



INTERNATIONAL
CAMPAIGN
FOR TIBET

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TIBET

WATCH

WINTER 2025
INSIDE:

Joyous Celebrations Continue
for His Holiness' 90th Birthday

Asia's Water Tower: Tibet's
Crucial Role in the Future of Asia

Tibet Human Rights Coverage
Reduced in Latest US Report

US Senate Passes Dalai Lama's
Birthday Resolution

Get to Know ICT's
Executive Director



MOMENTUM FOR CHANGE



Photo: Ven Zamling Norbu/OHDL

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Dear Friend,

I hope this issue of *Tibet Watch* finds you well.

As we go to press, an international delegation of ICT leaders and board members from all our offices, have recently returned from traveling to India to offer our 90th birthday greetings to His Holiness in Dharamsala, India. The trip, planned to coincide with Tibetan Democracy Day, was fruitful and meaningful—we reconnected with many friends and held important meetings with the Central Tibetan Administration, members of Tibetan civil community and society.

Traveling and working in collaboration with our international offices and colleagues gave us additional inspiration and energy for the work in the year to come—please stay tuned to learn more about future initiatives resulting from these meetings! Read more on page 6.

Our cover story in this issue features the Dalai Lama's joyous 90th birthday celebration, a momentous occasion marked this summer, along with the passage of a new Senate resolution in his honor (pages 4-5). We are delighted to share some stunning photos from His Holiness' birthday events.

The summer also brought 12 inspiring Tibetan-American college students from across the country to Washington, DC, for the annual Tibetan Youth Leadership Program. Learn about their experiences and achievements on page 5.

This issue also highlights World Water Week in Stockholm and examines China's massive hydropower projects that endanger Tibetan villages, culture, and environment. These projects pose a looming disaster for millions of people living downstream—not only in Tibet but across neighboring countries as well. Read about our panel in Stockholm on page 6.

This year's annual ICT wall calendar carries a heartfelt call to save the Earth, featuring vibrant illustrations and inspiring quotes from the book *Heart to Heart*, a collaboration between *Mutts* cartoonist Patrick McDonnell and His Holiness the Dalai Lama. See page 7 for this special pairing of moving illustrations and thought-provoking words. You'll also find timely reviews of new books on Tibet on page 9.

Also in this issue, you can read about the State Department's sharply condensed country report on human rights practices for Tibet, and we examine the reduced scope of this report and urge the need for restoration of robust and comprehensive structure when detailing the Chinese government's machinery of repression (page 8).

Finally, don't miss the Q&A with the new Executive Director of our Washington DC office, Ryan Fiorelli, on page 10. Ryan comes to us after many years of Tibet advocacy in US government, and I hope you'll enjoy getting to know him!

Thank you so much for supporting our work. My best wishes for the upcoming festive season, and the New Year to come!



In solidarity,

Tencho Gyatso

Tencho Gyatso
President



HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA CELEBRATES 90 YEARS OF COMPASSION



His Holiness the Dalai Lama's 90th birthday was celebrated this summer with joy and reverence through two celebrations in Dharamsala, India. The first was a celebration taking place according to the Tibetan lunar calendar on June 30, organized by the people of Dhomey (Amdo) province, His Holiness' home province. The event featured many offerings, performances, and a long-life ceremony.



The second celebration took place on July 6, at the Main Tibetan Temple courtyard. Organized by the Central Tibetan Administration, the event included performances by local and foreign singers and dancers, dignitaries including a representative of US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Tibetan artists, presentations of cake and gifts, and more. Among those attending some of the celebrations were actor and longtime Tibet supporter Richard Gere and ICT President Tencho Gyatso.



To mark the milestone of His Holiness' 90th birthday, ICT launched the *Compassion Rising World Tour* campaign to spark a year of global celebration, encouraging people from all walks of life to come together through acts of compassion that amplify and reaffirm His Holiness' inspirational legacy.

All photos on this page by Tenzin Choejor/OHHDL, excluding top right photo; accredited to Ven Zamling Norbu/OHHDL.



A highlight of the ongoing world tour was a screening of Martin Scorsese's personal copy of the Oscar-winning film *Kundun* at the Tribeca Film Festival in New York City. Additional events included the release of His Holiness' new book *Voice for the*

Voiceless, the Tibet Eco Awards in Canada, a birthday celebration at the US Capitol, a symposium at the University of Bologna, and many more festivals and events across the world. Learn more about this year-long campaign at CompassionRising.com.

