



## INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

### Truman-Reagan medal awarded to ICT leader

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Bhuchung K. Tsering, head of research and monitoring at the International Campaign for Tibet, received the Truman-Reagan Medal of Freedom last week for his lifelong commitment to Tibetans suffering under Communist Chinese oppression.

The Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation presented the award to Tsering at its 16th annual Roll Call of Nations Wreath Laying Ceremony in Washington, DC on June 9. The ceremony featured the participation of diplomats from countries that were formerly under communist rule, as well as representatives of NGOs that work for freedom for their communities that are still under communist rule, including Cubans, Uyghurs, Chinese, Koreans, Vietnamese and others.

The Representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to North America, Dr. Namgyal Choedup, and ICT President Tencho Gyatso were also among those who attended.

By receiving the medal, Tsering joined the ranks of past awardees like former Czech President Václav Havel, Pope John Paul II and Hong Kong publisher Jimmy Lai.

Another past recipient, US Ambassador Paula Dobriansky, bestowed the award on Tsering at a ceremony in front of the Goddess of Democracy statue at the Victims of Communism Memorial in Washington.

*“The honor that you bestow on me today is really an acknowledgement of the strength of the Tibetan people and their struggle,”* Tsering said. *“I remain grateful.”*

### Suffering in Tibet

Throughout his remarks, Tsering highlighted the suffering of Tibet, which [Communist China has illegally occupied for over 60 years](#), forcing the Dalai Lama into exile in 1959.

Under Chinese rule, [Tibet now ranks as the least-free country on Earth](#) alongside South Sudan and Syria, according to Freedom House.

*“Tibet is seen more as a possession by the Chinese Communists who prefer to call it ‘China’s Tibet’ rather than being allowed to survive as a country with a living and distinct culture,”* Tsering said. *“On account of Chinese policies, the survival of Tibetan identity, culture, language, religion, way of life, etc., has been threatened.”*

In the face of China’s human rights abuses, the US government has been steadfast in providing [institutionalized, bipartisan support for Tibet](#), Tsering said.

He added that Tibet supporters hope Congress will soon pass the bipartisan [Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Conflict Act](#), which will pressure China’s government to get back to the negotiating

table with the Dalai Lama's representatives for the first time since 2010 to find a peaceful resolution to the Tibet conflict.

## About Bhuchung Tsering

Bhuchung K. Tsering was born in Tibet. His family fled to India in 1960 in the wake of the Communist Chinese invasion.

Receiving his bachelor's degree in English literature from the University of Delhi in 1982, Tsering worked as a journalist with Indian Express in New Delhi before joining the Central Tibetan Administration—which provides democratic governance for Tibetans in exile—in Dharamsala, India in January 1984.

Tsering worked as the editor of Tibetan Bulletin, the official CTA journal, and served in the Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala, as well as at the Office of Tibet in Switzerland.

Tsering joined the International Campaign for Tibet in Washington, DC in 1995 and currently leads the Research and Monitoring Unit.

Tsering was a member of the Task Force set up by the CTA to work on issues related to the dialogue process with Chinese leadership. He was also a member of the team led by the envoys of the Dalai Lama in the [dialogue they held with Chinese leadership between 2002 and 2010](#).

“On behalf of the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, we thank you Bhuchung Tsering for your indomitable courage, your visionary leadership of the ICT and your relentless drive for the people of Tibet,” said Dobriansky, who also served as the Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues in the George W. Bush administration.

“While China hides its subjugation of the Tibetan people and erasure of their culture, language, religion and history, heroes like Bhuchung ensure that the world cannot simply ignore the Chinese Communist Party's crimes,” Dobriansky added. “Bhuchung Tsering reminds us that even in the face of abject tyranny, the animating spirit of liberty is kept aflame in those of us courageous enough to stand for freedom.”

## Tsering's acceptance speech

[Watch Bhuchung K. Tsering receive the Truman-Reagan Medal of Freedom.](#)

Below is the text of Tsering's speech upon accepting the Truman-Reagan Medal of Freedom on June 9, 2023.

