



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Tibetan activist receives State Department religious freedom award

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The International Campaign for Tibet congratulates Tibetan activist Lhadon Tethong on receiving a US State Department International Religious Freedom Award as part of the department's 25th anniversary celebration of the International Religious Freedom Act.

At the award ceremony on Jan. 18, 2024, Richard Verma, deputy secretary of state for management and resources, hailed Lhadon for “us[ing] technology to support Tibetans and others facing Chinese repression.”

Lhadon, who was one of several to receive the awards, is the co-founder and director of Tibet Action Institute, an organization that combines digital communication and strategic nonviolent action to advance the Tibetan freedom movement.

After the ceremony, Lhadon [tweeted](#): “Today the US [Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom Rashad Hussain] recognized @TibetAction’s work to defend the inalienable right of Tibetans in PRC-occupied Tibet to worship freely as Beijing holds 1M Tibetan kids in a system of colonial boarding schools, intentionally cutting them off from their religion & culture.”

International Religious Freedom Awards

The International Religious Freedom Awards are part of the events celebrating a quarter-century of the International Religious Freedom Act, which President Bill Clinton signed into law in October 1998. The act elevated the role of religious freedom in US foreign policy.

According to the [State Department](#), the awards recognize individuals for “their courage and commitment to promoting and defending religious freedom globally.”

Along with Lhadon, awards this year went to Farid Ahmed, Kola Alapinni, Mirza Dinnayi, Peter Jacob, Martha Patricia Molina Montenegro, Tali Nates and a group of nine Orthodox clergy from Lithuania represented by Gintaras Sungaila.

“These advocates,” the department said, “have focused on promoting human rights and mutual respect for all in countries including Nigeria, Iraq, Pakistan, New Zealand, South Africa, and Nicaragua, as well as protecting the rights of Orthodox Christians, Tibetan Buddhists, and members of other religious communities around the world.”

Staff of the Office of Tibet, including Representative Namgyal Choedup, and International Campaign for Tibet were among those invited to attend the awards ceremony and congratulated Lhadon and the other award recipients.

Lhadon also recently appeared on ICT's Tibet Talks podcast to [discuss China's boarding schools in Tibet](#), which have separated over 1 million Tibetan children from their families, language, religion and culture.

State Department support

The award for Lhadon is just one of several recent US government actions that have shined a light on the human rights situation in Tibet.

- Secretary of State Anthony Blinken last year [announced visa sanctions on Chinese officials](#) for their involvement in the boarding school system.
- Blinken also [expressed concerns about China's reported mass DNA collection in Tibet](#), making him the senior-most US official to raise the issue publicly.
- [President Joe Biden also raised Tibet with Xi Jinping](#) during their meeting in San Francisco in November.
- In recent years, the US has enacted the [Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act](#) and the [Tibetan Policy and Support Act](#). Congress is now considering another bipartisan bill, the [Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act](#), which unanimously passed the House Foreign Affairs Committee late last year.



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