US SENATE PASSES DALAI LAMA BIRTHDAY RESOLUTION



On July 14, the US Senate unanimously approved a resolution commemorating the Dalai Lama's 90th birthday on July 6th as a Day of Compassion, reinforcing longstanding US bipartisan support for the Tibetan people.

The passage comes in the wake of Tibet Lobby Day, which saw more than 200 Tibetan Americans and Tibet supporters from across the United States come to Washington to advance support for the resolution and urge for concrete action on Tibet. ICT continues to advocate for passage of the House version of the resolution, H.Res.515, and is hopeful it will soon be officially in the books.

"The passage of this resolution is a demonstration of America's deep

and enduring support for the Dalai Lama's message of compassion and non-violence, and for the human rights and democratic freedoms of the Tibetan people," said ICT President Tencho Gyatso. "I must express our heartfelt gratitude to Tibet's friends in the Senate and also to the participants in Tibet Lobby Day who helped propel the resolution forward during this crucial moment."

The resolution recognizes July 6, 2025, as a Day of Compassion in honor of the Dalai Lama's birthday, affirms the Tibetan people's human rights and fundamental freedoms, and reiterates that any attempt by the People's Republic of China (PRC) to interfere in the recognition of a 15th Dalai Lama violates the religious freedom of Tibetan Buddhists.



STUDENTS COMPLETE SUCCESSFUL TIBETAN YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAM (TYLP) IN WASHINGTON, DC

From July 12 to 19, the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) welcomed 12 Tibetan American college students from across the US to Washington, DC. The 12 participants, from 7 different states and 10 institutions, had the opportunity to learn about the American political system and the roles that activists, lobbyists, think tanks, and journalists serve in foreign policy.

This year, TYLP saw the highest number of applications in its 25-year history. The in-person program included meetings with staffers from congressional offices, interaction with leaders of civil society organizations and Tibetan leaders, workshops on advocacy and communications, and sessions with TYLP alumni who have served or are serving in federal agencies or Congress.

TYLP aims to give these promising students the political skills they need as they develop into the next generation of Tibetan American leaders.

ICT Executive Director Ryan Fioresi said, "I was honored to engage with this impressive group and was inspired by their energy and optimism for the future of the Tibetan movement. ICT is proud to continue supporting this impactful initiative and is excited to see each of the TYLP participants realize their immense potential in their future careers."

ICT BOARDS & LEADERS CONVENE FOR STRATEGY MEETINGS IN INDIA



In September, members of the International Campaign for Tibet's Boards of Directors, along with leadership from the International Campaign for Tibet's US office, ICT Europe, and ICT Germany met in Delhi and Dharamsa-

la, India. They gathered to strategize with key stakeholders from the Central Tibetan Administration, His Holiness's private office, and members of Tibetan civil society.

During their meetings, they explored a variety of strategies to further amplify the impact and effectiveness of ICT's advocacy in the US, Europe, and globally, in close coordination with Tibetan partners in Dharamsala.

Leaders reported they gained invaluable insights into how ICT can con-

tinue and increase its support of the Tibetan exile movement, while continuing to advance the fundamental freedoms of Tibetans in Tibet. While the challenges are immense and the situation in Tibet remains dire, the team was energized and inspired by the commitment, resilience, and optimism of Tibetan partners in India and His Holiness' enduring message of non-violence and compassion.

We look forward to sharing more details soon about the outcomes of these strategy sessions!

ICT PANEL AT WORLD WATER WEEK 2025

ICT organized an important panel in August during the annual World Water Week in Stockholm, one of the world's leading conferences on water policy and sustainability. The panel, titled "Tibet: Epicenter of Climate Risk, Regional Conflict and Clean Energy," emphasized Tibet's critical role in the ecological, humanitarian, and geopolitical future of Asia and beyond.

Decisions being made by the Chinese Communist Party today regarding water management, energy, and climate have direct consequences for the 7 million Tibetans living in Tibet, the nearly 2 billion people downstream, and ultimately global climate stability.

The panel included Palmo Tenzin, Senior Researcher at ICT, who presented findings from the report *Chinese Hydropower: Damning Tibet's Culture, Community, and Environment*. She addressed the scale and pace of Chinese hydropower projects, the impact on Tibetan communities, and the urgent need for alternative energy solutions that align with traditional ways of life.

