



## **PRESS STATEMENT**

**Amsterdam, October 5, 2010**

### **INPaT Calls Nepal for the Immediate Release of Tibetan Ballot Boxes.**

Upon hearing about the shocking developments of Nepalese authorities confiscating ballot boxes of the Tibetan Refugee Community in the Nepalese capital Kathmandu on 3 October, the International Network of Parliamentarians for Tibet (INPaT) today called upon the Nepalese Prime Minister to immediately release the ballot boxes to the legitimate representatives of the local Tibetan Election Commission in Nepal.

Matteo Mecacci, co-chair INPaT, as many parliamentarians from more than 30 countries all over the world, wish to stand by Nepal's side in the development of democracy and the protection of democratic processes and institutions. But we are deeply disturbed by this unwarranted action, which occurred despite permission being given earlier for Tibetan exiles to peacefully cast their votes.

Permission had been given in Nepal for the election of representatives for the Tibetan Parliament in exile, involving nearly 9,000 Tibetans, but police stormed three centers where the Tibetan exile community were placing their vote and took the ballot boxes. The move is believed to be due to a demand by the Chinese embassy in Kathmandu.

"We parliamentarians regularly experience elections in our countries, but what is unique about the Tibetan Elections is the exercise of democratic rights and responsibilities for the past 50 years outside their homeland under the leadership of H. H. the Dalai Lama. The world must support such best practices rather than sabotage their democratic experiment," said Mecacci.

INPaT fears the footage of the seizure of ballot boxes by riot police from a fragile exile community that has a legitimate presence in Nepal does not enhance Nepal's standing on the world stage. In addition, it runs counter to the strong cultural and religious ties among the Himalayan peoples that have existed for centuries. Mecacci said also "We are calling on the Nepalese authorities to return the ballot boxes to the Tibetan community in Nepal as soon as possible."

Around 80,000 registered Tibetans outside Chinese-occupied Tibet were casting their votes on Sunday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, in the preliminary elections for their next Prime Minister and 44 Members of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile.

Bearing in mind of the sad incident in Nepal, INPaT reiterates its call upon the Tibetan Election Commission ' to invite international election monitoring entities to observe the 2011 and Kalon Tripa general elections."

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