



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

US Commission: China's suppression of Tibetan Buddhism intensified

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China intensified its control and suppression of Tibetan Buddhism in 2022, but the United States took steps to increase support for the religion's followers, a new report from a US Commission says.

The 2023 annual report of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, released May 1, says China's authorities restricted Tibetans' access to religious sites, banned religious gatherings, destroyed places and symbols of religious significance, and subjected monks and nuns to "political reeducation."

China even persecuted Tibetan Buddhists living in the United States, according to the report.

At the same time, the report notes the US arrested and sanctioned Chinese officials charged with violating Tibetans' rights, held hearings and events on China's abuse of the Tibetan people and raised the issue of Tibetans' religious freedom at the UN.

"Religion is the heart of life for many Tibetans, but under China's brutal occupation of their homeland, their freedom to practice and preserve their beautiful faith has been trampled," said the international Campaign for Tibet, an advocacy group that promotes human rights and democratic freedoms for the Tibetan people. *"ICT thanks the US Commission on International Religious Freedom for spotlighting China's violation of Tibetans' right to religious freedom and the US government's strong response."*

"We look forward to working with US leaders to pass the [Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Conflict Act](#), which can help bring a peaceful end to China's repression of the Tibetan people through negotiations between China's officials and the Dalai Lama's envoys."

Religious freedom violations in Tibet

The commission's report addresses several egregious examples of [China's religious freedom violations in Tibet](#), a historically independent country that China has illegally occupied for over 60 years.

Among these is China's alleged torture of Tibetan monks, including Rinchen Tsultrim and Go Sherab Gyatso, both of who are [reportedly in prison on false charges of separatism or secession](#) because they peacefully expressed their views.

In total, there were 73 documented Tibetan Buddhist victims of religious repression by the end of last year, the report says.

The report adds that China allegedly [conducted mass DNA collection in Tibet](#), “likely to strengthen surveillance and control there.”

Several Tibetans self-immolated in Tibet last year, the report says, [lighting their own bodies on fire](#) in a desperate act of protest against China’s oppression.

China also detained several Tibetans for honoring the Dalai Lama or simply possessing a photo of him, the report notes.

The report points out that China even has a heinous plan to appoint an eventual successor to the [87-year-old Dalai Lama](#), who has lived in exile since China forced him to flee Tibet in 1959.

“The Chinese government repeatedly stated its intent to interfere in the Dalai Lama’s reincarnation,” the report says, “claiming it has the ultimate authority to appoint his successor.”

US support for Tibetans

In 2020, the US passed a law, the [Tibetan Policy and Support Act](#), that—along with expanding overall US support for Tibetans—makes it official US policy that only the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Buddhist community can decide on his succession. If any Chinese officials try to interfere in that process, the US will sanction them under the law.

The US already sanctioned several Chinese officials last year for violating Tibetans’ rights, the report notes.

On Human Rights Day on Dec. 10, 2022, the Treasury Department [sanctioned Wu Yingjie and Zhang Hongbo for “serious human rights abuse”](#) against the Tibetan people. Wu was Party Secretary of the Tibet Autonomous Region, which spans roughly half of Tibet, from 2016 to 2021. Zhang was director of the region’s Public Security Bureau from 2018 to last year.

The report lists other steps the US took last year to show support for Tibetans. The US joined a 47-country statement about human rights conditions in Xinjiang (which Uyghurs know as East Turkestan), Hong Kong and Tibet.

The Congressional-Executive Commission on China also [held a hearing on human rights abuse in Tibet](#), and US Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues Uzra Zeya delivered remarks about protecting Tibetans’ religious freedom at a [side event of the 51st session of the UN Human Rights Council](#).

The Justice Department also arrested and charged Wang Shujun with conducting transnational repression on behalf of China’s Ministry of State Security. According to the report, Wang’s victims included Uyghur and Tibetan activists in the US and abroad.

Recommendations for further US action

The report notes that China allegedly operated overseas “police service stations” in locations around the globe, including New York City. These stations, the report says, raised concerns about China attempting to “harass and intimidate ethnic minorities and dissidents abroad, including Uyghurs and Tibetans.”

The report recommends the State Department once again designate China as a “country of particular concern” for its religious freedom violations.

The report also encourages Congress to support legislation that will “counter the CCP’s malign influence in the United States, particularly its lobbying efforts that undermine religious freedom and related human rights.”

The International Campaign for Tibet adds that Congress should pass the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Conflict Act, a bipartisan bill that was reintroduced in the House and Senate this year to [pressure China’s government to resume negotiations with the Dalai Lama’s envoys](#) by recognizing that Tibet’s legal status has yet to be determined under international law.

[Learn more about the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Conflict Act.](#)

[Read the US Commission on International Religious Freedom’s 2023 annual report.](#)



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