She was joined by Dr. Charlotte Wag-



ner of the Stockholm Environment Institute and Dr. Wolfgang Schwanghart of the University of Potsdam who discussed the risks of hydropower.

Tibet's glacial peaks feed Asia's major rivers, including the Mekong, Brahmaputra, and Yangtze, making them vital for countries downstream in Asia. However, large-scale dam projects degrade ecosystems and water quality, drive regional instability, and emit greenhouse gas pollution. The panel also discussed alternative solutions and policy rec-

ommendations that contribute to sustainable and equitable energy.

Palmo Tenzin emphasized that ICT's report recommends ceasing all planning, proposing and construction of hydropower dams by the Chinese government and all displacement of communities for damming. She also remarked that the ongoing violation of Tibetans' rights is a result of the occupation of Tibet, and no long-term solution for the entire region is achievable without a political solution to the territorial conflict.



Lesley Rich, longtime ICT employee, presents the 2026 calendar to His Holiness the Dalai Lama.



2026 ICT CALENDAR: GREAT COMPASSION

Words by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Illustrations by Patrick McDonnell

Our 2026 calendar is a collaboration with renowned illustrator Patrick McDonnell of Mutts Comics, created in honor of His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s 90th birthday and the enduring power of compassion.

Each month features our favorite illustrations and quotes from *Heart to Heart*, a remarkable book that pairs the words of His Holiness with engaging illustrations by McDonnell. With gentle wisdom and moving simplicity, this new calendar invites you to reflect on our deep connection to one another and to this Earth we all live on.

As His Holiness reminds us, compassion is not a passive feeling—it’s a powerful force for action. We hope each page of this calendar offers a moment of reflection, a spark of hope, or a small inspiration to act with greater compassion.

Purchase your 2026 calendar and more ICT exclusive *Heart to Heart* inspired items at savetibetstore.org!





STATE DEPARTMENT REPORT

FAILS TO FULLY DOCUMENT CHINA'S ABUSES IN TIBET

Photo: Olivier Adam

As in previous years, the State Department's 2024 Country Report on Human Rights Practices for Tibet confirms ongoing and serious human rights abuses against the Tibetan people, including disappearances, torture, arbitrary arrest, and restrictions on religious freedom. Alarming, however, the 2024 report, released on August 12, 2025, lacks the depth and substance of previous years.

The report is more notable for what it does not include—and for underscoring the importance of Radio Free Asia (RFA) as one of the few media organizations still able to report on human rights abuses in Tibet. ICT continues to urge the current administration to reinstate funding for this and other critical organizations.

The 2024 report is less than half the length of the 2023 report and omits several important sections. The section on political prisoners has been removed entirely, and the previously robust sections on the right of assembly, and freedom of movement have been greatly reduced, among other issues.

The 2024 report repeatedly cites RFA, referencing coverage of incidents such as social media surveillance of

Tibetans, the sentencing of activists, and the arrest of a monk. The State Department has historically relied on RFA for its highly credible human rights reporting. The shuttering of RFA means that the State Department diplomats who are preparing the 2025 report will have to do so without this unique and singular resource.

China has effectively closed Tibet off to foreign journalists. The restrictions on reporting are so severe that some

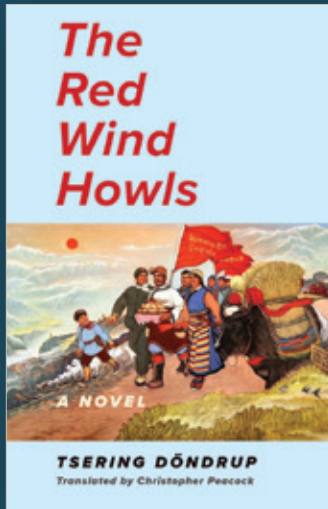
journalists have resorted to traveling there undercover in order to hear directly from Tibetans.

In such an environment, the existence of the State Department human rights report gives credibility to widespread accusations of human rights abuses against the Tibetan people. A robust report provides an overarching view of China's machinery of repression, while a reduced report leaves much of this out of view.

EXCLUDING THESE SECTIONS DOES NOT CHANGE THE FACT THAT TIBETAN POLITICAL PRISONERS CONTINUE TO BE IMPRISONED AND MISTREATED AND THOSE WITH RELATIVE "FREEDOM" CONTINUE TO HAVE THEIR INTERNET ACTIVITY SURVEILLED AND THEIR ABILITY TO ASSEMBLE, MOVE, AND EVEN SPEAK HEAVILY RESTRICTED.

