



## INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

### **ICT urges UNESCO to designate Potala Palace Ensemble as “World Heritage in Danger” amid cultural heritage violations in Tibet**

<https://savetibet.org/ict-urges-unesco-to-designate-potala-palace-ensemble-as-world-heritage-in-danger-amid-cultural-heritage-violations-in-tibet>

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The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) is calling on the UNESCO World Heritage Committee to designate the “Historic Ensemble of the Potala Palace” in Lhasa, Tibet, as a World Heritage Site in Danger during its upcoming 47th session in July 2025. This urgent appeal follows years of unchecked destruction, sinicization, and mismanagement of Tibet’s most sacred cultural and religious landmarks, particularly the Jokhang Temple.

The latest controversy centers on the construction of two large, Chinese-style pavilions directly in front of the Jokhang Temple allegedly built to protect three ancient stelae. However, these structures have been widely criticized for not only violating UNESCO operational guidelines (built without prior notice and a heritage impact assessment), but for also obstructing religious rituals, diminishing the temple’s historic façade, and imposing a foreign architectural style that undermines the site's authenticity. ICT [details this development](#) in the annual report of the organization World Heritage Watch, [published on June 1](#).

**“These pavilions are not only architecturally incongruent with the 1,300-year-old temple, but they also interfere with Tibetan Buddhist practices and conceal inscriptions that document Tibet’s historical sovereignty,”** said ICT.

Both UNESCO and the expert body ICOMOS have repeatedly called for a proper Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) and alternative designs. In 2024, China submitted their second HIA retroactively, after the first one retroactive HIA failed to comply with ICOMOS Guidelines. The summary of the HIA acknowledged the pavilions’ negative visual impact but did not offer details about plans for mitigation. The full report is not publicly available.

In addition, the Chinese authorities have [recently reported](#) on a political indoctrination drive targeting monks of the Jokhang Temple. In a letter to UNESCO, ICT has urged to call on the Chinese authorities to immediately stop such measures, as they do further harm to the intangible heritage and integrity of the site.

The Jokhang Temple, along with the Potala Palace and Norbulingka, forms part of the UNESCO-inscribed heritage ensemble. Since its inscription, the site has suffered from:

- Demolition of historic buildings.
- Sinicization of architecture, replacing traditional Tibetan designs with tourist-oriented facades.

- Suppression of intangible culture, with mass tourism, security checkpoints, and propaganda banners disrupting sacred rituals.

ICT warns that these developments violate UNESCO's Operational Guidelines and threaten the site's Outstanding Universal Value. The organization is urging the World Heritage Committee to take decisive action by inscribing the site on the List of World Heritage in Danger. The living traditions of Tibetan Buddhists and residents should be preserved and shielded from the constant bombardment of mass tourism, excessive security infrastructure and patriotic propaganda banners that desecrate the sacred temple and space.



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