



## INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

### The Arc'teryx fireworks stunt in Tibet – A call for corporate accountability in fragile ecosystems

<https://savetibet.org/the-arcteryx-fireworks-stunt-in-tibet-a-call-for-corporate-accountability-in-fragile-ecosystems>

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On September 19, 2025, Canadian outdoor apparel brand Arc'teryx, in collaboration with Chinese pyrotechnic artist Cai Guo-Qiang, staged a promotional fireworks display titled "Rising Dragon" at over 5,500 meters (18,000 feet) in Tibet's pristine mountains. The stunt has sparked widespread outrage, both within China and globally, for its blatant disregard for Tibet's fragile ecosystem and sacred cultural significance.

The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) demands a full independent environmental assessment, reparations for affected communities, and stricter global regulations on corporate activities in Tibet. Facing significant backlash over the stunt, Arc'teryx and artist Cai Guo-Qiang issued apologies, and Chinese central authorities pledged to investigate. The ICT considers neither the apologies nor the Chinese government's statement credible for the following reasons:

1. Such an environmentally destructive stunt in Tibet has precedent. In 1996, Chinese filmmakers detonated explosives on the surface of Kharola Glacier in Tibet, near the site of Cai Guo-Qiang's recent fireworks stunt, for the filming of Feng Xiaogang's *Red River Valley* (1997). A glacier that took centuries to form was blasted to create a "realistic" avalanche scene, with permission from local Chinese authorities for minimal compensation. The use of explosives caused irreversible damage to the glacier's structure, leaving visible scarring that persists nearly 30 years later.
2. The Chinese authorities have also shown blatant disregard for Tibet's environment. While they routinely use "environmental protection" as a pretext to displace Tibetan nomadic communities, they have conducted military drills employing heavy artillery, rockets, and tanks in many ecologically sensitive areas of the Tibetan plateau, disregarding the environmental consequences. Therefore, the Chinese authorities' assurance of launching an investigation into the fireworks stunt lacks credibility.
3. Another issue undermining the credibility of a government investigation is the business and political connection between [Ding Shizong](#) (Chairman of the Board of Directors of China's Anta Sports, the majority shareholder in Amer Sports Inc.), and Xi Jinping. This relationship creates a [conflict of interest](#) that compromises the independence of any investigation. Xi has known Ding since his time as governor of Fujian Province. Xi encouraged Ding to expand his outdoor apparel business, referring to it as an "ice and snow cause." Ding also serves as a member of the Standing Committee of the 14th Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and vice chairman of the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce, while previously serving as a deputy to the 13th National People's Congress (2018–2023), reflecting strong political and business ties. The intertwined political and business [relationship](#) between Ding and Xi within China's opaque political system undermines the credibility of any government-led investigation.
4. Arc'teryx's damage control apology, posted on [Instagram](#), is disingenuous at best and misleading at worst. The apology deflects blame to the "local artist" and "its team in China," portraying the company as unaware of its local team's actions. However, Arc'teryx, a formerly Canadian company, is now owned by Finland's Amer Sports, which is majority-controlled by Chinese companies, with China's ANTA Sports as the majority shareholder. In essence, Arc'teryx trying to deflect

blame to its local team in China is clearly misleading as it is a Chinese company. Additionally, the company's apology, as quoted by [Global Times](#), stated that "we will accelerate our established environmental protection plans in Xizang region and fully promote public welfare projects that contribute to local cultural development". The statement adopting the Chinese government's term "Xizang" for Tibet is highly problematic as the company is appeasing the government by complying with the Chinese government's Tibet to "Xizang" country name change policy in effect since fall 2021. This clearly shows corporate leaders' failure to take accountability in a genuine or meaningful way.

