



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

COP30 climate conference opens in Belém: calls for a just transition that respects human rights and justice – spotlight on Tibet

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As COP30 continues in the heart of the Amazon, the International Campaign for Tibet urges negotiators and stakeholders to ensure that the principle of a just transition becomes reality. This depends on concrete action to recognize the rights of those whose voices are systematically silenced, such as the Tibetan people.

While global leaders debate renewable energy solutions, Tibet remains on the frontline of climate injustice. Chinese state-led hydropower projects on Tibet's rivers—often branded as “green energy”—are causing irreversible ecological damage and displacing local communities. These mega-dams disrupt fragile ecosystems, threaten downstream water security across Asia, and erode the cultural and spiritual heritage of the Tibetan people. The science is also clear that new hydropower dams can release significant amounts of methane, a short-action greenhouse gas which is untenable considering the shrinking window to meet global climate commitments. No proper climate agenda can ignore the three clear strikes against hydropower in Tibet: Injustice and displacement of local communities, environmental degradation, and climate change drivers.

The scale of the problem:

- A recent study by the International Campaign for Tibet details that China has initiated or proposed at least 193 hydropower projects in Tibet since 2000, with nearly 80% classified as large or mega-dams (>100 MW).
- The centerpiece is the Medog (Motuo) Hydropower Station on the Yarlung Tsangpo River—an estimated \$167 billion project comprising five cascade dams. When completed, it will have an installed capacity of 60 GW, nearly three times the output of the Three Gorges Dam.
- The study also demonstrated that if complete, China's agenda will expel 1.2 million people from their traditional homes and lands.
- These projects proceed without Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC), violating international standards and denying Tibetans any agency over decisions that affect their land, livelihoods, and future.
- Climate change requires a renewable transition. There are many alternatives that can achieve multiple benefits that protect the rights and lives of the Tibetan people and other marginalized communities.

As COP30 emphasizes equity and inclusion, we call on governments, financial institutions, and climate negotiators to:

- Integrate human rights safeguards into all climate and energy policies.
- Condition climate finance on compliance with FPIC and genuine community participation.
- Recognize Tibet's role as Asia's water tower and protect its ecosystems from exploitative projects.

To move from abstraction to reality, COP negotiation must promote just mitigation and adaptation pathways that produce clean energy, genuinely reduce climate pollution and protect the rights of people. A truly just transition and sustainable climate solution cannot be achieved by sacrificing the rights of vulnerable peoples. Climate justice must be universal—because the future we seek depends on it.