



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

China persists in blocking access to Tibet, US State Department reports

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US government officials, journalists, and others are still blocked from entering Tibet, according to the US State Department's latest [report to Congress](#) on access to Tibetan areas. The report, published on May 29, is the seventh annual report mandated by the 2018 Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act (RATA).

RATA passed with bipartisan support in 2018 and has since proved an effective tool in holding the Chinese government accountable for its repression—both inside Tibet and transnationally. RATA was reauthorized last year by Congress, and in March 2025 the State Department imposed a new raft of visa restrictions on Chinese officials involved in denying access to Tibet for Americans.

New report

The 2025 report states that US officials made five requests in 2024 for official travel to the China-designated Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), none of which were approved.

Highlighting the continued denial of access for six consecutive years, the report notes that “no US official has been able to visit the TAR since 2019.” Compared to [2023](#), when three requests for access were made, US officials increased their requests to five in [2024](#), but the Chinese government continued to deny access.

In the Tibetan areas beyond the boundaries of the TAR, in Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu and Yunnan provinces, US diplomats, government officials, and other foreign nationals, whether traveling for official duties or personal reasons, faced pervasive and intrusive measures by Chinese security forces. These measures included conspicuous surveillance, preventing them from meeting or speaking with local contacts, harassment, and restrictions on their movements. These actions not only limited freedom of movement for US officials but also deters open engagement with local Tibetan communities.

The US State Department reported that the exact number of US citizens who visited the TAR in 2024 remains unknown due to restricted access and limited data from Chinese authorities. However, the Department estimates that the number of visitors in 2024 is likely significantly lower than in 2019, when approximately 10,000 US citizens traveled to the region. This decline, [as ICT's March 11, 2025 report showed](#), reflects China's stringent travel restrictions, including the requirement for special permits and the persistent denial of access to US officials, journalists, and independent travelers.

The report further highlighted that Tibetan-Americans face a disproportionately exclusionary screening process compared to other US citizens when applying for Chinese visas to visit their homeland. This process often involves additional scrutiny, including intrusive background checks and

interrogations about their family ties, political affiliations, and travel intentions, creating significant barriers to entry.

Once in Tibetan-inhabited areas, Tibetan-Americans encounter more frequent and severe harassment from Chinese security officials than in other parts of China. Such harassment includes prolonged interrogations, verbal threats, intimidation, and, in some cases, coercion into downloading tracking software onto their personal devices. These measures, which are more intense than those faced by other US citizens, appear designed to monitor and deter Tibetan-American visitors from engaging freely with local communities or advocating for Tibetan cultural and political issues.

While China maintains stringent control over access to Tibet, select foreign influencers and travel bloggers promoted by Chinese state media, [as outlined in ICT report of January 2024](#), are granted unrestricted access. State-approved influencers, often invited or sponsored by Chinese authorities, are provided with curated itineraries and exemptions from standard travel restrictions. These individuals, whose content is frequently amplified by Chinese state media outlets like Xinhua and CGTN, portray a sanitized and carefully crafted image of Tibet that aligns with Beijing's narrative and external propaganda. Official and unofficial delegations to Tibet should remain aware and prepared for China's tactics. For more information on this topic, please see ["Do-No Harm when visiting" – ICT advises official delegations to Tibet](#).



International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) | 1825 Jefferson Place NW | Washington, DC 20036 | United States of America
Phone: (202) 785-1515 | Fax: (202) 785-4343 | info@savetibet.org

ICT Europe
Funenpark 1D | 1018 AK
Amsterdam, The Netherlands
Phone: +31 (0)20 3308265
Fax: +31 (0)20 3308266
icteurope@savetibet.nl

ICT Deutschland e.V.
Schönhauser Allee 163 | 10435
Berlin, Germany
Phone: +49 (0)30 27879086
Fax: +49 (0)30 27879087
info@savetibet.de

ICT Brussels
11, rue de la linière | 1060
Brussels, Belgium
Phone: +32 (0)2 609 44 10
Fax: +32 (0)2 609 44 32
info@savetibet.eu