*Thank you Ambassador Paula Dobriansky for your introduction. I have been attending the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation Roll Call of Nations Wreath Laying Ceremony for several years, but am privileged to be here this year in an additional capacity.*

*When I was informed of your intention to bestow upon me the Truman-Reagan Medal of Freedom, my immediate feeling was that I am not deserving of it. First of all, if we look at the list of the past honorees, my contribution does not reach anywhere near all of theirs. Secondly, given the nature of modern Tibetan history, it is in the very DNA of each and every Tibetan to do whatever we can to oppose the misdeeds of the Chinese Communist authorities toward our homeland and people.*

*Under the leadership of His Holiness the Dalai Lama (and his North America Representative Dr. Namgyal Choedup is here among us today) all Tibetans are nurtured in an environment where the*

*Tibetan struggle is part of our daily lives. In Tibet, our Tibetan brothers and sisters are not in a situation to reveal their true thinking openly, but those of us outside of Tibet are contributing in our respective ways to the fulfilment of His Holiness' vision. This is one of the reasons for the Tibetan issue still being alive even after six decades of Tibet being under Chinese Communist occupation.*

*Therefore, I have not felt for a moment that I was doing anything out of the ordinary, whether during my school days when I first began my activism or when I was working as a professional journalist for an Indian newspaper before joining the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, which Paula mentioned.*

*After joining the International Campaign for Tibet (and our new President Tencho Gyatso is here) in 1995 and in my task of supporting the work of Mr. Lodi Gyari, the Special Envoy of H.H. the Dalai Lama and Executive Chairman of the ICT Board, I have been fortunate to not only be able to spread greater awareness of the Tibetan situation but also be a part of the team that worked on encouraging policy initiatives on Tibet by the United States and other governments. Today, we are proud to see that fundamental support to Tibet in the United States is not only bipartisan, but has been institutionalized through different legislations. We are hopeful that a new bipartisan and bicameral legislation, the Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Conflict Act, which is before Congress will become law soon so that the US can ensure support for Tibet now and in the future.*

*Therefore, the honor that you bestow on me today is really an acknowledgement of the strength of the Tibetan people and their struggle. I remain grateful.*

*I should point out here that I personally did not suffer any physical persecution under Chinese Communist rule. My parents were among the few Tibetans who were able to escape to India soon after the invasion and occupation. I was only a few days old when I was carried over the mountain pass into freedom.*

*Nevertheless, like my fellow Tibetans both in Tibet and outside, I, too, have become a victim of Chinese Communism; they have deprived the entire Tibetan people of our identity and sense of belonging. Tibet is seen more as a possession by the Chinese Communists who prefer to call it "China's Tibet" rather than being allowed to survive as a country with a living and distinct culture. On account of Chinese policies, the survival of Tibetan identity, culture, language, religion, way of life, etc., has been threatened. Therefore, the Tibetan people refer to Chinese Communists as Tenda Gyamar, meaning "Red China, Enemy of the Faith."*

*It might interest you to note that the period in which the two presidents for whom this medal is named have been significant in Tibetan history.*

*It was during the time of President Harry S. Truman in the late 1940s that Communist China began its invasion of Tibet. In the initial decades of their occupation, the Chinese communists launched a policy of physical destruction of Tibet. This included killing of Tibetans considered enemies and destroying Tibetan religious and cultural centers.*

*There certainly are Tibetan victims of Chinese Communism among the 100 million people who have suffered under Communism that was mentioned earlier. By your action today, you are honoring the memory of the 1.2 million Tibetans who, according to information compiled by the Tibetan leadership in Dharamsala, have died under Chinese occupation between 1949 and 1979. This figure includes at least 430,000 who were killed in the fighting in the 1950s and thereafter, 340,000 who starved to death, 56,000 who were executed, 90,000 who died in struggle sessions, 170,000 who died in prison, and at least 9,000 who ended up committing suicide.*

*During President Ronald Reagan's term, in the 1980s, Tibetans in Tibet were able to show their resilience. During a short period then when Tibetans experienced a comparatively liberalized policy, they were able to reveal their continued devotion to their faith, culture and identity. A subsequent*

*ruthless and far reaching Chinese Communist policy of control eventually becoming one of assimilation made such displays impossible. However, I have no doubt that the resilience of the Tibetans in Tibet will continue to be displayed in other ways.*

*Today, you are also putting the spotlight on the 159 Tibetans who have committed self-immolations since 2009 to highlight the plight of the Tibetan people under Chinese rule. They made the highest sacrifice, namely giving their lives, even while ensuring that in the process no others were harmed.*

