

  
INTERNATIONAL  
CAMPAIGN  
FOR TIBET

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**TIBET**  
WATCH

**SPRING 2020**

**INSIDE:**

Pelosi Leads Tibet  
Strategy Meeting

Tibetan Policy & Support  
Act Gains Momentum

Losar Celebration at  
the State Department

Petition to Protect  
Religious Freedom



**SETTING STRATEGY FOR SUPPORT OF TIBET**  
**MARCH 4<sup>TH</sup> MEETING GATHERED LEADERS FROM AROUND THE WORLD**



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Photo: Olivier Adam



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Dear Friend,

As I write to you, ICT is at the start of a very busy year, while our nation and the world are also facing a global health crisis. The coming months will be a challenging time, but rest assured that ICT's vital work for Tibet will forge ahead. The continued support of our community of compassion empowers this work—thank you.

We have already accomplished many things in 2020 and I hope you enjoy the highlights shared in this issue.

At the end of January, one of our major initiatives took a crucial step forward. The Tibetan Policy and Support Act (TPSA), for which we have been advocating for months, was passed by the House of Representatives with an overwhelming majority.

This success owes much to the efforts of ICT members who showed up to lobby on Capitol Hill, wrote emails, made phone calls, gave financial support and signed petitions to their elected leaders in government. Thank you so much for the powerful impact you have made so far!

On pages 4 and 5, you'll see the milestones along the path to passage of this important legislation. The next step is the debate and vote in the Senate. Despite the challenges ahead, our focus at ICT is to build on the momentum that you have helped grow and to show the Senate leadership that religious freedom in Tibet—and protection of the succession process for the Dalai Lama—is an issue that greatly concerns the American people. Please help us reinforce that message by signing and returning the petition on page 11, which we plan to hand-deliver collectively to Senator James E. Risch, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations.

Featured on the cover of this edition, is a photo of members of ICT's international Boards and staff from offices in Amsterdam, Berlin, Brussels and Washington, DC as they met with Speaker Pelosi in the US Capitol to discuss the situation in Tibet. This meeting was part of an invigorating two-day strategic planning session convened to coordinate the international operations of ICT.

We eagerly await an upcoming report from the State Department that relates to the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act that was signed into law at the end of 2018 (read more on page 6). It will identify those Chinese officials who will be sanctioned by the US because of their involvement in refusing entry to Tibet for American citizens. This report is an important sign of the effective implementation of the law, and we will keep you informed and updated in future communications.

On page 8 of this issue, you'll see colorful photos from Losar celebrations—Tibetan New Year—held at the US State Department at the end of February. It is an important recognition by the US government of the contributions made by the Tibetan American community to our society, and we are proud of being instrumental in organizing this yearly event that honors the enduring beauty and significance of Tibetan culture.

As we go to press, the novel coronavirus continues to affect our world, disrupt many lives and create uncertainty. During these troubled times, please take a moment to reflect on the wise words shared by His Holiness the Dalai Lama on March 13<sup>th</sup> that are featured on the back cover. On behalf of all of us at ICT, we wish you a healthy, happy and safe New Year.

In solidarity,



Matteo Mecacci



# THE TIBETAN POLICY AND SUPPORT ACT



## GAINING MOMENTUM

The Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2019 (TPSA), introduced this past fall, protects among many things Tibetan Buddhists' religious freedom and right to select their own leader.

The TPSA will make it official US policy that the Dalai Lama's succession is a strictly religious issue that only he and Tibetan Buddhists can decide. Chinese officials who interfere will face sanctions that could include

having their assets frozen and their entry to the US denied.

The TPSA also addresses American diplomatic representation in Tibet and conditions the opening of any new Chinese consulate in the US on the opening of an American consulate in Lhasa, the Tibetan capital. It contains provisions regarding Tibet's fragile ecosystem and precious water supply, as well as humanitar-

ian support inside Tibet and in the diaspora community. It also aims to strengthen the office of the Special Coordinator for Tibet at the US State Department and lends support to Tibetan democracy in exile.

