



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

ICT statement on Panchen Lama's 34th birthday

<http://www.savetibet.org/ict-statement-on-panchen-lamas-34th-birthday>

April 24, 2023

The 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, recognized in 1995 by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in accordance with Tibetan Buddhist tradition, turns 34 on April 25, 2023. However, he was swiftly kidnapped by the Chinese government in 1995 itself at the mere age of 6. This child—now an adult—has never been seen since.

The International Campaign for Tibet urges parliaments and governments to ask China for concrete evidence of the Panchen Lama's health and location and the restoration of his right to take his place in Tashi Lhunpo Monastery.

UN human rights mechanisms have been undertaking concerted efforts to obtain concrete evidence of the health and location of the Panchen Lama and his family. ICT also urges Chinese authorities to respond positively to the appeals already made by the UN and governments, as well as by Tibetan Buddhists, to permit the Panchen Lama to live a genuinely free and normal life.

In 2020, five UN human rights experts and expert bodies once again [raised concerns](#) with the Chinese government about the Panchen Lama and Beijing's reincarnation rules, citing fears about Chinese interference in the succession of the Dalai Lama. In a statement to the Chinese government, the experts "express grave concern at the continued refusal by the Government of China to disclose precisely the whereabouts of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima," the 11th Panchen Lama, and call for an independent monitor to visit him.

In particular, we call on Chairman Mike Gallagher and Ranking Member Raja Krishnamoorthi of the House Select Committee on Strategic Competition between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party (known as the Select Committee on China) to write a joint letter to the Chinese government to call for the Panchen Lama's release and restoration of his religious rights. The Select Committee has a mandate to build consensus on the threat posed by the Chinese Communist Party, and there are few examples of the CCP's methods more vivid than its willingness to disappear a child and his family and keep them in darkness for almost three decades. The CCP objective is to use a deep spiritual tradition of Tibetan Buddhists to serve its political agenda of controlling the Tibetan people.

After the 10th Panchen Lama's death in 1989, Chinese authorities interfered in identifying the next Panchen Lama, realizing it was a potent tactic in its mission of control. China asserted that the reincarnation would be subject to approval by the atheist, communist regime. A propaganda blitz ensued that falsely claimed that the selection of the Panchen Lama and Dalai Lama reincarnations had always been the prerogative of imperial Chinese governments.

Laying the foundation for their long-term objective to manipulate the recognition of the next Dalai Lama in the future, Chinese authorities subsequently installed their own Panchen Lama in a hastily organized ceremony directed by Communist officials.

The 11th Panchen Lama is now well beyond the conventional age of assuming his spiritual duties.

To this day, China's repressive policies in Tibet have led to executions, torture, imprisonment, the destruction of religious institutions, political indoctrination, the expulsion of monks and nuns from monasteries and nunneries, the banning of religious ceremonies, restrictions on the numbers of monks in monasteries and the extreme disruption of the religious practices of average Tibetans.

The Chinese Communist Party's willingness to forcibly disappear a child is a stark reminder of its cold-blooded strategy to dismantle the very heart of Tibetan religion and cultural identity. Such extreme measures should never be tolerated by the international community, and all necessary pressure must be applied to free the Panchen Lama and other prisoners of conscience in Tibet.

The Panchen Lama represents the fate of Tibet today, which has been turned into a vast prison by the Chinese government. Therefore, on this birthday of the Panchen Lama, we also ask governments to support the Tibetan people and their efforts to secure a peaceful resolution to the Tibet issue, including co-sponsorship of Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Conflict Act (H.R. 533 and S. 138).

[Send this petition](#) to the Chair and Ranking Member of the House Select Committee on China to take up the issue of the Panchen Lama with the Chinese government.



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