5. Chinese artist Cai Guo-Qiang's remorse for the stunt, expressed after the backlash, also lacks credibility. Cai is aware of the environmental impact of fireworks in pristine mountain ecosystems, as Japan and France have previously [denied](#) Cai's similar "art" projects on their soil. Yet, he obtained approval from Chinese authorities in Tibet for the stunt, which he described as a lifelong dream realized, at the expense of Tibet's delicate ecosystem. He claimed to have used "biodegradable" fireworks and "salt bricks" to lure small animals away from harm. Environmental experts, Dr. Gu Lei and Lian Xinming, have debunked these claims on China's state media. In an interview with [Beijing News](#) on September 21, Dr. Gu, a director of the China Wildlife Conservation Association and an associate professor at Capital Normal University, speaking on Cai Guo-Qiang and Arc'teryx preliminary preparations and restoration measures stated:

*"Using salt bricks to lure pikas away from the fireworks display area is unfeasible. Pikas are timid and will not leave their burrows to forage, and salt bricks are unattractive to wildlife and birds."*

*Beijing News further reported that "Degradable materials" are not a panacea either. "This activity could cause 'irreversible damage' to the fragile ecosystem of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau," a long-time alpine ecology expert at the Chinese Academy of Sciences told the Beijing News Zero Carbon Research Institute, stating that Arc'teryx's so-called environmental remediation measures are ineffective in restoring the environment. He analyzed the ecological impacts from three perspectives: first, direct ecological damage to the fireworks display area. Artificial measures such as "covering the fireworks area with soil" have already damaged the ecosystem itself; second, severe soil erosion will result, which will also have serious impacts on surrounding areas; and third, through runoff, fireworks residues may enter downstream waters, causing secondary impacts on the entire basin's ecological environment."*

*This expert, who has long worked in scientific research on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, pointed out that alpine meadow ecosystems take centuries or even millennia to form, and such fireworks activities directly damage the surface vegetation layer. "Once the meadows are destroyed, the loss of vegetation will lead to severe soil erosion, making recovery of the entire ecosystem almost impossible."*

Similarly, [Liu Xin](#), a plant survey volunteer with the Qinghai Sanjiangyuan Ecological and Environmental Protection Association, added that:

*"blasting can disrupt plant growth cycles, with the impact being particularly severe on perennial, single-flowering plants. The blasting could prevent them from producing seeds, "severing their life cycle." She said natural recovery is long and uncertain, making it difficult to accelerate with human intervention. She expressed skepticism about the organizers' claims of "vegetation restoration."*

6. According to Cai Guo-Qiang, the fireworks display titled *Rising Dragon* symbolizes the “auspiciousness” and “endless vitality” of Eastern dragon culture. However, for Tibetans, the dragon is strongly associated with Chinese identity and staging a “Rising Dragon” fireworks show on the sacred snowy mountains—a profound cultural symbol in Tibetan tradition—is deeply offensive, considering China’s decades-long illegal occupation of Tibet and its brutal repression of the Tibetan people. Cai also stated that he chose Ralung (Pinyin: Relong) for the stunt because the syllable “long” in the Pinyin rendering resembles the Chinese word for dragon (lóng). In Tibetan, however, place name Ralung means “valley of goats,” and imposing a Chinese cultural symbol on Tibetan land disregards its indigenous meaning. Beijing-based Tibetan writer-activist Tsering Woesser (@degewa) condemned the stunt, stating:

*“Is this contemporary art? What we see is a cultural imperialist arrogantly showcasing his skills, using Tibet’s mountains and rivers as mere props. Behind the fleeting minutes of explosions lies the ecological cost to the snow mountains and the erosion of cultural dignity. This is not a ‘dialogue with heaven and earth,’ but a nauseating performance by a cultural imperialist on the snow-covered plateau.”*

**VIDEO:** [Arc'teryx fireworks](#)

## The Chinese voice

Despite the destructive and environmentally harmful stunt, the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) is encouraged by the robust and vibrant level of awareness about the environmental cause of Tibet, particularly within China. While those involved assumed the Chinese community would praise the stunt, the Chinese people were the first and most vocal in their outspoken criticism. Millions of Chinese took to social media platforms like [Weibo](#) to express their dismay at the entities involved in the stunt. Despite initial censorship efforts by Chinese authorities, the sheer scale of public outcry overwhelmed Beijing’s censorship apparatus. This event mirrors the [White Paper Movement](#) in China during the COVID-19 pandemic, which arose in protest to the government’s zero-COVID policy. The authorities reversed that policy, fearing ongoing backlash from Chinese citizens. The strong public backlash against damaging Tibet’s environment may compel Chinese authorities to reconsider their assumption of the Chinese people’s complicity in such destructive actions.

The Chinese and global communities called for boycotting the corporate entities involved in the stunt. The Helsinki-based parent company, Amer Sports Inc., saw its stock, which had enjoyed a significant rise following its initial public offering (IPO) in February 2024, plummet in the day following the stunt.