This new legislation updates and extends the original Tibetan Policy Act of 2002, which established US policy on Tibet. It is time to pass a new law for a new era.

## EUROPEAN COUNTRIES EXPRESS SUPPORT

Belgium and the Netherlands have rejected China's efforts to control the succession of the revered spiritual leader of Tibet. Dutch Foreign Affairs Minister Stef Blok said,

*"The position of this cabinet is that it is up to the Tibetan religious community itself to appoint a future successor to the Dalai Lama."*



## PATH TO PASSAGE

### DECEMBER 2018

The Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act (RATA) was signed into law, paving the way for future legislation on Tibet.

### SEPTEMBER 2019

Rep. James McGovern (D-MA) introduced the TPSA in the House and Sens. Marco Rubio (R-FL) and Ben Cardin (D-MD) introduced the bill in the Senate.

### OCTOBER 2019

ICT held “Mini Lobby Day” in DC, where ICT members visited Congressional offices asking for support of the TPSA.

### OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2019

The ICT community sent more than 12,000 messages to Members of Congress, asking them to support and co-sponsor the bill.

### DECEMBER 2019

The bill was unanimously approved by the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

### JANUARY 2020

The TPSA passed the House with an overwhelming vote of 392-22 and moved to the Senate.

### FEBRUARY 2020

As we go to press, the TPSA is before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations and we are preparing for Tibet Lobby Day—March 23-24—when Tibetan Americans and Tibet supporters from across the country will hold phone meetings to lobby Senators to pass the TPSA.

### NEXT STEPS

Once out of committee, the bill will go before the full Senate for debate—and passage—and then on to the President for signature into law.



Photo: Olivier Adam

## IN TIBET, SELECTING THE DALAI LAMA IS A SACRED TRADITION.

## BUT CHINA HAS BEEN PLOTTING TO TAKE CONTROL FOR 25 YEARS.



In 1995, the Dalai Lama recognized a six-year-old boy as the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama.



When a Dalai Lama passes, the Panchen Lama is involved in the search for his successor.



Tibetan Buddhists alone have the right to select their next spiritual leader.



Days after he was recognized, China abducted the Panchen Lama. His whereabouts are still unknown.



China installed a fake Panchen Lama, who the Communist Party will use to rubber stamp its own Dalai Lama.



China plans to use their Dalai Lama to further manipulate and control Tibetan Buddhism.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

### THE TPSA IS VITAL TO THE PROTECTION OF TIBET'S FUTURE. HELP TODAY!



Sign and return the petition on page 11



Make a donation to support our advocacy efforts at [savetibet.org/give](https://savetibet.org/give)



Call or email the offices of your Senators and ask them to vote yes on S.2539, the Tibetan Policy and Support Act



## ICT'S INTERNATIONAL BOARD CONVENES IN WASHINGTON, DC

Board members and staff leadership from the International Campaign for Tibet's offices in Amsterdam, Berlin and Brussels joined their colleagues in Washington, DC for a two-day strategy session March 4-5, 2020. During the meeting, they reviewed ICT's success in implementing the strategic plan formulated in 2013-2014 and discussed how to further integrate ICT's offices around the world.

The International Board also discussed how to build on the success of the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act; how to strengthen support for Tibet particularly in Europe; and how to advance access to Tibet, religious freedom and sustainable development.



## ICT BOARD MEMBERS PARTICIPATE IN STRATEGY MEETING WITH SPEAKER PELOSI AND MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

While convened in Washington, DC in early March, ICT Board members and staff were invited to a strategy meeting on Tibet hosted for the sixth year by House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) at her office on Capitol Hill (featured on the front cover). A bipartisan group of Congress members also participated in this session to discuss the situation in Tibet.



