

## Religious Repression Continues

### Cultural Revolution

China's attack against Tibetan Buddhism began with the invasion and occupation of Tibet. In 1959 the International Commission of Jurists reported to the United Nations that "the Chinese were determined to use all methods at their disposal to eliminate religious belief and to substitute Communist doctrines." During the Cultural Revolution, the destruction of almost all of Tibet's monasteries - more than 6,000 - was completed and virtually all religious practice was banned.

A brief period of liberalization in 1979 allowed Tibetans to contribute to the revival of religion - and Tibetan nationalism. The Communist Party moved to impose more restrictive policies. These measures against religious freedom have been harsh and continue today.

### Ongoing Repression

Regulations dictate official rules for monks according to Party policy, and Party work teams sent to monasteries carry out "patriotic re-education" characterized by denunciations of the Dalai Lama. Limits on the admission of new monks and expulsions of monks who fail or seek to avoid indoctrination on patriotism has resulted in the flight to exile in India of thousands of monks and nuns since the late 1980's. Nuns and monks have been expelled on suspicion of political activities and, in the past, many took to the streets in dissent.

Today, obtaining a traditional religious education is extremely difficult or impossible



in Tibet - teachings cannot be given by a Lama without the permission of the Religious Affairs Bureau of the Chinese government. Due to China's effective surveillance and control mechanisms, a climate of self-censorship and fear means that Tibetans express their religious beliefs and dissent privately or secretly.

### The International Campaign for Tibet recommends that:

- China invest the authority to make decisions on religious issues in legitimate Tibetan religious authorities and not government bureaucracies or Chinese Communist Party officials; and that
- China immediately stops its hostile approach towards the spiritual and moral authority of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and allows the Tibetan people to freely revere him according to traditional belief.

### Q & A:

#### Does China guarantee freedom of religion?

Although China's Constitution states that citizens have 'freedom of religious belief', the Communist Party defines what 'acceptable' religious behavior is and religion is only tolerated as long as it does not interfere with or challenge the legitimacy and status of the Party.

#### Is Tibet's monastic community able to receive a religious education at a monastery or nunnery?

During the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s, all religious practice came under attack, which included the destruction of monasteries and nunneries. Although today many of the great monasteries and nunneries have been rebuilt in some form, religious study remains severely controlled by Communist Party officials inside the monasteries.

### How you can help...

1. Host a screening of ICT's film 'Devotion and Defiance', which chronicles recent Communist Party crackdowns on Buddhism in Tibet. To order the film, go to [www.savetibet.org](http://www.savetibet.org).
2. Join the ICT Action Network to receive regular updates and calls for action by going to [www.savetibet.org/enews](http://www.savetibet.org/enews)
3. Support Tibetan monasteries in India and Nepal that continue to provide a religious education to Tibetans in exile