



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

US report highlights China's policy of controlling all aspects of Tibetan Buddhism

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A US State Department report on religious freedom in Tibet says, “CCP [Communist Party of China] regulations stipulate official control of all aspects of Tibetan Buddhism, including the recognition of lamas, religious venues, groups, personnel, and schools.”

The State Department's 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom, released June 26, 2023, says that as in previous years, there were “forced disappearances, arrests, physical abuse, and prolonged detentions without trial of monks, nuns, and other persons due to their religious practices.”

Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken and Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom Rashad Hussain released the report at an event at the State Department. International Campaign for Tibet's Bhuchung Tsering was among a select group of people invited to attend the launch. Ambassador Hussain referred to “decades of persecution of religious communities “ and included Tibetan Buddhists among them.

“The suppression of religious freedom in Tibet, including the efforts by the Chinese government to control the succession of His Holiness the Dalai Lama are core issues for the survival of Tibetan civilization and its future,” Tencho Gyatso, president of the International Campaign for Tibet, said. “I welcome the spotlight put on Tibet in this year's State Department religious freedom report as this is needed more than ever today.”

Focus on Sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism

The report says, “The government continued carrying out its 2019-23 five-year plan to Sinicize Buddhism in China by emphasizing loyalty to the CCP and the state. The Sinicization plan included Tibetan Buddhism, with the involvement of the state-run BAC. Regulations promulgated in 2020 and 2021 further formalized administrative procedures for Sinicizing all religions, including Tibetan Buddhism, in order to “follow the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics,” “correctly handle the relationship between national law and canon,” and place more ideological controls on the training, selection, and monitoring of clergy.”

Further, the report says, “Authorities continued to require Buddhist monasteries to translate texts from Tibetan to Mandarin in what observers said was an effort to erase the Tibetan language. Authorities also continued to force monasteries to display portraits of CCP leaders and Tibetans to replace images of the Dalai Lama and other lamas in their homes with portraits of CCP leaders, including former Chairman Mao Zedong and General Secretary and PRC President Xi Jinping. Images of the Dalai Lama were banned, with harsh repercussions for owning or displaying his image. Repression, including arbitrary surveillance, increased around politically sensitive events, religious anniversaries,

cultural events with religious components, and the Dalai Lama's birthday. Authorities canceled or curtailed lay attendance at religious events, including some that had received advanced official approval."

Role of Infamous United Front highlighted

The report expands on the role of the infamous United Front Work Department of the Chinese Communist Party in denial of religious freedom to the Tibetan people. It says, "CCP regulations regarding religion are issued by the CCP's United Front Work Department (UFWD). The UFWD's Bureau of Ethnic and Religious Work manages religious affairs through the State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA).

"The UFWD controls the selection of Tibetan religious leaders, including lamas. Regulations stipulate that, depending on the perceived geographic area of influence of the lama, relevant administrative entities may deny permission for a lama to be recognized as reincarnated (a tenet of Tibetan Buddhism), and that these administrative entities must approve reincarnations. The UFWD claims the right to deny recognition of reincarnations of high lamas of "especially great influence." The regulations also state no foreign organization or individual may interfere in the selection of reincarnate lamas, and all reincarnate lamas must be reborn within China. The CCP maintains a registry of officially recognized reincarnate lamas.

"UFWD regulations allow citizens to take part only in officially approved religious practices; these regulations assert CCP control over all aspects of religious activity, including the managing of religious venues, groups, personnel, and schools. Through local regulations issued under the framework of the national-level Management Regulation of Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries, governments of the TAR and other autonomous Tibetan areas control the registration of monasteries, nunneries, and other Tibetan Buddhist religious centers. The regulations also give the CCP formal control over building and managing religious structures and require monasteries to obtain official permission to hold large-scale religious events or gatherings."

As in previous years, the report highlights the continued disappearance of the Panchen Lama, saying, "The whereabouts of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, recognized as the 11th Panchen Lama by the Dalai Lama and most Tibetan Buddhists, remained unknown since his 1995 forced disappearance by Chinese authorities. Nyima was six years old at the time he and his family were reportedly abducted."

You can read the full text of the [Tibet section of the report here](#).



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