## STATE DEPARTMENT REPORT ON CHINESE OFFICIALS: UPDATE

On December 10, 2019, ICT held a 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Nobel Peace Prize. During the event, Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom Sam Brownback made an important announcement regarding the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act (RATA), which became law last year.

The legislation, which targets China's forced isolation of Tibet from the outside world, requires the State Department to deny or revoke visas to the US for the Chinese officials responsible for keeping American diplomats, journalists and ordinary citizens out of Tibet.

Brownback said the State Department will soon release a report identifying the number of Chinese officials that have been denied entry to the US under RATA.

*"This is very meaningful. We are hopeful that the department will fully and effectively implement [the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act]."*

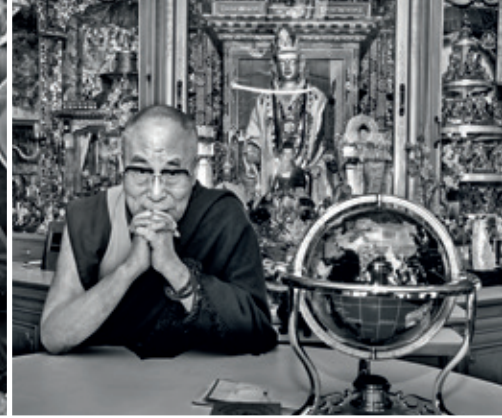
ICT PRESIDENT MATTEO MECACCI





## THE DALAI LAMA: GLIMPSES INTO A LIFE OF WISDOM 2020 WALL CALENDAR

This year's ICT calendar features twelve special photographs of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, taken by renowned Indian photographer Raghu Rai, who has closely followed His Holiness's life. Today the Dalai Lama, who retired from Tibetan political leadership in 2011, devotes himself to promoting human values and religious harmony. He also continues to draw attention to the rich Tibetan Buddhist cultural heritage, which he feels has much to contribute to the development of world civilization. This calendar is a tribute to the Dalai Lama by the International Campaign for Tibet.



To order your 2020 wall calendar, visit [savetibetstore.org](http://savetibetstore.org). A very limited quantity is available.

### Special Invitation:

## JOIN MOUNTAINEER CONRAD ANKER IN YOSEMITE TO BENEFIT ICT AND THE ROWELL FUND FOR TIBET

ICT is hosting a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to climb, hike and soak in the beautiful scenery of Yosemite National Park's Tuolumne Meadows with exciting activities, good food and great company. We invite you to join renowned alpinist and climber, Conrad Anker, ICT staff including Tencho Gyatso, Board members including John Ackerly and other distinguished members of the outdoor community, for a unique weekend of adventure in Yosemite National Park.

All proceeds will support ICT and the Rowell Fund for Tibet, which



promotes and preserves Tibetan culture. The Rowell Fund, managed by ICT, was established in memory of lifelong Tibet supporters Galen and Barbara Rowell, who died in a plane crash in 2002. Each year, grants are awarded to support projects lead by Tibetans who have a vision to make a significant contribution to their community and/or an international audience in the fields of visual arts and media, and environmental and women's rights.

Some of this year's grantee projects include a documentary film on

the importance of Tibetan women in community building; a rainwater conservation project; a biography in Tibetan of the Dalai Lama's mother; and a project to promote health and wellbeing among Tibetan monks and nuns in exile.

Please join us, August 6-9, 2020, to rock climb with Conrad Anker, hike in one of the most beautiful wild areas on Earth and enjoy talks and presentations from professional climbers, photographers and experts on Tibet and the Himalayas.

For more information, please visit: [www.savetibet.org/news/experience-yosemite-with-the-legendary-conrad-anker](http://www.savetibet.org/news/experience-yosemite-with-the-legendary-conrad-anker).

To reserve your spot, please email [yosemite@savetibet.org](mailto:yosemite@savetibet.org) or call (202) 785-1515.

