



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Rand report indicates expansion of prisons and detention centers in Tibet

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A new report says recent patterns of growth in nighttime lighting concentrated in higher security facilities in Tibet indicate the Chinese government is imposing longer detentions and imprisonments on Tibetans.

Rand Europe's report, "A night-time lighting analysis of Tibet's prisons and detention centres," analyzes light seen from space and measured over monthly averages, finding a growth in emitted light since 2019. This led researchers to conclude that the growth could indicate new construction or the expansion of existing prison and detention facilities.

The International Campaign for Tibet said: "*This Rand report corroborates analysis over the years by the International Campaign for Tibet and others, including [satellite imagery of Tibet's capital Lhasa](#), revealing hyper-securitization and the unprecedented scope of China's machinery of compliance in Tibet.*"

"Evidence of the expansion and modernization of prison and detention facilities in Tibet in a political climate of tightened control remains a threat to a rules-based order that respects international human rights standards. We call on governments to raise the systematic and widespread rights violations in Tibet with the Chinese government and consider concrete actions. Such actions should include bilateral sanctions against officials in the state and Communist Party apparatus. Tibet should also be addressed with greater resolve at the United Nations and other international fora."

Key findings

Among the study's key findings are:

- There are at least 79 prisons and detention centers across Tibet.
- The majority of these are assessed to be small, low-security detention centers that most likely provide low-level detention and short-term jail functions.
- Almost all these facilities were built before 2011, when the Tibet Autonomous Region's former Party Secretary Chen Quanguo (also known as the architect of China's Uyghur genocide) came to power in Tibet. Rand says it cannot rule out the possibility that Chen repurposed existing facilities for political purposes upon his arrival.
- At the aggregate level, the overall size and scale of the Tibetan detention system has been relatively consistent over the past decade.

The report says its findings "may suggest a shift towards longer detentions and imprisonments and is similar to recent observations in Xinjiang too, where a high percentage of these facilities showed active growth in night-time lighting in 2019 and 2020."

Preventive repression

China is [illegally occupying Tibet](#), which now [ranks as the least-free country on Earth](#) alongside South Sudan and Syria, according to the watchdog group Freedom House.

Rand's report asserts that Chinese authorities are "engaging in preventive repression" toward Tibetans. ICT has noted increased restriction of movement of Tibetans both within Tibetan areas and outside, including denial of passports.

"As part of [Chinese authorities'] nationwide 'stability maintenance' strategy, they are detaining, persecuting, and convicting Tibetans for non-violent forms of protest and other expressions of dissent such as assisting or supporting self-immolations and carrying pictures of the Dalai Lama," the report says.

Rand study

The study says that in "contrast with the body of knowledge on the detention and imprisonment of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in Xinjiang, the Tibetan detention system is still very much a black hole to the international community."

It further says, "The precise workings, nature, and scale of the Chinese Communist Party's efforts to imprison and detain Tibetans, however, remain poorly understood."

The report says that lack of evidence on many issues, especially on China's so-called "vocational training centers" for Tibetans, is not evidence of the absence of repression. "Rather, it highlights a need for further research to address many of the research gaps and to better understand the situation."

[Read Rand Europe's report here.](#)



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