



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

'Peaceful liberation' of Tibet festivities no cause to celebrate

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Although China is holding large festivities to mark 70 years of its authoritarian rule in Tibet, the Tibetan people themselves have no reason to celebrate, the International Campaign for Tibet said today.

China is organizing a series of events for Aug. 19, 2021 in celebration of the 70th anniversary of its so-called "peaceful liberation of Tibet." A 22-member delegation from Beijing—led by Wang Yang, member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference—arrived today, Aug. 18, in Lhasa, Tibet's capital, for the events.

In a press conference on Aug. 17, Zhao Huinian, deputy secretary-general of the Tibet Autonomous Region Party Committee and member of the Office of the Leading Group for the 70th Anniversary Celebration of Tibet's Peaceful Liberation, said Wang's delegation will "present washing machines to farmers and herdsmen, and present souvenirs such as medical and health kits to cadres and employees, which fully reflects the special support for work in Tibet, care and concern for cadres and masses of all ethnic groups in Tibet from Party Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at its core."

The celebrations will take place in the square in front of the Potala Palace, the traditional winter residence of the Dalai Lama. Authorities have already announced the closure of the Potala to the public today and tomorrow. Ten major roads in Lhasa are also being closed not only to traffic, but also to pedestrians from 4 am Aug. 19 until the end of the ceremony.

International Campaign for Tibet quote

"Judging by developments in Tibet over the past 70 years, the Tibetan people have no cause for jubilation, as Chinese policies have turned Tibet itself into an open-air prison with restrictions on all aspects of Tibetan life," said the International Campaign for Tibet, a Washington, DC-based advocacy group. "Today, Tibetans have to live under the watchful eye of the Chinese Communist Party, and the mere assertion of their Tibetan identity or reverence for the Dalai Lama is cause for incarceration and persecution.

"After 70 years of oppression, the only thing the Tibetan people need 'peaceful liberation' from today is China's brutality. Rather than force an empty celebration on the Tibetan people, the Chinese government should sit down with Tibetan leaders and the Dalai Lama's representatives to negotiate meaningful autonomy that will bring actual peace and basic freedoms back to Tibet."

Forced Agreement

The festivities tomorrow are set to mark the 70th anniversary of the controversial 17-Point Agreement.

China falsely terms the agreement as the "peaceful liberation of Tibet." However, after he was able to flee Tibet for India in 1959, the Dalai Lama said that the 1951 agreement was made under duress.

Additionally, as evidenced by the situation in Tibet today, China violated its own forced agreement rather than abide by it. The agreement states that Tibet would enjoy full autonomy, and that there would be no interference by the Chinese government in Tibet's religion, 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.

Restrictions on Tibetan life

Today, the Tibetan people face restrictions at all levels of their lives. Religion, which is of great importance to the Tibetan people, has been made subservient to the needs of the Chinese Communist Party. China has even asserted its authority to determine the next Dalai Lama, ignoring the fact that the system of reincarnation is a deeply spiritual process and contradictory to the atheistic approach of the CCP.

Not only party members, but all Tibetans are being forced to turn away from religion. A new code of conduct for CCP members in the Tibet Autonomous Region, which spans most of central and western Tibet, explicitly forbids party members from all forms of religiosity in both public and private life.

Party members are also required to take an active role in propagating 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.

Sinicization rather than peaceful liberation

China is also in the process of implementing assimilationist policies that will lead to the complete "Sinicization" of the Tibetan people. Sinicization is a campaign by the Chinese government to bring all aspects of society under the control of the Chinese government.

In Tibet, Sinicization includes giving the government total authority over Tibetan Buddhism and attempting to eliminate Tibetans' unique religious, linguistic and cultural identity. Accordingly, the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) includes long-range objectives that will lead to the continued displacement of Tibetans in Tibet in the name of "poverty alleviation" and ecological conservation, and their losing their traditional lifestyle under China's urbanization plan.

Chinese leadership

In recent months, Chinese authorities have launched a massive propaganda blitz as part of their efforts to use the 17-Point Agreement to legitimize their occupation of Tibet. Furthermore, ironically, they are making efforts to convince the Tibetan people about the benefits of their "peaceful liberation."

In July, Chinese President Xi Jinping made an unannounced visit to Nyingtri (Chinese: Linzhi) and Lhasa, during which he gave remarks to the public while facing the "Monument to the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet" in front of the Potala Palace. This week's celebrations will take place in the same ground.

Senior Chinese leaders have also had a presence at past celebrations of anniversaries of the controversial agreement. During the 60th anniversary celebrations on July 19, 2011, Xi Jinping, who was then China's vice president, led a 59-member central government delegation to Lhasa.

During the 50th anniversary celebrations on July 19, 2001, Hu Jintao, who was then the vice president, led the delegation. For the 40th anniversary celebrations in 1991, Li Tieying, a Politburo member, led the delegation from Beijing.

Past commemorations were marked by the release of stamps. This year, commemorative coins were issued by China's central bank on Aug. 16, 2021.



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