



## INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

### **Ban on Tibetan Buddhist teachers in Guangdong's Yunfu City**

Read online: <https://savetibet.org/ban-on-tibetan-buddhist-teachers-in-guangdongs-yunfu-city>

August 4, 2022

The government-backed Chinese Buddhist Association in the coastal province of Guangdong has called to “resolutely resist illegal preaching by Tibetan monks” in a move similar to previous notices issued in China’s Shanxi Province. The notice by the Buddhist Association of Yunfu city, made public by the Rights Protection Network in July 2022, states that “illegal preaching” had “seriously affected the interests of believers, property safety, family safety and social harmony.” While referring to Tibetan Buddhist teachers as “outlaws” who pretend to be “living Buddhas” to “cheat” on or even sexually exploit believers, the notice unmistakably underscores the political nature of regulations and rules pertaining to Tibetan Buddhism. It cites national laws and regulations that ban Tibetan Buddhist monks from leaving “the Tibetan area,” and, most notably, the notice warns of “religious infiltration by overseas Tibetan Buddhist monks.”

The Yunfu notice is similar to the notices issued in May 2019 in Weibin District, Baoji prefecture-level city, and Niangziguan Town, both in Shanxi Province. The Weibin notice of May 23, 2019 prohibited Chinese temples in the district from inviting Tibetan Buddhist teachers from giving religious services or from displaying any signs of Tibetan Buddhism in their temples. The Niangziguan notice, issued in May 2019 and titled “Niangziguan Town Program for Resolutely Waging the Tough Battle to Prevent and Defuse Major Risks,” conflated Tibetan Buddhist teaching with promoting and carrying Tibetan independence activities to justify restrictions on the influence of Tibetan Buddhist teachers on Chinese society.

“The Yunfu and Shanxi notices highlight at the local level what the toxic mélange of rigid regulatory overreach and institutional suspicion means for Tibetan Buddhists. They have become subject to prejudice and discrimination by the state resulting in disharmony between the Tibetans and Chinese,” the International Campaign for Tibet said. “Such notices are part of the party-state’s systematic approach to malign Tibetan Buddhism and its teachers to make the lives of Tibetans very difficult,” ICT added.

As a medium for disinformation, the notices depict Tibetan Buddhist teachers as either separatist activists, sexual predators, frauds siphoning devotees’ funds, or all of the above.

The Chinese government aims to curb the influence of Tibetan Buddhism and the Tibetan religious teachers in the Chinese Buddhist community. In the eyes of the Chinese state, apparently, Tibetan Buddhism should only spread in Tibet, and Chinese Buddhism should only spread in China. To achieve this, the Chinese government has strengthened laws to control the behavior of religious teachers and therefore the spread of Tibetan Buddhist teachings. In force since May 1, 2021, new religious measures on the administration of religious clergy (Order no.15) require religious clergy who engage in religious activities across jurisdictions (provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities) to obtain prior approval and report to the government bodies in all concerned jurisdictions (Article 34, Order no.15). Failure to follow the approved and “correct” path of the state will face punishments, including criminal charges, as per Article 65 and 73 of the “Regulations on Religious Affairs” (2018).

For religious clerics inside the Tibet Autonomous Region who seek to leave their place of religious activity (either to a place within or outside the TAR), the November 2021 “Measures for the implementation of the Regulations on Religious Affairs of the Tibet Autonomous Region” requires individuals to obtain prior approval and report to county-level governments in both home and destination locations (Article 39). Such requirements have been stipulated in a number of previous local and regional regulations, in particular outside the Tibet Autonomous Region.

The Chinese government's treatment of Chinese practitioners of Tibetan Buddhism at the Serthar Larung Five Sciences Buddhist Academy (popularly known as Larung Gar) in Serthar (Chinese: Seda) County, Sichuan also highlights an important dimension of the strategy to contain the spread or appeal of Tibetan Buddhism. In November 2021, Chinese practitioners at Larung Gar were expelled from the academy and prevented from returning. The Chinese practitioners were told to either convert to Chinese Buddhism or return to a layman's life.

### **Yunfu Buddhist Association of Guangdong Province (letterhead)**

Notice Regarding the Request to Resist Illegal Preaching by Tibetan Buddhist Monks

Luoding City Buddhist Association, Xinxing County Buddhist Association, all temples (nunneries and viharas) in the city:

In recent years, illegal preaching by Tibetan Buddhist monks on the mainland has become more and more serious, which has seriously impacted the teachings of Nīārtha Mahayana Buddhism and Zen Buddhism, and seriously affected the interests of believers, property safety, family safety and social harmony. Some outlaws pretend to be Living Buddhas to initiate empowerments, teach the Dharma,

perform life liberations, develop followers, cheat people for money and sexual interests, engage in various acts which violate national laws and regulations, and even support separatist activities, which has become a major hidden danger to social stability and harmony. According to the country's religious policies, laws and regulations, it is illegal for Tibetan Buddhist monks to leave the Tibetan areas to teach Dharma or accept followers and offerings without permission. In accordance with the national and provincial regulations on religious affairs and relevant regulations of religious policies, as well in order to safeguard the interests of religious believers and maintain the pure inheritance of the Buddha's Dharma and Zen Buddhism, we require all Buddhist associations, monasteries and other places of religious activity in the city to resolutely resist Tibetan Buddhist monks illegally teaching the Dharma in our city.

The relevant matters are hereby notified as follows:

1. Adhere to the mission of protecting and promoting the Buddha's righteous Dharma and the righteousness of Zen Buddhism, and earnestly study the Twelve Divisions of the Tripitaka, especially the Zen Buddhism's clear mind and view of the Tathagata's righteous Dharma. Our city is the hometown of the Sixth Patriarch, Huineng, and an important place for Zen Buddhism. It is the historical mission of monks to promote Zen Buddhism. Therefore, all monasteries are required to adhere to the principle of combining common practice and self-cultivation on the basis of public cultivation, and choose the corresponding method for self-cultivation. Choose Zen Buddhism as the main course, taking the Sixth Patriarch of Zen Buddhism as an example, re-walk the path of the Patriarch, make the Bodhisattva vow, cultivate the Bodhisattva Way, practice the Bodhisattva Way, promote the Zen culture, and serve the harmonious society.
2. Resolutely resist the illegal preaching of Tibetan Buddhist monks. Monasteries and other places of religious activity shall not allow Tibetan Buddhist monks to secretly develop followers without permission; monastery monks shall not violate religious policies, teachings and canons to teach the Dharma together with Tibetan Buddhist monks or privately study Tibetan Buddhism in monasteries. Those who violate the precepts of Chinese Buddhism by studying or participating in Tibetan Buddhist activities will be dealt with in accordance with the national religious policies and Buddhist doctrine. At the same time, the monks in each monastery are required to do a good job in the work of the believers. If any Tibetan Buddhist monks are found to be illegally preaching or pretending to be Living Buddhas to cheat people for money and sexual interests, they should immediately report to the local religious departments and public security organs.
3. Prevent religious infiltration by overseas Tibetan Buddhist monks. Overseas Tibetan Buddhist groups or individuals illegally come to our city to engage in illegal activities such as empowerments and teaching, performing life liberations, developing believers, accepting offerings, or using Tibetan Buddhist teachings to

cheat people for money and sexual interests in the name of Tibetan Buddhism should be reported to the relevant authorities immediately once found.



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