

Tibet

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PRESS WATCH

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SPRING 2011
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International Campaign for Tibet*

**INTERNATIONAL
CAMPAIGN
FOR TIBET**



A Deepening Tibetan Democracy

It is up to the Tibetan people.

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MANDALA SOCIETY YOUR LIVING LEGACY TO TIBET

The Mandala Society is an intimate group of Tibet supporters, committed to helping future generations of Tibetans. By including the International Campaign for Tibet in their will or trust, Mandala Society members ensure that ICT will continue to have the resources to promote a peaceful resolution of the occupation of Tibet, and will be able to help rebuild Tibet when Tibetans achieve genuine autonomy.

For more information about Mandala Society membership, please contact Chris Chaleunrath at 202-785-1515, ext. 225, chris.chaleunrath@savetibet.org, or use the envelope attached to this newsletter to request a call.



The Mandala Society of the International Campaign for Tibet

From the President



Mary Beth Markey,
President

TIBET PRESS WATCH

The International Campaign for Tibet works to promote human rights and democratic freedoms for the people of Tibet.

Founded in 1988, ICT is a non-profit membership organization with offices in Washington, D.C., Amsterdam, Berlin and Brussels, and field offices in Dharamsala and Kathmandu.

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“IT IS UP TO THE TIBETAN PEOPLE.”

Friends and supporters of the International Campaign for Tibet know our mission is to promote human rights and democratic freedoms for the Tibetan people. As the Chinese government presses its aggressive assimilation policies in Tibet, the most keenly noted among these rights is the right of self-determination, widely understood as the right to participate in the democratic process of governance and to influence one's future — politically, socially and culturally.

When we explain to policymakers why Tibetans in Tibet take great risks to assert their national identity or why His Holiness the Dalai Lama is leading Tibetans in exile down a path of democratic governance, we are making a case for self-determination. And when the Chinese government clamps down on Tibetans seeking to use their language in the classroom, remain on their lands, develop according to their priorities, or simply live by the ancient tenets of Buddhist teachings, we say, “it is not for the central planners in Beijing to determine, it is up to the Tibetan people!”

This year, during his annual statement to the Tibetan people on March 10, Tibetan Uprising Day, the Dalai Lama made the historic announcement that he would devolve his political authority in the Tibetan government to a democratically elected leader. Since then, the Tibetan community in exile and in Tibet has been roiling amid speculation about what this decision would mean for the future of Tibet. Tibetan intellectuals and leaders, inside and outside Tibet, have been engaged in close examination of the system that governs the functions of the exile government with an eye to a future that allows the Dalai Lama to step aside as leader.

In this same historic moment, Tibetans in exile voted on March 20 for their new political leadership. From Dharamsala to New York City and everywhere in between where Tibetans live in freedom, Tibetans went to the polls and with great seriousness cast their votes for Kalon Tripa, the leader of the *Kashag* or executive branch, and for their representatives in the Tibetan exile parliament. It was my great privilege to participate as a member of the Tibetan Election Observers Mission under the auspices of the International Network of Parliamentarians for Tibet and funded in part by the National Endowment for Democracy. I was greatly impressed by the professionalism and pride of those who campaigned, those who ran the election, and those who stood in long lines to vote.

As we watch leaders around the world struggle to let loose the reigns of power, it is truly remarkable that His Holiness is ending a system founded by the Great Fifth Dalai Lama in 1642 by giving his people the gift of self-rule. The world is in motion and inevitably moving towards greater democracy. World leaders understand that they need to pay regard to the freely expressed will of peoples. Our job at the International Campaign for Tibet, with your help, is to stress that China is not immune to popular impulses for democratic freedoms. So far, Chinese authorities feel only threatened by calls for accountability and rule of law from those they govern. But a path is opening up before them.

ICT Press Release

Dalai Lama Proclaims Success of Tibetan Democracy, Hands over Government Duties to Elected Tibetan Leader

Excerpt, March 9, 2011

Amidst the Tibetan people's annual commemoration of the 1959 Tibetan National Uprising against the Chinese Communist occupation of Tibet, His Holiness the Dalai Lama proclaimed a victory for Tibetan democracy by announcing his desire for the full devolution of his responsibilities in the Tibetan exile government to the elected Tibetan leader or Kalon Tripa.

"In contrast to those long-serving autocrats who have been much in the news, the Dalai Lama is the rare visionary who is willingly divesting power to his people," said Mary Beth Markey, ICT President. "His decision, based on the maturation of Tibetan democracy in exile, deserves both accolades and support."

