe in human dignity, in equality of opportunity, the rule of law, fundamental freedoms, including freedom of religion and belief,” Blinken said at the roundtable. “These are fundamental tenets of democracies like ours, and our purpose is to give real meaning to these words and constantly renew our commitment to these ideals.”

Blinken support for Tibet

Blinken’s meetings with Dongchung and Geshe Dorji Damdul were only the latest signs of the State Department’s commitment to Tibet under his leadership.

Earlier this month, Blinken joined other world leaders in wishing the Dalai Lama a happy birthday as he turned 86.

“I have deep respect and appreciation for His Holiness’ grace, wisdom, and humility, as well as his dedication to greater global equality and the equal rights of all people, including his fellow Tibetans,” Blinken said. “I wish His Holiness the very best.”

On Feb. 12, Blinken became the first secretary of state to speak at the State Department’s annual reception for Tibetan New Year, which the International Campaign for Tibet helped organize.

“Tibet’s cultural legacy has thrived for more than 2,000 years, and the Biden administration is committed to preserving, protecting and honoring this linguistic, religious and cultural heritage,” Blinken said at the event.

Blinken also raised Tibet in his first call as secretary with a Chinese diplomat, stressing that “the United States will continue to stand up for human rights and democratic values, including in Xinjiang, Tibet, and Hong Kong,” according to a department spokesperson.

Deputy secretary raises Tibet in China

Just before Blinken’s visit to India, Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman visited China, where she raised Tibet in meetings with Chinese officials.

According to the State Department, Sherman “raised our concerns about human rights, including Beijing’s anti-democratic crackdown in Hong Kong; the ongoing genocide and crimes against humanity in Xinjiang; abuses in Tibet; and the curtailing of media access and freedom of the press.”

Sherman's reference to Tibet sent an important message to the Chinese government that the US will continue to stand up for Tibetans and other peoples oppressed by Beijing.



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