



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

After 31 years, China continues to hide the Panchen Lama from the world

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MaY 15, 2026

On May 17, 1995, Chinese authorities kidnapped a six-year-old Tibetan boy, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, just days after His Holiness the Dalai Lama recognized him as the reincarnated Panchen Lama, one of Tibetan Buddhism's most important leaders. While Tibetans in exile [celebrated the Panchen Lama's 37th birthday last month](#), neither he nor his parents have been seen in public since China abducted them in 1995.

On the eve of the 31st anniversary of this egregious injustice, the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) and Tibetans, Tibetan Buddhists and Tibet supporters around the world demand that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) account for the Panchen Lama's whereabouts, release him immediately, and restore to him the rights and freedoms to which he is entitled under China's laws and its international commitments.

"On May 17, we mark a tragic day in Tibetan history, when the Chinese government stole a venerated religious leader – a six-year-old boy – from us. The CCP continues to hold him and his family to this day," said ICT President Tencho Gyatso. "We implore President Trump, Secretary Rubio and other international leaders to tell President Xi and other Chinese officials to immediately release the Panchen Lama and end their interference in Tibetan cultural and religious practices."

The CCP's refusal to provide information about the Panchen Lama's whereabouts is another component of its ongoing campaign of repression and cultural assimilation in Tibet. The CCP's 1995 abduction of the Panchen Lama was its first move to implement its plan to interfere in the succession of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and Beijing's continued enforced disappearance of the Panchen Lama is a key component of those accelerating efforts. After kidnapping Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, Chinese authorities appointed another Tibetan boy, Gyaltsen Norbu, to serve in his role, which Tibetans and the international community have wholly rejected. ICT and the international community expect Beijing to deploy a similar tactic to try to interfere with Tibetans' selection of the 15th Dalai Lama when the time comes.

More recently, the enactment of the "[Ethnic Unity and Progress Law](#)," which enters into force on July 1, and the [PRC's 15th Five-Year Plan](#) are the latest moves by the CCP to sever China's domestic and international human rights commitments and to accelerate the destruction of Tibet's unique linguistic, religious and cultural heritage. China has illegally occupied Tibet, a [historically independent country](#), for over 60 years. The CCP has refused to negotiate with Tibetan leaders on a lasting agreement about Tibet's status since 2010. Chinese authorities have also refused to let His Holiness the [Dalai Lama](#) – the spiritual leader of [Tibetan Buddhism](#) and [one of the most admired figures in the world](#) – return home to Tibet in the nearly seven decades since they [forced him into exile](#) in 1959.



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