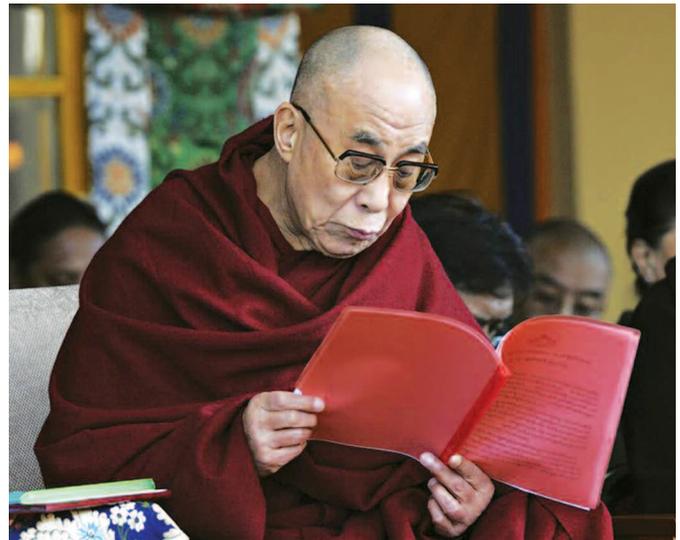
In 1990, a Constitution Redrafting Committee instituted by the Dalai Lama prepared a draft Charter for Tibetans in Exile. On July 14, 1991, following its circulation for popular comment, the Tibetan parliament in exile voted unanimously to approve the final Charter.

The Charter is a working constitution modeled on similar documents in liberal democracies. To date, the only contentious provisions of the Charter have been those limiting the power

"In contrast to those long-serving autocrats who have been much in the news, the Dalai Lama is the rare visionary who is willingly divesting power to his people... His decision, based on the maturation of Tibetan democracy in exile, deserves both accolades and support."

of the Dalai Lama, which he proposed. When the parliament pressed for the withdrawal of these provisions, the Dalai Lama responded: "The two clauses exist not as decorative pieces of the Charter but to drive home the difference between a system that pays lip service to democracy while holding on firmly to power, and one that is serious about implementing democracy." The Dalai Lama summarily exercised his authority to limit his own power, overriding the parliament's objection.

"No one can dispute the relevance of the Dalai Lama as the natural leader of the Tibetan people," said Tsering Jampa,



His Holiness the Dalai Lama reads from his March 10 statement in Dharamsala, India.

Executive Director of ICT-Europe, "but now we will see how the Tibetan leaders in parliament respond to a significant step for the Tibetan people in the democratic process."

A spate of comments from Chinese officials dismissing the authority of the Dalai Lama and directives limiting foreign travel in Tibet indicate that the Chinese government is nervous about what the Dalai Lama would say on March 10 and its effect on stability in Tibet. In March 2008, a wave of demonstrations began in Lhasa on Tibetan National Uprising Day and spread across the Tibetan plateau. The Chinese government responded with a massive security crackdown, and its tight restrictions remain in force.

For the complete statement, please visit www.dalailama.com.

In the News...

As events in the Middle East drew international attention and support for efforts to secure democratic autonomy for countries long dominated by authoritarian regimes, the message of peaceful non-violence always espoused by His Holiness the Dalai Lama was more resonant than ever. The delicacy of Tibet's challenges are shown in sharp relief in this quarter's news media coverage.

Dalai Lama to Retire from Political Life

Jason Burke and Tania Branigan,
guardian.co.uk.,
Thursday March 10, 2011

The Dalai Lama has announced he will retire from political life within days. In a speech posted on the internet and delivered in the northern Indian hill town of Dharamsala, the Tibetan Buddhist spiritual leader said he would ask the Tibetan parliament in exile to make the necessary constitutional changes to relieve him of his "formal authority" as head of the Tibetan community outside China.

The assembly, which meets early next week, is expected to approve his request.

Kate Saunders, of the International Campaign for Tibet, said the decision meant that "at a perilous moment in the history of Tibet" the Dalai Lama was "expressing his faith in the Tibetan people".

In Thursday's speech the Dalai Lama spoke of recent events in the Middle East, describing them as "remarkable non-violent struggles for freedom and democracy".

"I am a firm believer in non-violence and people power and these events have shown once again that determined non-violent action can indeed bring about positive change," he said. "We must all hope that these inspiring changes lead to genuine freedom, happiness and prosperity for the peoples in these countries."

China's foreign ministry spokeswoman, Jiang Yu, said the Dalai Lama was playing "tricks to deceive the international community", the news agency Agence France Presse reported.

Tibetan Monk Dies After Self-Immolation

Edward Wong, New York Times,
March 17, 2011

BEIJING — A young Tibetan monk who set himself on fire to protest Chinese rule in the vast Tibetan regions of western China died early on Thursday. It was the first time that a monk protesting against China had killed himself through self-immolation, according to historians of modern Tibet.



Phuntsog, a monk from Kirti Monastery in Sichuan Province who died after self-immolation in Tibet in March.

The act appeared to reflect the sense of desperation and futility that simmers among Tibetans who chafe at rule by China, which invaded central Tibet in 1951. The monk, Phuntsog, 21, belonged to the Kirti Monastery in Sichuan Province. The monastery has been a locus of protest against Chinese policies and was especially active in the 2008 Tibetan uprising, whose third anniversary is this month.

