



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Thirty-four Members of the European Parliament call on China not to interfere in Dalai Lama's succession

<https://savetibet.org/thirty-four-members-of-the-european-parliament-call-on-china-not-to-interfere-in-dalai-lamas-succession>

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The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) welcomes the [op-ed](#) published today in *EUobserver*, signed by 34 Members of the European Parliament from 15 EU countries, urging China not to interfere in the selection of the next Dalai Lama.

This initiative comes just two days after the Dalai Lama released a [public statement](#) affirming that the institution of the Dalai Lama will continue and that decisions regarding his succession will rest solely with him and the Gaden Phodrang Trust, based in Dharamshala, India. The statement reiterates that no government, including the People's Republic of China, has the authority to influence this spiritual process.

In their op-ed, the MEPs of four political groups (S&D, EPP, Greens and Renew Europe) call for the EU to consider targeted sanctions against Chinese officials responsible for violating the religious rights of Tibetans, including those involved in any attempt to control or manipulate the process of the Dalai Lama's succession.

The European Parliament has repeatedly expressed its opposition to Chinese interference in Tibetan religious affairs including lately in its [resolution](#) of May 2025. In its most recent [EU-China Human Rights Dialogue](#), the EU also raised the issue of succession, calling on China to respect the religious freedom of Tibetans and to refrain from imposing a successor.

The ICT views today's op-ed as a continuation of the European Parliament's long-standing interest in the human rights situation in Tibet, including freedom of religion and belief.

Read on EUobserver: <https://euobserver.com/eu-and-the-world/ar47531bf2>

This Sunday (6 July), the 14th Dalai Lama will turn 90 — a milestone for a spiritual leader whose message of peace and compassion has resonated far beyond Tibet.

The Dalai Lama is indeed a vital figure not only for the Tibetan people, but also for the future of the world, embodying the principles of peace, reconciliation, and respect for human rights.

In a world too often marked by division and aggression, the Dalai Lama's unwavering commitment to dialogue, mutual understanding, and respect for human dignity mirrors the very values upon which the European Union was founded. His consistent appeal for reconciliation rather than revenge has inspired thousands across faiths, ideologies, and generations.

At a time when the Chinese government is seeking to assert full control over Tibetan Buddhism — including the deeply spiritual process of identifying the Dalai Lama’s successor — the European Union must take a principled stand. We must speak with one voice to defend freedom of religion, human rights, and the right of the Tibetan Buddhist community to determine their own religious leaders free from state interference.

In 1988, the Dalai Lama addressed the European Parliament, presenting a visionary five-point peace plan.

He called for all of Tibet to become a zone of peace, the protection of Tibetan culture and the environment, and meaningful negotiations with Beijing to determine Tibet’s status and the future relationship between the Tibetan and Chinese peoples.

Most significantly, he renounced demands for full independence in favour of the “Middle Way,” which advocates for genuine autonomy within the People’s Republic of China.

This approach remains a pragmatic and peaceful solution to the longstanding conflict.

Yet, instead of seizing this opportunity, the Chinese Communist Party has responded with assimilation and repressive policies that threaten the very survival of Tibetan culture and identity.

Since 2010, the Chinese authorities have unilaterally ended the dialogue process with the Dalai Lama’s representatives, which began in 2002.

In the meantime, Beijing has rolled out increasingly aggressive assimilationist policies in Tibet, such as the coercive boarding schools system that forcibly separate Tibetan children from their families and culture — a policy that was [denounced by the European Parliament in December 2023](#).

These measures are not only violations of international law — they are part of a broader strategy to erase an entire civilisation.

The Chinese Communist Party’s attempts to control reincarnation are not merely symbolic; they are part of a calculated political strategy to legitimise its rule in Tibet and to undermine Tibetan spiritual authority.

China: Reincarnation ‘must abide national laws’

As the Dalai Lama grows older, Beijing has been laying the groundwork to appoint its own successor.

In response to the Dalai Lama’s new book [Voice for the Voiceless](#), stating that his successor will be born outside of China and that Tibetan freedom movement will continue even after his death, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson recently reiterated the government of China’s position that the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama “should abide by national laws and regulations”, adding that the search for the reincarnation should be a “domestic search” through China’s golden urn method and approved by China’s central government.

This issue is not only a Tibetan one — it is a test of the international community’s commitment to religious freedom. If we allow a government to impose a spiritual leader on a people against their will, we set a dangerous precedent with global implications.

Several of our governments and parliaments have already expressed their opposition to these interferences — including most recently the Dutch House of Representatives in a [motion](#) that clearly underlines that China has no legitimate role in the religious succession of the Dalai Lama.

In June 2024, following the [39th EU-China Human Rights Dialogue](#) — which included a field visit to the Tibet Autonomous Region — the EU also reiterated its position that “the selection of religious leaders should happen without any government interference and in respect of religious norms, including in the case of the succession of the Dalai Lama.”

On 8 May this year, the European Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) firmly opposing any attempt by the Chinese government to interfere in the selection of Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leaders, including the Dalai Lama.

While these past statements have sent an important signal, the time has come for the European Union and its members states to take a firmer stance and make it clear that we support the authority of the present Dalai Lama as the head of the Tibetan Buddhist community to decide on his reincarnation as per Tibetan religious tradition.

Further, we should make clear that any interference by the Chinese government in the succession of the Dalai Lama will carry serious consequences.

We call on the EU on behalf of the 27 EU member states to adopt a statement affirming this position.

The EU must also make clear that any Chinese officials involved in such interference will be considered for listing under the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime — the so-called “European Magnitsky Act.”

We further call on the Chinese government to resume direct and meaningful dialogue with the representatives of the Dalai Lama. The 2008 “Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy,” presented by the Tibetan side, remains a viable basis for negotiation.

Dialogue – not repression – is the only sustainable path to peace and stability in Tibet. The Dalai Lama is not an obstacle but a solution to the frozen conflict in Tibet.

In 2011, the Dalai Lama relinquished his political authority to the democratically-elected Central Tibetan Administration. Yet he remains a moral and spiritual guide — not only for Tibetans, but for the world.

As he turns 90, we must ensure that his legacy of non-violence, dialogue, and hope is not met with silence. If the EU is to live up to its founding values, it must stand with the Tibetan people, defend their right to religious freedom, and demand that China returns to the negotiating table.

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