*A limited number of reservations are available.*



## TIBET INTEREST GROUP IN EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT MEETS FOR FIRST TIME SINCE ELECTIONS

The first meeting of the European Parliament's Tibet Interest Group since a new Parliament was elected took place January 22, 2020 in Brussels. The meeting brought together about 15 Members of the European Parliament or their assistants, as well as the ICT Brussels team and Tashi Phuntsok, head of the Office of

Tibet in Brussels, which is an official agency of the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration.

MEP Mikulas Peksa explained that in the face of the threats currently posed by the Chinese regime, the Tibetan struggle for human rights and freedom is more relevant than ever and that the support of policymakers worldwide remains deeply needed.

ICT EU Policy Director Vincent Metten also welcomed the new members of the group and its president and



underlined the importance of the upcoming year for EU-China relations. Metten mentioned the many events planned for the year, such as the EU-China Human Rights dialogue, the EU-China Summit and the meetings between EU Member States and Chinese heads of states and governments in Leipzig, Germany in September.



Following his attendance at the National Prayer Breakfast, former political prisoner Golog Jigme visited with staff at the ICT office in Washington, DC.

## US LEADERS PRAY FOR TIBETANS AT NATIONAL PRAYER BREAKFAST

Top US leaders prayed for religious prisoners in Tibet on February 6, 2020 at the National Prayer Breakfast. The event included Tibetan monk Golog Jigme, a participant in ICT's Political Prisoner Rehabilitation Program, who escaped torture and imprisonment and whose presence helped raise awareness of China's ruthless oppression.

With President Trump sitting nearby, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi led the gathering in a prayer for "the poor and the persecuted" at the Washington Hilton in Washington, DC. The first group she mentioned was the Tibetan Buddhists.

"Let us pray for the Panchen Lama and all the Tibetan Buddhists in prison in China or missing for following their faith," Speaker Pelosi said as Trump closed his eyes and bowed his head in prayer.

## LOSAR CELEBRATION

For the sixth year in a row, the US State Department held a reception to celebrate Losar—the Tibetan New Year—one of the most important and joyful holidays for the people of Tibet.

This is the Iron Mouse Year 2147 on the Tibetan calendar. In Tibetan astrology, there is a twelve-year cycle with each year represented by a different animal and associated with one of the five elements—Earth, Water, Fire, Wood and Iron.

The event, held on February 18<sup>th</sup>, brought together US government officials, the US representative of the Dalai Lama, diplomats, Tibetan-Americans and supporters, and included traditional music, snacks, decorations and a beautiful Losar altar.



Left: Two members of the Capital Area Tibetan Association, Paldon Tegang and 11-year-old Tenzin Choetsok, in traditional Tibetan dress for the occasion. Right: ICT's Director of Outreach Tencho Gyatso (at center) celebrates Losar with fellow members of the Capital Area Tibetan Association at the annual State Department event in February. Losar Tashi Delek!



## SELF-IMMOLATION REPORT

One confirmed self-immolation has occurred since our last report, bringing the total to 156 self-immolations since 2009. Each issue, we present with sadness those individuals who have most recently chosen this act of protest.



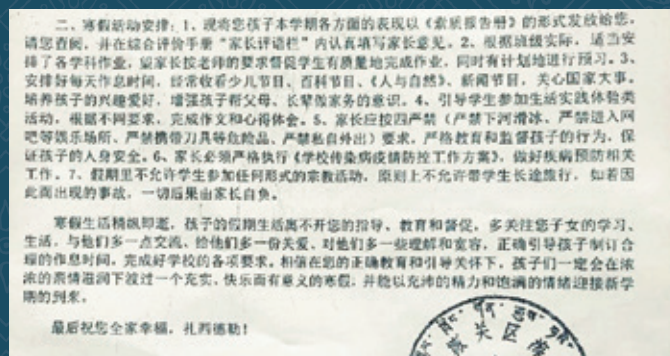
**November 26, 2019**

A young Tibetan former monk from Kirti monastery (pictured above) set himself on fire and died in Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan, in the Tibetan area of Amdo. His is the only known self-immolation by a Tibetan in 2019.