A report by a Tibet advocacy organization based in Washington, International Campaign for Tibet, said that security officers doused Phuntsog's flames, then proceeded to beat and kick him.

Nepal Caught Between China and India

Beijing pours money into the Himalayan country, a historical buffer between the two giant rivals, worrying New Delhi.

Mark Magnier, Los Angeles Times,
February 20, 2011

Reporting from Katmandu, Nepal — A recent recording making the rounds in Nepal featured a Maoist party leader speaking to a man with a Chinese accent. During the 12-minute tape, the Chinese voice offers \$6.9 million to bribe 50 Nepali legislators for help in forming a Maoist-led government that would favor China over India.

Whether the tape is genuine, whether the voice is really that of a Chinese official

In the News...



and whether India's intelligence wing released it as part of a propaganda exercise haven't been established.

But the tape reinforced a long-standing view in Nepal: The strategically located, landlocked nation of 30 million people is a playground for its two giant neighbors.

Beijing is building a \$1.9-billion railroad from the city of Lhasa to the Tibet-Nepal border that may eventually reach Katmandu. Chinese trade, aid and infrastructure projects are pouring in. Nepali politicians traveling to Beijing are tripping over one another as China funds Nepali police training, border control, roads, even garbage trucks.

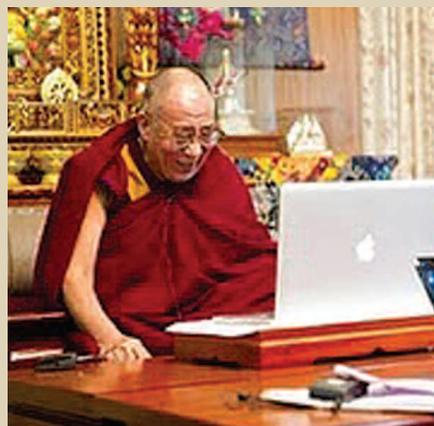
How I Met His Holiness the Dalai Lama Without a Passport

by Woesser, first published on highpeakspureearth.com

It all started with a video conversation in cyberspace. On January 4, 2011, His Holiness was in Dharamsala engaging in a video conversation with the two human rights lawyers, Teng Biao and Jiang Tianyong, as well as the author Wang Lixiong.

And I was standing behind Wang Lixiong, attentively listening to every word. When the Dalai Lama appeared on screen, I could hardly believe it, tears started streaming down my face.

Just like so many Tibetans, hoping to be able to see His Holiness, to respectfully listen to his teachings, to be granted an audience, this has also been my innermost wish; from a very young age, I have always longed for this moment to come true. But, I cannot get a passport, just like many other Tibetans, it is almost unthinkable that this regime that controls us will ever grant us a passport, which



His Holiness has a video conversation with Tibetan blogger, Woesser.

should, in actual fact, be a fundamental right that every citizen enjoys. Last year, Lhasa gave out passports to anyone above 60 years of age, albeit only for the period of one week.

As a result the office in charge of passports was full of the grey-haired, limping elderly; and it was clear that they were all heading for the foothills of the Himalayas to visit relatives, pay homage to the holy land of Buddhism, as well as to fulfill that dream that no one speaks of but everyone knows. I am sorrowfully thinking that I may have to wait until I am 60 years old until I get hold of a passport.

However, the internet gave my passportless self a pass to travel; in the New Year, it helped me to make my dream come true — through the internet I met, as if in a dream but still very vivid and real, His Holiness the Dalai Lama!

I cried and I cried. When I, as Tibetans do, prostrated three times, silently reciting some prayers, holding a khata in my hands and kneeling in front of the computer with tear-dimmed eyes, I saw His Holiness reaching out both of his hands as if he was going to take the khata, as if he was going to give me his blessings. I am unable to describe with words how



Woesser virtually offers a khata to His Holiness the Dalai Lama via an internet call in January.

I felt... I am really such a fortunate person; in Tibet, many people get into trouble simply for owning a photo of the Dalai Lama.

Facing the image of me on the screen, the Dalai Lama instructed me in an earnest and tireless way: "Do not give up, keep going, it is of the utmost importance that Han Chinese intellectuals and we Tibetans always tell each other about the real situation, that we communicate with and understand each other; you have to internalise this. Over the past 60 years, the courage and faith of those of us Tibetans living in Tibet has been as strong as a rock.



His Holiness the 17th Gyalwa Karmapa Ogyen Trinley Dorje.

The international community is paying close attention to the real situation in Tibet, people from all over the world see that there is a truth in Tibet, Chinese intellectuals are increasingly aware of this, looking at it from a broad perspective, big and powerful China is in the process of transforming. Hence, you must remain confident and work even harder, do you understand?”

By then, I had already calmed down and kept the words spoken by His Holiness in my heart.

