



## INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

### ICT Statement on the Panchen Lama's 37th Birthday – April 25, 2026

<https://savetibet.org/ict-statement-on-the-panchen-lamas-37th-birthday-april-25-2026>

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The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) and the global Tibetan community mark the 37th birthday of the Panchen Lama on April 25, 2026, 31 years after he was recognized by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and subsequently kidnapped by Chinese authorities. The Panchen Lama's enforced disappearance and wrongful detention are continuing symbols of the Chinese Communist Party's (CCP) religious persecution and its [persistent campaign](#) to erase Tibet's unique cultural, linguistic and religious heritage.

The 11th Panchen Lama, named Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, was born in Chinese-occupied Tibet on April 25, 1989, and was recognized by the Dalai Lama as the Panchen Lama on May 14, 1995. Three days after his recognition, Chinese authorities kidnapped the Panchen Lama and his parents. He and his family have not been seen or directly heard from since their apprehension.

China's unlawful detention of the Panchen Lama is a clear violation of Chinese and international law. Article 37 of the Chinese Constitution prohibits "[u]nlawful detention or the unlawful deprivation or restriction of a citizen's personal freedom by other means;" international laws, including the UN Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, require states to provide information about the fate and location of a disappeared person as soon as possible. Further, China's abduction and continued enforced disappearance of the Panchen Lama violate its obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which China has been a State Party since 1992.

As China has continued to [ramp up disappearances and unlawful detentions](#) of Tibetans, ICT, alongside the [international community](#), calls on the CCP to immediately release the Panchen Lama and restore to him the human rights to which he is entitled under international law.

ICT further urges US Secretary of State Marco Rubio and US Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues Riley Barnes to directly address the Panchen Lama's disappearance in discussions with the Chinese government, including during President Trump's upcoming summit meeting with President Xi. The United States should fully implement the [Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020](#), which rejects Chinese interference in Tibetan Buddhism and the selection of the next Dalai Lama.

China's recent passage of the "Ethnic Unity Law" [codifies the forced assimilation](#) policies that underpinned the kidnapping and detention of the Panchen Lama and increasing numbers of Tibetan Buddhist leaders. China's repression of religious leaders and severe restrictions on expressions of Tibetan Buddhist faith, including restrictions on children's access to monasteries, reflects a broader plan to erase Tibetans' identity.

Tibetans, meanwhile, continue to resist this campaign, reject the atheist CCP-appointed Panchen Lama and strongly support a Tibetan-led succession process for the Dalai Lama and other Tibetan Buddhist lamas that is free from Beijing's interference. Thirty-one years after the Panchen Lama's abduction and enforced disappearance, ICT reiterates our call for the United Nations and the international community to redouble its efforts to secure his release and finally put an end to this injustice.



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