*I take this opportunity to pay my homage to the Tibetans in Tibet, who, through their determination and courage, continue to stand up to the assault from the Chinese Communists.*

*In exile, the Dalai Lama adopted far-sighted policies aimed at preserving Tibetan identity and cultural heritage on the one hand while working towards a peaceful resolution to the Tibetan issue on the other. He has established a democratic system of governance for the Tibetans in exile, including devolving all his political authority to the elected Tibetan leadership.*

*Despite the fact that historically, Tibet was independent, the Dalai Lama has been looking for a non-violent mutually satisfactory solution to Tibet that takes into consideration Chinese interest, too.*

*His Holiness the Dalai Lama had to escape to India in 1959 and has since been unable to return to his homeland. He will be 88 years old this coming July. The Dalai Lama continues to be a symbol of the Tibetan nation and people. The strong bond between His Holiness and the Tibetan people is the primary reason for the Tibetan struggle not becoming violent. Tibet occupies a strategic position in central Asia and it is important that it does not become another flashpoint like the Middle East. It is for this reason that the international community needs to support the non-violent struggle espoused by the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan leadership.*

*But the world needs to be concerned about the survival of Tibet not merely out of sympathy for the Tibetan people. Tibetan culture, whether Buddhist philosophy, science or medicine, has much to contribute to the development of world civilization. Therefore, the survival of Tibetan culture is in the interest of the international community. Also, no one in the world desires war and violence, and at a time when we are concerned with violent conflicts, it is imperative that peaceful movements like that of the Tibetan people receive strong support.*

*At this point, may I say that for any political system to continue to exist, it has to be relevant and beneficial to the people. The Chinese Communist Party has failed the people in China and as H.H. the Dalai Lama said it has to change according to the reality of the situation. The Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation has been playing an important role in reminding the international community about communism and its misuse in different parts of the world. VOC's consistent and continued focus on the plight of those who are being persecuted by Communist regimes and highlighting of them in the international community is a source of hope and encouragement to those communities.*

*In Tibetan Buddhism, dedicating any positive deeds, like this honor today, for the common good has an important role in one's spiritual practice. Therefore, may I have the permission to recite a dedication prayer.*

བསོད་ནམས་འདི་ཡི་ཐམ་བཅད་གཟིགས་པ་ནིང།  
ཐོབ་ནས་ཉེས་པའི་དག་ནམས་པམ་བྱུས་ནས།  
སྐྱེ་ཞུ་ན་འཆེ་ན་བརྒྱབས་འཇུགས་པ་ཡི།  
སྲིད་པའི་མཚོ་ལས་འགྲོ་བ་གྲོལ་བར་ཤོག།

*By this merit, may all beings attain omniscience  
And defeat the enemy of wrongdoing  
May they be freed from this worldly sea's*

*Waves of birth, old age, sickness and death*

*I would like to conclude by saying that the people of Tibet have not lost their hope despite over six decades of Communist control. In 1959 soon after the Chinese communists occupied Tibet, one Indian political leader by the name of Jayaprakash Narayan said, "Is Tibet lost forever? No. A thousand times no. Tibet will not die because there is no death for the human spirit. Communism will not succeed because man will not be slave forever."*

*Thank you.*



International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) | 1825 Jefferson Place NW | Washington, DC 20036 | United States of America  
Phone: (202) 785-1515 | Fax: (202) 785-4343 | [info@savetibet.org](mailto:info@savetibet.org)

ICT Europe  
Funenpark 1D | 1018 AK  
Amsterdam, The Netherlands  
Phone: +31 (0)20 3308265  
Fax: +31 (0)20 3308266  
[icteurope@savetibet.nl](mailto:icteurope@savetibet.nl)

ICT Deutschland e.V.  
Schönhauser Allee 163 | 10435  
Berlin, Germany  
Phone: +49 (0)30 27879086  
Fax: +49 (0)30 27879087  
[info@savetibet.de](mailto:info@savetibet.de)

ICT Brussels  
11, rue de la linière | 1060  
Brussels, Belgium  
Phone: +32 (0)2 609 44 10  
Fax: +32 (0)2 609 44 32  
[info@savetibet.eu](mailto:info@savetibet.eu)