



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

ICT statement: China's broken promises to Tibetans cloud the TAR's 60th anniversary

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September 9, 2025 marks the 60th anniversary of the founding of an entity labeled as “Tibet Autonomous Region” (TAR), a province-level administrative division in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) which encompasses merely roughly half of Tibet. While Chinese state media is striking a predictably upbeat tone on the anniversary, the reality is that Tibetans have little to celebrate.

“For our brothers and sisters in Tibet, the last sixty years have lurched from one calamity to another,” said International Campaign for Tibet President Tencho Gyatso. “Instead of forcing Tibetans to put on a performance of gratitude, China must change course and put the interests of the Tibetan people ahead of their own compulsive need for power and control.”

Sixty years of “autonomy”

The PRC’s invasion of Tibet, and subsequent illegal occupation, was accompanied by promises of regional autonomy, freedom of religious belief, the development of Tibet’s languages, and a clause stating that there would be no compulsion on the part of China’s government over Tibet.

These promises were immediately violated by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). After the Dalai Lama’s 1959 flight from Tibet all pretenses were discarded, and in 1965 the Chinese authorities unveiled the “Tibet Autonomous Region”. In the time since, no Tibetan has ever been appointed to rule the TAR as the Party Secretary; every single Party Secretary has been Chinese, a list which includes prominent human rights abusers such as Chen Quanguo (the architect of China’s mass internment campaign in East Turkestan/Xinjiang) and hyper-corrupt cadres such as Wu Yingjie (recently arrested and sentenced to accepting over ¥343 million in bribes).

Over the last sixty years, the Tibet Autonomous Region has been the scene of the near-total destruction of Tibetan Buddhism during the Cultural Revolution, lagging development compared with provinces in China, forced relocation of Tibetan nomads, harsh restrictions on Tibetan Buddhism that continue to the current day, and ongoing efforts to replace the everyday usage of Tibet’s languages with Mandarin Chinese.

China has come under sustained international criticism for their misrule of Tibet. The State Department’s annual Human Rights Reports catalogue a [long list of abuses](#), Freedom House scores Tibet at a flat [0/100](#), and the United Nations regularly [expresses alarm](#) at the situation there, as [does](#) the European Union.

Tibetans inside Tibet today cannot listen to the teachings of the Dalai Lama, but they can read the works of Xi Jinping. Courtrooms operate in Chinese, not Tibetan. Tibetan children are forced into boarding schools which only teach them in Chinese, and Tibetan nomads have been compelled to leave their land by the tens of thousands. Tibet’s natural resources are recklessly exploited, harming the environment, destroying cultural heritage and risking regional tensions. Dissent against Chinese rule is strictly punished, and one of the world’s longest-held political prisoners – the 11th Panchen Lama – was taken from the TAR.

This is clearly not the will of the Tibetan people. The Tibetans did not choose to destroy their monasteries and temples, nor to send the Dalai Lama into exile and disappear the Panchen Lama, nor to devalue the Tibetan language and start teaching it as a secondary language. They did not choose to be brutally ruled over by a string of corrupt and abusive Chinese cadres who are hostile to their language, religion and culture.

These decisions were all made and forced upon the Tibetan people by the Chinese leaders of the CCP, and only by embracing the Dalai Lama’s proposal of genuine autonomy can they hope to restore their relationship with the Tibetan people.



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