[Amer Sports Annual Report 2024](#), hosted on Amer Sports, Inc.’s official investor relations platform (Q4 Investor Relations CDN), states that over 60% of its shareholders are Chinese companies (ANTA Sports, FountainVest Partners, and Tencent Holdings Limited).

## Recommendations

1. The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) calls on the public to hold shareholders accountable for their corporate malfeasance, posing irreversible damage to Tibet’s highly sensitive environment, with long-lasting impacts for its fragile ecosystem.
2. The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) urges the White Cube contemporary art gallery to uphold its stated belief that “art has the power to enrich people’s lives” and cancel Cai Guo-Qiang’s *Gunpowder and Abstraction* exhibition in London, scheduled from September 26 to November 9, 2025. Cai’s recent stunt in Tibet has caused environmental harm and deep offense to the Tibetan people, undermining lives rather than enriching them.

3. ICT calls on the Finnish government to investigate Amer Sports Inc.'s knowledge of and involvement in the incident. The investigation should determine whether Amer Sports actively directed Arc'teryx's promotional activities in Tibet in pursuit of brand recognition and corporate profit. Despite being aware of the risks of operating in China, Amer Sports failed to exercise adequate oversight to prevent environmental and cultural harm.
4. ICT commends the Chinese public for courageously raising their voices to protect Tibet's environment. ICT welcomes their support and encourages the Chinese citizenry to continue speaking out against government actions that undermine Tibet's ecological and cultural integrity. Over 92 million Weibo users have engaged with the Chinese government's announcement of an investigation into the fireworks stunt in Gyangtse County. ICT appeals for sustained public involvement within China to ensure accountability.

## Exhibits

### Translated Excerpts from Videos Expressing Concerns and Implications of the Fireworks Stunt

#### **VIDEO:** [Arc'teryx fireworks reaction](#)

*So, this idea of blasting mountains—well, Cai Guo-Qiang has been planning it for over 30 years. Take a look at this sketch; it's his original concept drawing. This one was drawn by Cai back in 1989. He once described it as depicting Mont Saint-Victoire at dusk—a mountain in France—where gunpowder and fuses would create a soaring dragon, winding from the base to the peak.*

*Here's a real view of Mont Saint-Victoire in France—it's beautiful, right? You're probably wondering, does Cai Guo-Qiang have some grudge against this mountain? Why blow it up for no reason? Well, here's the thing: there was a French painter named Cézanne, famous for painting this mountain. Cai said he wanted to "dialogue" with the painter. Honestly, I don't see a dialogue here—it feels more like a challenge.*

*This isn't his first time blasting mountains. Back in 1993, he did it at Jiayuguan. He organized over 100 people to lay gunpowder westward from Jiayuguan, stretching 10 kilometers. When they lit it, the explosion lasted 10 minutes. Look at this photo—flames everywhere! I don't see beauty; it feels more like a warzone, as if invaders were attacking.*

*He got away with blasting Jiayuguan, but Mont Saint-Victoire? That plan fell through. Why? Because the French strongly opposed it. Local environmental groups said the mountain is a breeding ground for endangered birds, and explosions would disrupt the ecological balance. So, the French Ministry of Culture rejected his proposal. After that, he set his sights on Mount Fuji, but that was also shot down due to environmental assessments.*

*I really don't know how—whether it was Cai or Arc'teryx—this time they pulled it off. Somehow, this plan got approved in the Himalayas, the most environmentally fragile place on Earth. What a reckless move! Do you remember the 1996 film Red River Valley? To shoot an avalanche scene, the director went crazy and buried explosives in the Karola Glacier, artificially triggering an avalanche. Now, 30 years later, that massive triangular gash from the explosion is still there, completely unhealed.*

*Honestly, seeing that gash still makes my heart ache, and I feel so guilty. I think we arrogant humans are so foolish—how can we harm nature, our beautiful home, in the name of art? But let me say this: condemnation aside, it's one thing for an artist to lose their senses, or for a company to be reckless, but what are the authorities doing?*

*How did such a foolish plan pass through layers of approval to become reality? That's the real question we should be investigating. Those responsible for approving this are the biggest culprits and must be held accountable. Do you agree?*