Less factual and comprehensive reporting creates more room for China to downplay its abuses. As a result, **ICT calls on the State Department to restore the prior and more comprehensive structure of the Human Rights Report to support US and international advocacy and accountability efforts for the Chinese government's abuses.**

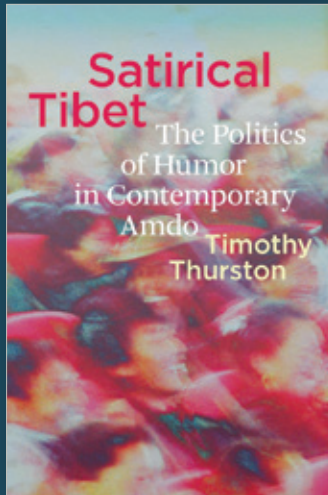
RECENT PUBLICATIONS



THE RED WIND HOWLS

By *Tsering Döndrup*
Columbia University Press, 2025

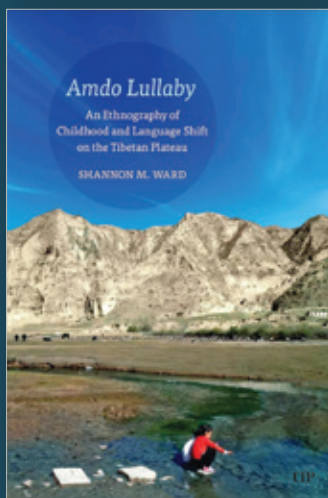
This compelling translation of Tsering Döndrup's novel about the aftermath of the 1958 uprising in northern Tibet – banned in China, naturally – is infused with gallows humor and a meandering structure reminiscent of *Catch-22*. The author was forced into early retirement for writing it as punishment for the book's sharp critique of Chinese rule in Tibet. Very highly recommended.



SATIRICAL TIBET

By *Timothy Thurston*
University of Washington Press, 2025

This exploration of the intersection of politics and humor in Amdo, Tibet, traces the evolution of comic routines known as *zurza*. Thurston translates portions of *zurza* routines to show how they skewer their targets, serving as a form of Tibetan expression in an environment where every word can be scrutinized by Chinese authorities.



AMDO LULLABY: AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF CHILDHOOD AND LANGUAGE SHIFT ON THE TIBETAN PLATEAU

By *Shannon M. Ward*
University of Toronto Press, 2024

Completing our trilogy of Amdo-focused books in this edition is *Amdo Lullaby*. Ward writes about linguistic shift among children, keenly noting how kids integrate Tibetan and Chinese during play, and watching as Chinese language education policies lead to disparate outcomes between families raising their children in the city versus those who stay in the countryside. The choice to render spoken Tibetan in International Phonetic Alphabet and some of the analysis might hold particular appeal for linguists.



10 THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT RYAN

WELCOMING RYAN FIORESI, OUR NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IN WASHINGTON DC

Ryan Fiorese stepped into a new role as Executive Director of our US office on July 8, 2025. He has nearly a decade of experience leading on China and Tibet human rights policy within the US executive and legislative branches and most recently served as Senior Advisor on Tibetan Issues in the State Department's Office of the Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights. We sat down with Ryan recently to learn more about him.

1. I was born in Southern California and grew up in Los Angeles, close to the beach, and spent lots of time outdoors as a kid enjoying the great weather.

2. I completed my undergraduate education at UC Santa Barbara, where I studied international affairs and was exposed to different subjects like Poly Sci, Econ, East Asian Studies, Latin American Studies, and more. As a student, I was very interested in the Chiapas uprising in Mexico and felt an affinity for the Zapatistas. I was fascinated by how they organized their community and emphasized autonomy, justice, and self-determination. In many respects, I feel that the aspirations of the Tibetan people share many similarities with the Zapatistas and that is perhaps why I was so drawn to the movement, given my prior academic and personal interests.

3. After college I took part in a program called WorldTeach, which took me to China for a year as a teacher of middle school students. I lived in a very rural place in Hunan, Chairman Mao's home province, and learned a lot about the culture during

day-to-day life. I ended up staying in China and living in Shanghai for three years working for an American company and then completed a graduate degree in international relations at the Nanjing, China campus of the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

4. I've been lucky to travel to somewhere in the range of 45-50 countries over the course of my life and to learn Mandarin, which I still speak. Traveling has afforded me so many interesting experiences and a broad perspective on the world.

