



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

14th Dalai Lama lays out the future of his institution in new statement clarifying succession direction

<https://savetibet.org/14th-dalai-lama-lays-out-the-future-of-his-institution-in-new-statement-clarifying-succession-direction>

July 2, 2025

In what is a matter of relief to millions of Tibetan Buddhist devotees and supporters, the 14th Dalai Lama on July 2, 2025 [made public a statement affirming the continuation of the institution of Dalai Lama](#). In a written statement, along with a video of the Dalai Lama reading it released from his home in Dharamsala, India, he said he was taking the decision based on requests received from the Tibetan Buddhist community, including “messages through various channels from Tibetans in Tibet.”

“The Dalai Lama’s statement is a robust assertion of something we have known all along: namely, that it is the sole right of the Tibetan people and the Tibetan Buddhist community to recognize the next Dalai Lama,” said Tencho Gyatso, president of the International Campaign for Tibet. “However, it is absolutely vital that any attempt by China to interfere in the future of the Dalai Lama institution is firmly rejected.”

“We are elated that his lineage – which holds a unique relationship with the Tibetan people – will continue, and we urge governments and the United Nations to once again explicitly uphold the right of Tibetan Buddhists to select their religious leaders,” she continued.

Plan for succession

The Dalai Lama [reiterated his statement of 2011](#) that only his Gaden Phodrang Trust, the Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, will exclusively be responsible for the process of the recognition of the reincarnation. Highlighting the spiritual nature of the process, the Dalai Lama said, “They should consult the various heads of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions and the reliable oath-bound Dharma Protectors who are linked inseparably to the lineage of the Dalai Lamas. They should accordingly carry out the procedures of search and recognition in accordance with past tradition.”

The statement was made during a three-day gathering of Tibetan Buddhist religious leaders that began in Dharamsala today, to which the heads of all the major traditions are present.

Illegitimate claims from Beijing

The Dalai Lama’s statement means that only the individual recognized through the process laid out by him would be legitimate. In recent years, China’s atheist government claimed authority over the process and that the Dalai Lama’s reincarnation must comply with Chinese Communist laws.

Not only do the Chinese government’s claims completely disregard centuries-old Tibetan Buddhist religious tradition, they also obviously violate the universal principle of religious freedom.

Governments, including the United Nations and the European Union, have repeatedly rejected this Chinese communist denial of the fundamental right of Tibetan Buddhist communities to follow their own spiritual process without its interference. [UN human rights experts and expert bodies](#) have objected to it, the US State Department [referred to the Chinese plan](#) as “meritless,” and Congress [passed a law](#) which will sanction Chinese officials who interfere in the process. The [EU reaffirmed](#) that the selection of the Dalai Lama should happen without government interference and in accordance with religious norms.

Tibetan Buddhist practitioners traditionally lived in Tibet, Mongolia, Bhutan, and Himalayan region of India and Nepal, and Russia. Today they live around the world, and China’s violation of their religious freedom is therefore not confined to Tibet but rather an assault on a faith practiced by citizens in the United States, across Europe, and in many countries worldwide.

Background of the statement

The Tibetan Buddhist practice of identifying reincarnate lamas evolved over the course of generations and has been practiced for centuries.

The 14th Dalai Lama was recognized by traditional means as a child during an era of independence for Tibet. Since annexing Tibet, Chinese authorities alternately banned, ignored, or exercised heavy-handed restrictions over the process – doing incalculable damage to Tibetan Buddhism in the process.

Ever since the Chinese government’s 1995 abduction of the 11th Panchen Lama, who was six years old at the time, it has been clear that Chinese interference in the Dalai Lama lineage is a distinct possibility. The Chinese government has attempted in recent years to transform Tibetan Buddhism into a tool to control the Tibetan people, and exercising control over reincarnate lamas is one element of this scheme.

The Dalai Lama previously stated that he would provide clear instructions for the recognition of his successor in a statement released in 2011. In that statement, the Dalai Lama wrote that he would consult with high lamas, the Tibetan public, and other concerned individuals around his 90th birthday in order to make an appropriate decision. The Dalai Lama will turn 90 on July 6, 2025.

Recommendations

The International Campaign for Tibet calls on faith groups, governments, foreign ministries, the European Union, and the United Nations to:

- Publicly affirm the Dalai Lama’s statement and reiterate the right of Tibetan Buddhists to select religious leaders free from Chinese interference
- Engage with the PRC on the urgent need to respect the religious freedom of Tibetan Buddhists and halt any plans to interfere with the recognition process
- Warn Chinese leaders that the only legitimate 15th Dalai Lama will be one recognized by the methods and persons described in the Dalai Lama’s statement
- Actively monitor the situation going forward and be prepared to apply appropriate remedies as described in international law and national law in the case of Chinese interference

Following is the full text of the Statement Affirming the Continuation of the Institution of Dalai Lama signed by the 14th Dalai Lama on May 21, 2025 and released on July 2, 2025

[Translated from the original Tibetan](#)

[Watch on YouTube](#)

On 24 September 2011, at a meeting of the heads of Tibetan spiritual traditions, I made a statement to fellow Tibetans in and outside Tibet, followers of Tibetan Buddhism, and those who have a connection with Tibet and Tibetans, regarding whether the institution of the Dalai Lama should continue. I stated, “As far back as 1969, I made clear that concerned people should decide whether the Dalai Lama’s reincarnations should continue in the future.”

I also said, “When I am about ninety I will consult the high Lamas of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions, the Tibetan public, and other concerned people who follow Tibetan Buddhism, to re-evaluate whether or not the institution of the Dalai Lama should continue.”

Although I have had no public discussions on this issue, over the last 14 years leaders of Tibet’s spiritual traditions, members of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile, participants in a Special General Body Meeting, members of the Central Tibetan Administration, NGOs, Buddhists from the Himalayan region, Mongolia, Buddhist republics of the Russian Federation and Buddhists in Asia including mainland China, have written to me with reasons, earnestly requesting that the institution of the Dalai Lama continue. In particular, I have received messages through various channels from Tibetans in Tibet making the same appeal. In accordance with all these requests, I am affirming that the institution of the Dalai Lama will continue.

The process by which a future Dalai Lama is to be recognized has been clearly established in the 24 September 2011 statement which states that responsibility for doing so will rest exclusively with members of the Gaden Phodrang Trust, the Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. They should consult the various heads of the Tibetan Buddhist traditions and the reliable oath-bound Dharma Protectors who are linked inseparably to the lineage of the Dalai Lamas. They should accordingly carry out the procedures of search and recognition in accordance with past tradition.

I hereby reiterate that the Gaden Phodrang Trust has sole authority to recognize the future reincarnation; no one else has any such authority to interfere in this matter.

Dalai Lama

Dharamshala
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