Tour Agents: Tibet Closed to Foreigners in March

CNBC website, March 7, 2011

BEIJING — Chinese travel agents organizing trips to Tibet said Monday they have been ordered not to receive foreign visitors around the March 14 anniversary of a bloody anti-government riot in 2008.

The top Chinese government official for Tibet confirmed there were restrictions but said they were being enforced for safety reasons, citing possible overcrowding and the bitterly cold winter weather.

Zhang Qingli, the Communist Party head for the Tibetan region, told reporters at a briefing on the sidelines of the annual legislative session in Beijing that the regional government “had taken some control measures this year” to limit the number of visitors allowed into Tibet.

“It’s not that the anti-Chinese forces and the Dalai clique haven’t thought of it, but the fact is they haven’t been able to stir up any unrest since the March 14 (2008) incident,” Zhang said.

Karmapa is No Chinese Spy, He is an Asset for India

Kate Saunders, sunday-guardian.com, March 8, 2011

As the world’s attention was focused on Tahrir Square and Tripoli, Tibetans quietly celebrated the news that one of their most important religious leaders, the Karmapa, had been cleared following weeks of feverish speculation in India sparked by an investigation into donations received by his monastery in Himachal Pradesh.

On 16 February Home Secretary G.K. Pillai assured a Buddhist delegation that the Central government did not regard the Karmapa to be a Chinese spy, despite a virtual media witch-hunt over the past few weeks.

The Karmapa, a powerful force for reconciliation across diverse cultures, is particularly passionate about protecting the environment, and has set up a network of Buddhist monasteries and centres in the Himalayas, called Khoryug, with the aim of “practically applying values of compassion and inter-dependence”.

Since the police investigation, there has been an outpouring of support for the Karmapa from people across India. The reality is that many Indians have realised that, just like his predecessor into exile the Dalai Lama, the Karmapa is an asset for India and not a security threat, even while this support has rarely been reported in the Indian media. Instead, distorted, un-sourced reports with no basis in reality about the Karmapa as “Chinese spy” made banner headlines and have been replayed again and again on TV news.

Senate Mission Urges US-China Cooperation on Tibet

Matthew Pennington, AP, March 30, 2011

A rare Senate staff mission to Tibet has recommended the U.S. work with China for the economic development and cultural preservation of the region. But the delegation also said Washington should keep urging Beijing to reconcile with Buddhist leader, the Dalai Lama, and other exiled Tibetans.

“There are steps that the United States can take that might not only bring direct benefits to the Tibetan people, but also begin to build a foundation of trust between Washington and Beijing on Tibetan affairs,” the report by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee says.

The U.S. currently funds some American nongovernmental aid groups working in Tibetan regions, allotting \$8 million for the purpose in 2009.

The Dalai Lama recently announced he would resign from politics and make way for an elected leader, suggesting it could make easier negotiations between Tibetan exiles and Beijing that have made little headway.

The four-member delegation of staff from the Senate committee traveled to Tibet last September. The report says the delegation was “impressed by the scale and scope of the economic transformation” that has lifted hundreds of thousands out of poverty, driven by massive state investment in infrastructure. But it said the boom has heralded a massive influx of China’s ethnic Han majority so in Lhasa ethnic Tibetans are now a minority. It says discrimination persists and Buddhist monasteries face strict controls, breeding resentment among Tibetans.

Tibetan Democracy

by Leslie Butterfield

On March 10, 2011 His Holiness the Dalai Lama officially announced his intention to devolve the remainder of his political authority within the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) to an elected official within the Tibetan Government in Exile.

This announcement marked a culmination of the development of democracy in exile and serves as an example to the world of the Tibetan exile community's steadfast commitment to good governance. Less than two weeks later on March 20, 2011 the Tibetan population in exile took another stride toward democracy, voting for the next leader of their Cabinet, the Kalon Tripa. The peaceful transfer of power to the next Kalon Tripa this summer, who will officially take on the Dalai Lama's political leadership of the exile government, represents a popular embrace of democratic institutions and the fruition of the Dalai Lama's dreams for democratization.

Levels of voter registration exceed past elections and the excitement generated in this year's vote has indicated that Tibetans in exile have indeed begun to take on the responsibility requisite for a democracy to flourish.

For nearly six decades the Dalai Lama has been carefully adjusting his democratizing efforts to correspond to the readiness of the Tibetan population to accept them. Even before fleeing into exile in 1959, the Dalai Lama was working to limit his powers within the government in the interest of empowering the Tibetan people. However, as the Chinese Communist Party took control and the Dalai Lama fled over the Himalayas to India his reforms had little time to take hold.

After fleeing into exile the Dalai Lama began institutionalizing the democratic vision he had for his countrymen. In April

1959 the Dalai Lama established the Central Tibetan Administration of His Holiness the Dalai Lama (CTA), which took on the responsibility of providing basic social services for the refugee community. Thus, despite not having an actual country over which to govern, the Tibetan government in exile had the basis for democracy.

