



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

China's security chief convenes “anti-secession” meeting in Tibet

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China's top security official, Chen Wenqing, [visited Tibet from September 10 to 13, 2024](#) during which he convened a meeting on “anti-secession and stability maintenance,” indicating ongoing instability in Tibet and foreshadowing a possible increase in surveillance and restrictions.

Chen, who is a member of Chinese Communist Party's powerful 24-member Politburo and Secretary of the Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission (CPLA), went to Lhasa, Chamdo (Chinese: Changdu) and Kandze (Ganzi), according to Chinese state media.

“In Kandze, Sichuan, Chen Wenqing presided over a meeting on anti-secession and stability maintenance in Tibet,” state media reported, mentioning that the discussions covered not just the officially designated Tibet Autonomous Region, but also the Tibetan areas in Sichuan, Yunnan, Gansu, and Qinghai.

“Leniency and severity”

Political activism among Tibetan Buddhists appears to have been a major focus during the trip. In the meeting in Kandze, state media quoted Chen as saying, “We must resolutely crack down on separatist and sabotage activities in accordance with the law, resolutely manage religious affairs in accordance with the law, resolutely protect normal religious activities in accordance with the law, always adhere to the combination of leniency and severity, always adhere to the combination of punishment and prevention, and use the rule of law thinking and the rule of law to prevent risks, combat crime, and maintain stability.”

Chen further “stressed that the political and legal organs must fully implement the important instructions of General Secretary Xi Jinping on Tibet work and the Party's strategy for governing Tibet in the new era, continue to make maintaining stability the top priority, adhere to the overall coordination of the two major domestic and international situations and the two major issues of development and security, do a good job in anti-secession work, and effectively safeguard national security.”

Central Political and Legal Affairs Commission

The significance of this meeting is tied to the organization that Chen heads, the CPLA. [According to political scientist Minxin Pei](#), CPLA “oversees the vast coercive apparatus of the party-state. Its main responsibilities include providing policy proposals on domestic security, supervising implementation of the party's domestic security agenda, coordinating the actions of law enforcement and the judiciary, and ensuring the political loyalty of officials in law enforcement agencies.”

The CPLA's importance can also be seen in its membership, which includes Wang Xiaohong, minister of public security; Zhang Jun, president of the Supreme People's Court; and Ying Yong, procurator-general of the Supreme People's Procuratorate.

Interestingly, [both Zhang \(Sept.11 and 12\) and Ying \(Sept. 3 and 4\) also visited Tibet](#) around the time of Chen's visit, highlighting the issue of security. Zhang told Chinese courts in Tibet that it is necessary to hand down tough punishment to keep up the pressure on "violent terrorism, ethnic separatism and other serious criminal crimes."

Ying also stressed the need for prosecutors to "harshly crack down on all kinds of separatist infiltration, sabotage activities and crimes endangering national security in accordance with the law."

In Lhasa and Chamdo, two other Tibetan towns he visited in addition to Kandze, Chen "inspected political and legal units and the frontline of duty to learn about maintaining security and stability, promoting the rule of law, and listened to reports on political and legal work in Tibet."

Chen's record

Chen, who is a former minister of State Security, [is considered close to Xi Jinping](#) and is part of a new team of national security leaders that was brought in after the 20th Party Congress in October 2022. He has assumed key role in advancing Xi's security policies, making inspection trips to Tibet, Xinjiang (known to Uyghurs as East Turkestan). [Chen has publicly supported the implementation of the Hong Kong National Security Law](#). In January 2024, [Chen conveyed Xi's message](#) to a central conference on judicial, procuratorial and public security work urging for "efforts to resolutely safeguard national security, improve political acumen and political discernment, prevent and resolve major security risks."

In [August 2023, Chen convened a similar meeting on Tibet in Kanlho \(Gannan\) Tibetan](#) Autonomous Prefecture in Gansu Province. At the Kanlho meeting, Chen underscored the need for a comprehensive implementation of the party's strategy for governing Tibet in the new era. He called for a forward-looking approach in work deployment, a concentrated focus on key tasks, diligent execution of work responsibilities, proactive risk prevention and control measures, and a firm commitment to sustaining long-term peace and stability in Tibet."

At that time, Li Mingjiang, associate professor at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies at Nanyang Technological University in Singapore, [told the Lianhe Zaobao](#) newspaper that Chen's visits (to Kanlho and before that to Xinjiang) were "a sign of [China's] vigilance against new US policy trends regarding religion, education and other aspects of China's ethnic minority regions, and they are worried that this may affect national unity and harmony."

Reaction to the Resolve Tibet Act?

Chen's visit to Tibet this time and the meeting on anti-secession could very well be [connected to the latest law](#), popularly known as Resolve Tibet Act, passed in support of Tibet in the United States.

On July 12, 2024, the U.S. signed into law the "Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Disputes Act." In its reaction the next day, [China's Foreign Ministry spokesperson mischaracterized the law](#) as sending "a severely wrong signal to the 'Tibet independence forces'" despite the law explicitly stating that the dispute between Tibet and China must be resolved peacefully through dialogue without preconditions, in accordance with international law.

China escalated its external propaganda efforts regarding Tibet, attempting to frame the law internationally as U.S. interference in "China's internal affairs". This stance directly contradicts [the U.S. policy outlined in the law](#), which calls on China to "cease its propagation of disinformation about the history of Tibet, the Tibetan people, and Tibetan institutions, including that of the Dalai Lama".

The law affirms Tibet's unresolved status under international law and recognizes the Tibetan people's right to self-determination; a universal collective human right provided for in both the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.



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