**VIDEO:** [Arc'teryx fireworks reaction](#)

*The Himalayas represents us Tibetans. It is also a mountain range that countries all over the world must protect. Hello to all. I am Tenzin. According to yesterday's news, Chinese artist Cai Guo-qiang in collaboration with Arc'teryx lit a lot fireworks in the Himalaya. Although they said that the activity procedures were in compliance with the law and there was no environmental pollution material. But why set off fireworks in such a clean and unpolluted place? I don't know how the Lhasa Municipal Government and Environment Protection Bureau approved it. I don't understand why they can set off fireworks on Mount Krachungla and destroy the environment, and we Tibetans cannot offer incense and call upon the Gods on the sacred mountain. We Tibetans are reluctant to shout loudly on the sacred mountain, why do they set off such polluting fireworks on Mount Krachungla. fireworks cause great pollution to the surrounding environment, and they also scare many wild animals. The Himalayas are to be protected, not destroyed. China can live without Cai Guo-qiang but China cannot live without Tibet. Tibet's green mountain and clear waters are indispensable.*

**VIDEO:** [Arc'teryx fireworks reaction](#)

*(Fireworks clip plays). It sparked the fury of the entire nation! Setting off fireworks in the Himalayas—Cai Guo-Qiang and Arc'teryx, do you think the plateau's ecological firewall is just for show? You claim you used eco-friendly materials and relocated animals, but in the face of the fragile high-altitude ecosystem, no excuse for "artistic creation" can cover up the offense against nature.*

*Art is not a fig leaf for destruction. When a commercial brand and so-called art join forces to set off fireworks on the roof of the world, what's ignited isn't beauty—it's public outrage over the violation of ecological boundaries. This kind of operation, cloaking destruction in the name of art, should have been doused long ago by the people's fury. Sure, they apologized in the end and promised assessments and compensation, but can a mere apology or a bit of compensation fully erase the harm done to the plateau's ecosystem? If you think I'm right, friends, give me a like. Thanks!*

**VIDEO:** [Arc'teryx fireworks reaction](#)

*On September 22, 2025, while traveling near Ralung village in Gyantse County, Tibet, I came across the mountain damaged by Arc'teryx's art project. Three days after the fireworks show, the road to the performance site had already been sealed off by local workers. Drones were making trip after trip, with heavy-duty ones shuttling back and forth.*

*They were transporting debris from the performance down the mountain. At first, from the opposite hill, I saw what I thought were yaks—densely packed, moving creatures, seemingly back to grazing after the show. But when I looked closely, I realized they weren't yaks but hundreds of local villagers, carrying bags and picking up trash on the steep slopes. Although I didn't see obvious signs of environmental pollution or mountain damage yet, the fact that so many people were mobilized to scour the mountain for garbage speaks volumes. You can imagine how much waste—beyond the so-called eco-friendly, biodegradable colored powder—was left behind by this massive fireworks explosion, waste that only manual labor can clear, and the performance art forced upon nature to endure. Before this contemporary art*

*spectacle, could the Snow Mountain have faced an avalanche risk from the blast's shockwaves? If the organizers didn't know, they could just look a few kilometers away at the Karola Glacier. That ancient glacier still bears the unhealed black triangular scar from the Red River Valley film crew's explosion for a shoot. In the short morning I spent in Gyangtse, I noticed protected wildlife like bharal sheep and pikas scattering nervously at the sound of drones. Imagine the deafening blasts—even without casualties, these small animals must now fear the stable environment where their ancestors thrived.*

*To the instigator of this whole affair, you could have retired with your reputation intact, but this explosion has utterly stripped away the artistic veneer you wore. How will the Tibetan villagers cleaning up your mess on the mountain interpret your "rising dragon"? And what have you contributed to their material or spiritual well-being? Then there's the foolish bird that footed the bill. You study high mountains and high-income consumers, you champion local culture and localized store designs, and you want to use the ancient Tibetan civilization, the mystique of Shambhala, and the Himalayas to boost your brand's premium in the international market. But first, learn to read and write the slogan at the entrance to Relong Township, where this Rising Dragon performance took place: "Green waters and lush mountains are gold and silver mountains."*

**VIDEO:** [Arc'teryx fireworks reaction](#)

*Clip shows a user scrolling through the negative comments over the fireworks stunt in Tibet.*



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