In his statement on March 10, 1961 the Dalai Lama called for further reforms to the provisional government and worked with its leaders to create a new constitution guiding Tibetans on the trajectory towards democratic governance. However, for Tibetans in exile this document was considered a draft, awaiting final approval upon returning to Tibet. Because of the draft nature of the constitution, there were few detailed provisions for the specifics of running the government in exile and the institution developed somewhat organically out of necessity in the

thirty years following the adoption of the new Draft Constitution in 1963.

Initially for many Tibetans the establishment of democracy in the 1960s was less about their freedoms and more centered on following the wishes of His Holiness, their great protector. Not only was the idea of self-proclaimed candidacy, inherent in the democratic process, considered a shameless self-promotion that was uncharacteristic among the Tibetan population, but many Tibetans approached elections with little knowledge of the candidates, instead praying to the Dalai Lama for guidance upon entering their polling stations. Thus from the outset democracy in exile faced challenges stemming from cultural mores which celebrated previous theocratic tendencies.

In spite of these initial leanings, the Tibetan population in exile soon began to embrace democracy. Gradually, the



A Tibetan shows his Green Book and prepares to vote on March 20.



On March 2, 2011, ICT's Board of Directors met with the three candidates for Kalon Tripa: Lobsang Sangay, Tenzin N. Tethong, and Tashi Wangdi.

the power to vote for the Cabinet (Kashag) which until that time had been directly appointed by the Dalai Lama.

It was not until an amendment to the Charter in 2001 on the advice of the Dalai Lama that the Tibetan population in exile could vote for the Chairman of the Kashag, the Kalon Tripa. The popularly elected Kalon Tripa is eligible to

parliament which had been set up in 1960 enacted reforms including the establishment of a separate election commission. A Constitution Redrafting Committee convened by the Dalai Lama in 1990 began work on further reforms to better meet the needs of governing in exile. Following circulation among the exile community for popular comment, on June 14, 1991 the draft Charter for Tibetans in Exile was unanimously approved by the Tibetan parliament. Two weeks later, the Dalai Lama added his consent, making the document duly approved by the elected representatives of the Tibetans in exile and by their spiritual and political leader.

also be changed... I had to convince them that it was absolutely necessary not just for the present but for the future of all the Tibetan people.”

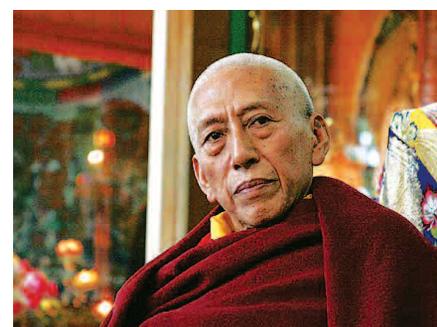
By the 1990s most Tibetans were still opposed to these propositions. However, in an exercise of his executive authority, the Dalai Lama overrode the parliamentarians’ objections explaining that such a provision must be included in the Charter for it to be of any value. Reluctantly the Tibetan population in exile accepted these terms and the Charter was brought into force by popular vote in 1991.

Among the provisions included in the new Charter were some intended to limit the Dalai Lama’s political power. He had proposed similar measures in the 1963 Constitution which would have allowed for his impeachment by a majority of parliamentarians, but this proposal had been met with widespread resistance and threatened to prevent the approval of the Constitution. Tibetans believe that the Dalai Lama is the reincarnation of Avalokiteshvara, the bodhisattva of compassion and the protector of Tibet and Tibetans — the thought of impeaching him was for many Tibetans anathema to their belief system.

The Charter also brought about changes in the structure and powers of the legislative assembly, then called the Assembly of Tibetan People’s Deputies now known as the Tibetan Parliament in Exile (TPIE). The body was restructured to include individuals representing the three main regions in Tibet (U-Tsang, Kham, and Amdo), two exile communities (North America and Europe), each of the four religious sects (Gelug, Kagyu, Sakya, and Nyingma) as well as the Bon religious tradition, and three individuals appointed directly by the Dalai Lama.

Democracy or not, such a proposition seemed like an ill-considered drastic measure. However, the Dalai Lama held the view that, “if we were to have a true democracy there had to be provisions whereby the Dalai Lama’s powers could

Tibetans from inside Tibet do not vote, however, relatives with ties to any of the regions vote for the members representing those constituencies. For example, a Tibetan from Amdo living in Dharamsala could vote for the Amdo representative but not the one from U-Tsang. These constituencies elected a total of 46 representatives who for the first time held



Professor Samdhong Rinpoche has served since 2001 as the first democratically elected Kalon Tripa.

serve up to two five-year terms. Professor Samdhong Rinpoche was the first Kalon Tripa to be popularly elected in 2001 and has served two consecutive terms. The past months have seen the first truly contested election for Kalon Tripa, with three leading candidates engaging in continued public debate around the world. Dr. Lobsang Sangay, Kasur Tenzin Tethong and Kasur Tashi Wangdi have been on the campaign trail throughout exile communities in Europe, North America and Asia. Levels of voter registration exceed past elections and the excitement generated in this year’s vote has indicated that Tibetans in exile have indeed begun to take on the responsibility requisite for a democracy to flourish.