Despite the intense restrictions that Chinese authorities have placed on sharing information with the outside world, images reached Tibetans in exile of 24-year-old Yonten alone and ablaze on a road somewhere in the pastoral area of Me'uruma, Ngaba, where the wave of Tibetan self-immolations began in 2009.

**Wellbeing: Deceased**

## TIBETAN SCHOOLCHILDREN PROHIBITED FROM TAKING PART IN RELIGIOUS ACTIVITIES



As schools in the Tibetan capital of Lhasa began their winter vacations in January, parents received orders prohibiting their children from being involved in any religious activities during the break.

In one directive dated December 31, 2019 and sent by Lhasa Chengguan Haicheng Elementary School, parents were told that per the order of the Education Department, students could not participate in any religious activities, nor could the parents take them to faraway places.

ICT maintains that by banning schoolchildren from religious activities, Chinese authorities are infringing upon basic principles of freedom of religion.



## RECENT PUBLICATION OF NOTE

**Resistance and Unity**  
Tashi Gelek, Dorjee Damdul  
and Tashi Dhondup  
Notion Press, 2019

Gelek, Damdul and Dhondup tell the story of Shangri Lhagyal, an "unsung hero" of Tibetan resistance to Chinese rule. In doing so, they share family stories about their homeland and explain

how eastern Tibetans like Lhagyal fought to preserve Tibet's freedom and safeguard the Dalai Lama. Former ICT employee Professor Carole McGranahan edited *Resistance and Unity*, which incorporates oral testimony recorded by Lhagyal and boxed asides explaining the historical context of the events he lived through.

In January, McGranahan and Damdul visited the ICT office in Washington, DC for a public talk and lively discussion of the book. They are seen here with ICT Vice President, Bhuchung K. Tsering.







## Member Spotlight:

# DR. ELENI TOUSIMIS



In 2016, Dr. Eleni Tousimis was proposed to be His Holiness the Dalai Lama's physician during his visit to Washington, DC. At first, she was extremely honored, but a little uncertain. As a breast cancer surgeon at Georgetown University Hospital, she wasn't sure she was the right person to care for an elderly man. But His Holiness was not worried about her specialization; he just wanted to know that she had a great heart and mind. "I am IN!" she remembers saying.

Born and raised in Washington, DC, Tousimis is a first-generation American from a big Greek family. Science has always been a part of her life; she grew up playing with microscopes in her father's biophysics lab. Today she is a renowned surgeon, professor and director of the MedStar Breast Health Program at Georgetown.

Unexpectedly, she's also a business school student. Hearing His Holiness speak in 2016 inspired her to seek a broader education. She decided to go back to school to pursue an MBA at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She values the program for its focus on innovation and on using technology to better humankind—which is very much in line with His Holiness's vision. "He's a religious leader who believes strongly in science," she says.

Given his reduced travel to the US, Tousimis never had the opportunity to serve again as a doctor to the Dalai Lama. But in 2018, she was invited to join ICT's Tencho Gyatso, Lesley Rich and a handful of other members to travel to Dharamsala, India. She spent time with the Dalai Lama's personal physician there as well as local Indian and Tibetan medical professionals. She was so impressed by their focus on mindfulness that she brought the practice back to her team in the US. Now, a group of admins, techs, doctors and nurses at her hospital gathers for fifteen minutes at the start of each day to calm their minds, and meditate on their purpose and the patients they serve. She says the ritual has made a huge positive impact—for both staff and patients.

But mindfulness was not the only lesson Tousimis carried back with her from Dharamsala. The Dalai Lama's focus on environmentalism inspired her to make other meaningful changes. When the breast health center at Georgetown was renovated recently, she pushed to use only recycled materials, without any toxic adhesives. The center is also aiming to go plastic-free by the end of 2020, and to reduce the waste and carbon footprint of the operating room. Tousimis credits her exposure to Tibetan culture and core values

with shaping her outlook—and her actions—in so many ways.