5. One of my favorite hobbies is practicing jiu jitsu, including Brazilian jiu jitsu. I also enjoy playing fantasy football with friends in my neighborhood.

6. One remarkable experience I've had was traveling to Dharamsala, India for the first time in 2022 when I worked at the State Department as a senior advisor to Under Secretary Uzra Zeya, who was the US Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues.

When we got to India, we were honored with a heroes' welcome, with people waving flags and lining the streets as we traveled to our meeting with the Central Tibetan Administration. I also had a very memorable and special audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Being in his presence, having a conversation and sharing a moment with him was incredibly inspirational and rewarding.

7. My past work includes not only government but also the nonprofit sector. For five years I oversaw global partnerships for the American College of Cardiology, based in DC. The job

took me to China, India, the Middle East, and elsewhere to advance the College's mission to improve heart health for patients globally. It was great preparation for ICT because of the exposure to the nonprofit world and how it operates.

8. I first learned about the Tibet issue from a Free Tibet bumper sticker when I was young. Later, while living in China, the Tibetan uprising in 2008 in the lead-up to the Beijing Olympics really opened my eyes. I saw the Chinese government clamp down and twist the narrative to make it seem like the protestors were responsible for the violence.

9. I've always had an interest in wanting to help empower the underdog. I find a lot of similarities between some of the Latin American countries I studied and the history of Tibet in terms of its invasion by a larger power and its unfortunate and unjust journey through oppression and marginalization.

10. In this role, I look forward to working with the amazing team at ICT and contributing to the advancement of its mission and its decades-long impact on supporting and empowering the Tibetan people. I want to help improve the human rights situation for Tibetans and increase awareness of the issue on a global scale. I'm looking forward to working with our international offices to shine a light on China's human rights abuses in Tibet and help Tibetans achieve self-determination. I'm so grateful for and inspired by the ICT members who support our work and help keep the Tibetan cause so strong and enduring.

CALLING ALL MEMBERS: URGE THE NEW SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR TIBETAN ISSUES TO TAKE THE NEXT STEPS



Photo: Olivier Adam

A new Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues should be appointed soon—perhaps even by the time you receive this newsletter. We want to make sure they hear from ICT members as soon as possible so they know about your commitment to the rights of the Tibetan people.

Join ICT in urging the new Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues to take the following important steps by adding your name to our petition.

PLEASE CLIP HERE & MAIL YOUR PETITION IN THE ENCLOSED ENVELOPE.



TO: SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR TIBETAN ISSUES, DEPARTMENT OF STATE
FROM: A CONCERNED AMERICAN

Dear Special Coordinator,

I am glad to hear that you have been appointed to this crucial position. Alongside the tens of thousands of fellow Americans who are members of the International Campaign for Tibet, I hope you will make the greatest use of your office by resolutely advocating for the human rights and democratic freedoms of the Tibetan people.

As you know, the Chinese Communist Party rules Tibet through brutal repression and cultural erasure. The Tibetan people, on the other hand, are steadfast allies in countering Chinese aggression and defending the values of democracy, religious freedom, and freedom of expression that all Americans hold dear. As China pursues its expansionist agenda throughout Asia, supporting Tibet is both the right thing to do *and* a pragmatic necessity to keep the United States and our allies safe and strong. I urge you to support Tibet and its people by:

- ✦ Visiting Dharamsala to meet with His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Sikyong Penpa Tsering to learn about their efforts to resolve the Tibet dispute and ensure that the United States is playing an active role in pushing China to resume dialogue.
- ✦ Working within the Department of State and across the Administration to protect vital American funding for Tibet programs.
- ✦ Using the tools mandated by the Resolve Tibet Act to defend the information space by countering Chinese disinformation on Tibet.
- ✦ Working with like-minded partners to hold China accountable for its human rights abuses in Tibet and counter its attempts to erase Tibetan civilization.

As the Dalai Lama reminds us, change only takes place through action. Facing an existential moment, the Tibetan people require that you take decisive action to ensure that they are not forgotten in their darkest hour.

Sincerely,

Signature _____

Name _____ State _____ Zip Code _____



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In September, a delegation of ICT board and staff members traveled to Dharamsala to engage with the Tibetan community and was honored with an audience with His Holiness.



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