As the Dalai Lama prepares to officially hand over his political role in the exile government to an elected leadership it would seem that the exile community is well equipped to carry on his democratic ideal.

Tibet Lobby Day

Political activism by Tibetan-Americans and their supporters

On February 28 and March 1, 2011, Tibetan-Americans and friends of Tibet from around the United States visited Capitol Hill to meet with their congressional representatives. They asked Congress to sustain programmatic investments and political support to help Tibetans preserve their identity. They also urged support for the basic desire of all peoples, including Tibetans, for universal freedoms.

“This Tibet Lobby Day demonstrates the growing political maturity of the Tibetan-American community and their desire for a larger political voice in Washington,” said Todd Stein, ICT Director of Government Relations. “They will find open doors, given Congress’ long-standing support for Tibet.”

More than 110 participants from Florida to Washington, California to Maine, and many states in between participated in more than 100 meetings in the House of Representatives and Senate.

Tibet Lobby Day 2011 captured the momentum for Tibet established at the January US-China Summit in Washington, D.C. during which President Obama publicly called for a resumption of the dialogue between Chinese officials and the Dalai Lama’s representatives. Lobby Day was just three weeks before the March 20 election in the Tibetan exile community for parliamentary representatives and for the chief executive (or Kalon Tripa) of the Central Tibetan Administration based in Dharamsala, India.



A Tibet Lobby Day participant with Senator Mark Udall of Colorado.

These two manifestations of participatory democracy by Tibetan Americans — voting for their exile government leadership and lobbying the Congress of their adopted country — echo the Tibetan people’s demands for basic human rights (including freedom of expression and assembly) within Tibet itself. The success of the Tibetan exile community’s democratic aspirations, supported and encouraged by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, are in stark contrast to the plight of Tibetans inside Tibet.

Commenting on Tibet Lobby Day, ICT’s Tencho Gyatso said: “Voicing our support for Tibet in the halls of Congress demonstrates our commitment to democracy. We look around the world today, and we feel the same yearnings for freedoms that our brothers and sisters in the Middle East feel. That we can organize and speak up with dignity and without fear of reprisals makes very clear the differences between being a Tibetan in America and being a Tibetan in the PRC (People’s Republic of China). We hope for a time when all Tibetans experience openness and accountability from their government.”



ICT Executive Chair, Lodi Gyari and ICT Board Chair, Richard Gere met with House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi for Tibet Lobby Day 2011.



Lobby Day participants gathered with Maine Congresswoman Chellie Pingree’s Foreign Affairs staffer Nora Bisharat after their meeting.

President Obama Meets with President Hu; Presses Him on Human Rights

When President Hu of the People's Republic of China traveled to the United States for a four-day state visit in late January, he found that President Obama was increasing the pressure on China's human rights record.

Unlike the previous state visit (by Obama to China in 2009), human rights was no longer considered to be an off-the-table topic, and Obama told Hu to provide more freedom to China's 1.3 billion people — his most forceful message on this contentious issue to date.

Hu's response included an acknowledgment that his government needed to do more in support of human rights — but he was very clear about Chinese sovereignty, noting that any further discussion on human rights must not attempt to interfere with China's affairs.



Presidents Hu and Obama at the White House news conference.

President Obama stated “As I’ve said before and I repeated to President Hu, we have some core views as Americans about the universality of certain rights — freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of assembly — that we think are very important and that transcend cultures. I have been very candid with President Hu about these issues.

After blaming translators and technical problems at their press conference together, President Hu did eventually respond to questions (in itself a diplomatic coup for the White House). “China is always committed to the protection and promotion of human rights,” he said.

He conceded that “a lot still needs to be done,” and said his government would be willing to continue a discussion on human

rights — provided that dialogue proceeded on the basis of mutual respect and noninterference into China's internal issues.

President Obama surprised many Tibet observers by specifically calling for a resumption of the dialogue process, “Even as we, the United States, recognize that Tibet is part of the People's Republic of China, the United States continues to support further dialogue between the government of China and the representatives of the Dalai Lama to resolve concerns and differences, including the preservation of the religious and cultural identity of the Tibetan people.”

Drawing on a key phrase of Hu's government — “Harmonious society,” — President Obama welcomed President Hu to Washington by saying in part “History shows that societies are more harmonious, nations are more successful and the world is more just when the rights and responsibilities of all nations and all people are upheld, including the universal rights of every human being.”

ICT President Mary Beth Markey praised Obama's remarks saying “I think it was a good day for human rights. He said exactly what we wanted him to say on Tibet.”