It has also shaped her perspective on the meaning of life. It's not about climbing the corporate ladder or making more money, she says:

**"IT'S ABOUT FINDING HAPPINESS IN HELPING OTHERS, CREATING PEACE WITHIN YOURSELF AND AROUND YOU AND FINDING YOUR PASSION AND PURPOSE. THIS IS WHAT WE AS HUMANS SHOULD BE STRIVING FOR."**

Tousimis remembers fondly the time she was selected from an audience of hundreds to ask His Holiness a single question. She chose to ask how to cultivate compassion while surrounded by so much technology. "He told me: You have a very extensive education. Before making any decision, use your knowledge in combination with your heart. It has to be both—mind and heart. I've always remembered that."

Join Dr. Tousimis in helping to preserve and promote Tibetan culture. Contact Brian Ahern at [brian.ahern@savetibet.org](mailto:brian.ahern@savetibet.org) or 202-580-6770 to learn about opportunities to get more involved in ICT's work.



# CALLING ALL MEMBERS:

## URGE THE CHAIRMAN OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS TO GUIDE THE TIBETAN POLICY AND SUPPORT ACT TO PASSAGE



The Tibetan Policy and Support Act recently passed in the House of Representatives with an overwhelming majority. Now, we are pushing for the bill to move on to a vote in the Senate. **Please sign the below petition to Senator James E. Risch, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, calling for his support in stewarding passage of the Tibetan Policy and Support Act.**

**This legislation has the potential to significantly strengthen US support for Tibetans by:**

- Establishing an official US policy that the selection of Tibetan Buddhist leaders—including a future Dalai Lama—can only be decided by Tibetan Buddhists, free of Chinese government interference, and that those Chinese officials who do interfere can be sanctioned.
- Prohibiting the opening of any new Chinese consulate in the US, until a US consulate is allowed to open in Tibet's historic capital, Lhasa.
- Extending US funding through 2025 for humanitarian programs in Tibet and Tibetan exiled communities, providing much needed financial stability.

Other provisions address China's plundering of Tibet's natural resources—including its precious water supply—and strengthening the international effort to find a longstanding political solution for peace.

Passage of this crucial legislation will be a priority focus of our advocacy work in the coming months. Please join us by taking a moment to add your name to the petition below and return it to us in the attached envelope. We will deliver all ICT member petitions together to demonstrate the widespread support for this Act.

Please take a moment to add your name to the petition below.

PLEASE CLIP HERE & MAIL YOUR PETITION IN THE ATTACHED ENVELOPE

**TO: SENATOR JAMES E. RISCH  
CHAIRMAN OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS**

**FROM: A CONCERNED CITIZEN**

As a strong ally of the Tibetan people, I am writing to urge you to facilitate and encourage passage of the Tibetan Policy and Support Act (S.2539).

This bipartisan bill will significantly enhance US support for the Tibetan cause through key provisions, including rejection of China's ultimate affront to religious freedom in Tibet: the Communist government's unconscionable scheme to pick an illegitimate Dalai Lama.

I hope you will show your compassion for the oppressed people of Tibet, and I thank you for your leadership on this important human rights issue.

Sincerely,

Sign Here \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_



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To learn more, contact Brian Ahern at 202.580.6770 or [brian.ahern@savetibet.org](mailto:brian.ahern@savetibet.org).



Photo: Tenzin Choejor

**AS THE WORLD FACES A GLOBAL HEALTH CRISIS,  
HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA SHARED THESE  
WISE WORDS ON SOCIAL MEDIA ON MARCH 13<sup>th</sup>:**

“In the global society we live in today, we are interdependent—we all depend on each other. Therefore, it is no longer appropriate to divide the world into ‘us’ and ‘them’. We need to think of everyone belonging to one humanity. If the world were attacked by aliens, we would unite. We need to work together in a similar way to resist dangers to health that affect us all.”

**—HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA**



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