



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Commission: Congress, administration should promote Tibet-China conflict resolution

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The US Congress and the Biden administration should push for a resolution to China's decades-long conflict against Tibet, the Congressional-Executive Commission on China says in its new annual report.

The report, released today, Nov. 16, 2022, says China's officials "continue to show no interest in responding to the Dalai Lama's request for dialogue and continue to disseminate false information about Tibet's history."

"To strengthen the longstanding, bipartisan U.S. policy of promoting dialogue, the Administration and Congress should ensure that calls for dialogue are based on the Tibetan people's right of self-determination under international law and use available resources to counter disinformation about Tibet from [People's Republic of China] officials," the report adds.

The Commission—which consists of nine Senators, nine Representatives and five senior administration officials, including Under Secretary of State Uzra Zeya, who serves as President Biden's Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues—monitors human rights and the development of the rule of law in China.

The commission's annual report documents the Chinese government's "egregious human rights violations" inside and outside the country. In Tibet—which China has illegally occupied for over 60 years—those violations included crackdowns on religious freedom, freedom of speech and language rights. There were also several self-immolations in Tibet this year, the report notes.

"We also continue to record the severe crackdown against Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims, Tibetans and Hong Kongers," said Commission Co-Chair Rep. Jim McGovern. "I urge Members of Congress and the Executive Branch to make use of our recommendations to hold the Chinese government accountable and more effectively prioritize the promotion of universal human rights and the rule of law."

"The only way to ensure human rights in Tibet is by protecting the Tibetan people's right to self-determination through peaceful dialogue with Chinese leaders," the International Campaign for Tibet said. "ICT thanks Chair Sen. Jeff Merkley, Co-Chair Rep. Jim McGovern, Special Coordinator Uzra Zeya and all the members of the Commission for producing this urgent report. We look forward to working with the Commission and other supporters in Congress and the administration to put their recommendations into action and to finally resolve China's illegal occupation of Tibet."

Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Conflict Act

Earlier this year, McGovern helped introduce a bipartisan bill that will pressure China to end its occupation of Tibet through peaceful negotiations with the envoys of the Dalai Lama.

The bill, called the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Conflict Act, will make it official US policy that the Tibetan people have the right to self-determination—and that China’s policies preclude them from exercising that right.

By recognizing Tibet’s status as unresolved under international law, the legislation will pressure China to resume negotiations with the Dalai Lama’s envoys for the first time since 2010.

McGovern, a Massachusetts Democrat, introduced the bill in July alongside Rep. Michael McCaul, R-Texas.

Hopes are high that a Senate version of the bill will be introduced soon.

Rights violations in Tibet

The Congressional-Executive Commission’s report documents a range of human rights violations in Tibet during the reporting year.

- **Religious freedom:** China “continued to restrict, and seek to control, the religious practices of Tibetans, the majority of whom practice Tibetan Buddhism,” the report says. These restrictions included denial of access to Buddhist religious institutions and prohibitions on various forms of worship, particularly during major religious events and politically sensitive anniversaries. The Chinese government also continued to claim authority over selecting Tibetan Buddhist reincarnated teachers, including the Dalai Lama.
- **Language rights:** China’s authorities enforced policies promoting or mandating the use of Mandarin Chinese in Tibetan areas instead of Tibetan or other local languages. This included ordering the closures of Tibetan language schools. According to reports, the Chinese government has separated over 75% of Tibetan schoolchildren ages 6-18 from their families and communities, forcing them into state-run boarding schools where they’re cut off from learning their language, religion and culture.
- **Freedom of speech:** China’s officials punished residents of Tibetan areas for exercising protected rights, including expressing criticism of Chinese government policies and sharing information online.

The report notes that several Tibetans self-immolated in protest of China’s policies over the past year, including 25-year-old popular singer Tsewang Norbu and 81-year-old Taphun.

The report adds that China’s “construction of dams along major rivers ... was reported to have negative impact on the 11 countries downstream and elsewhere in the world.” Most of the South and Southeast Asian regions’ major rivers originate in Tibet, showing the harmful impact of China’s continued occupation of Tibet on the health, welfare and security of nearly 2 billion people.

The report also notes that China continues to restrict foreigners’ access to Tibet and block the free flow of information.

Recommendations

The report recommends that Congress and the administration work with the UN and likeminded countries to set up visits by UN special procedures and human rights experts to Tibet to independently assess the situation there.

The report adds that Congress and the administration should monitor and report on state-run boarding schools in Tibet; work with allies to protect Tibetans' religious freedom, including their right to select their own religious leaders; and encourage China to resume dialogue with the Dalai Lama's envoys.

The report further says that Congressional and White House officials should urge Chinese authorities to release Tibetan political prisoners, including the Panchen Lama, the Tibetan Buddhist leader who has been missing since China abducted him in 1995 when he was just 6 years old.



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