“As I’ve said before and I repeated to President Hu, we have some core views as Americans about the universality of certain rights — freedom of speech, freedom of religion, freedom of assembly — that we think are very important and that transcend cultures.”



President Obama surprised many Tibet observers by specifically calling for a resumption of the dialogue process.

Aftermath of the Ladakh Mudslide

Showing our support

On the night of August 6, 2010, a violent storm unleashed torrents of rain on the remote Indian Himalayan region of Ladakh. The region, parched, was unable to absorb the rapid influx of rain and the floods poured down mountainsides and into valleys. The ancient capital of Leh, home to thousands of Tibetan refugees in twelve settlements, was right in the path of a water and mud surge.



A Tibetan woman surveys the damage to her crops caused by the violent mudslide.



Tibetans and Ladakhi work to dig their homes and business out of the compacted mud.

At least 190 died in the mudslide; hundreds of homes and businesses were leveled. As morning broke, Ladakhi and Tibetan rescue workers struggled side by side to free the dead and the injured from the mud-choked debris.

While just three Tibetans were killed, the impact to their communities was devastating. The floods destroyed scores of homes in the hastily-constructed refugee centers on the outskirts of town. Barley, the staple food crop, has traditionally been grown in small family fields adjacent to homes; the floods, however, carpeted these plots with boulders and a thick layer of heavily compacted mud, ruining the season's crop. With a frigid Himalayan winter only a few months distant, the situation was grim.

Tibetans left homeless were given temporary shelter in the community room of the 2,000 student Tibetan Children's Village, which escaped the floods unscathed. Lacking heavy machinery, the Tibetan community began the back-breaking process of clearing away the mud and debris with whatever rudimentary tools they could find.

The Tibetan Central Administration stepped forward to coordinate the rebuilding, led by Dhondup Tashi, the Chief Representative Officer (CRO) of His Holiness the Dalai Lama

in Choglamsar, Leh-Ladakh India, and Tsering Palden, director of the Tibetan Children's Village. Shortly after the disaster, His Holiness the Dalai Lama contributed 1 million rupees (approximately \$22,000) to the recovery efforts; the US government pledged its financial support.

To guide the rebuilding, each of the twelve Tibetan settlements sent a representative to a central council, coordinated by Dhondup Tashi, to decide how to allocate rebuilding funds based on the degree of damage to homes and fields. Reconstruction efforts continue many months after the cloudburst, with much work left to clear the barley fields so many Tibetan families depend.

Funds are urgently needed to assist the Tibetan people in Leh. Following a visit by two Washington, DC based ICT representatives, both ICT and ICT Europe have allocated \$5,000 to help in hiring Tibetan workers for ongoing recovery work through ICT's Private Partnership for the Sustainability of Tibetan Communities.

If you would like to support these efforts, please make your check payable to ICT with "Sustainability Fund" in the memo line and send it to ICT, 1825 Jefferson Place NW, Washington, DC 20036.

In response to reader request, we have added a feature which will highlight one aspect of Tibetan culture in each edition of Tibet Press Watch.

Avalokitesvara and the Tibetan Contemplation of Compassion

Who is Avalokitesvara? Why is he important to Tibetans?



Avalokitesvara (pronounced Ah-va lo k'tesh vara) is the personification of compassion, and one of the most important Buddhist deities. Avalokitesvara's essence is compassionate action and in Tibetan is known as Chenrezig.

Tibetans believe that Avalokitesvara has a particularly close relationship with Tibet because he took on the burden of caring for Tibet. These beliefs were brought to Tibet in the eighth century CE and His Holiness the Dalai Lama has been repeatedly incarnating as a manifestation of Avalokitesvara in Tibet since the fifteenth century.

Welcome Ngawang Choephel [Drakmargyapon]



Earlier this year, ICT welcomed its newest staff member, Ngawang Choephel [Drakmargyapon], who will lead ICT's work in Geneva, where the UN human rights mechanisms are based. Ngawang was responsible for coordinating the International Network of Parliamentarians for Tibet (INPaT) initiative to observe the Tibetan elections on March 20th and also will advocate for Tibet at the 16th session of the UN Human Rights Council. Ngawang has more than 20 years of experience in UN human rights mechanisms and will guide our work at the United Nations in an effective and results-oriented manner.

IN MEMORIAM: Jigme Norbu

We send our sincere condolences to the wife and three children of Jigme Norbu, nephew of the Dalai Lama, who was struck by a car and killed on February 14, 2011 in Palm Coast, Florida. The 45-year-old Bloomington, Indiana resident was in Florida for a 300-mile "Walk for Tibet" scheduled to end in West Palm Beach. On the walk, he carried a sign which read "FOR WORLD PEACE, HUMAN RIGHTS, AND TIBETAN INDEPENDENCE."

Jigme Norbu's father, Thubten Jigme Norbu, was a former professor of Tibetan and religious studies at Indiana University, Bloomington and once a curator of Tibetan artifacts at New York's American Museum of Natural History. Thubten Jigme Norbu was a co-founder of the International Tibet Independence Movement and began "freedom walks" to highlight the Tibetan cause. He passed away on September 5, 2008.

The Capital Area Tibetan Association (CATA) held a prayer service for Jigme Norbu at ICT's Washington office on Tuesday evening, February 15.



Jigme Norbu raised awareness for Tibet through his "freedom walks" until his death earlier this year.

Grand Teton Climb to Benefit the Rowell Fund

Make plans to join us in August.

If you can't climb the Himalayas this year, try the American alternative: An annual four-day adventure through the Grand Tetons, guided by Conrad Anker and Jimmy Chin. These veterans of many Himalayan expeditions (both have summited Everest numerous times) and ICT Rowell Advisory Board Members are eager to once again lead a small group of ICT members and staff through one of America's most spectacular mountain ranges.

The heart of the trip consists of three days and two nights on the Grand Teton, where you will stay in a spectacular camp perched over a glacier at 11,000 feet. Gourmet meals will be provided by your guides. Porters will carry all of your camping gear, climbing equipment, food, etc. On the last day we will split into two groups, with one group doing a more technical and challenging route to the 13,770 foot summit of the Grand Teton and the other doing non-technical lower summits nearby.

The trip will begin in Jackson Hole, Wyoming on the evening of Saturday, August 27 and will end late in the evening on Tuesday, August 30. No previous climbing experience is required, but all participants must be in good physical shape.

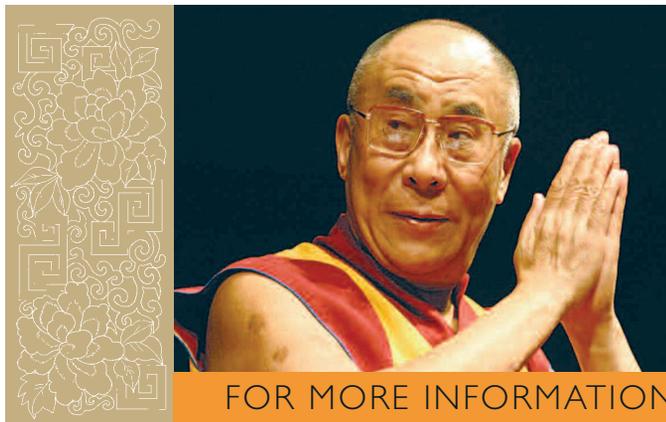
The cost of the trip is \$5,000, of which \$4,000 is a tax-deductible donation to the Rowell Fund for Tibet, an ICT project that raises grant money to support Tibetans who can make a significant contribution to their community and/or an international audience in the fields of visual arts and media, and environmental and women's rights.

The Rowell Fund was started in 2003 by ICT and some of the world's top mountain climbers; colleagues and climbing partners of Galen Rowell, a champion of the Tibetan environment and culture. After Galen and his wife Barbara passed away in August 2002, the Rowell Fund was created to carry on their legacy within the Tibetan community.

For more information on the adventure, please contact Chris Chaleunrath at chris.chaluenrath@savetibet.org.



Former political prisoner Ngawang Sangdrol climbing the Grand Teton to benefit the Rowell Fund.



KALACHAKRA FOR WORLD PEACE

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The Dalai Lama's Relinquishing His Political Role:

Questions and answers

Here are some answers to questions ICT members have asked frequently since His Holiness the Dalai Lama announced his desire to hand over his political power to the Kalon Tripa on March 10, 2011.

What is the Dalai Lama giving up?

He is relinquishing the last vestiges of his formal governmental role in the Tibetan government in exile (Central Tibetan Administration, or CTA). These duties, enshrined in the Charter (constitution) of Tibetans in exile, include summoning or suspending the parliament, appointing ministers, and holding referenda.

Is the Dalai Lama ending his advocacy for the Tibetan people?

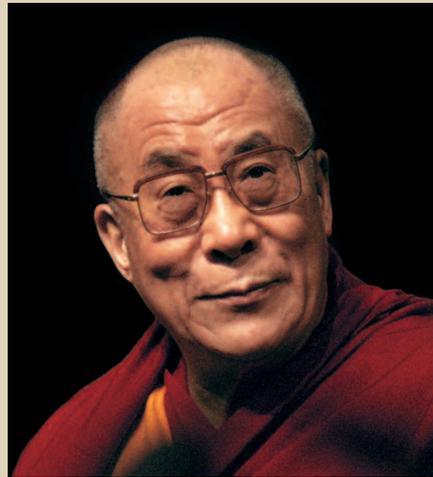
No. He says, "My desire to devolve authority has nothing to do with a wish to shirk responsibility," and "as long as Tibetans place their trust and faith in me, I will continue to serve the cause of Tibet." He will continue to speak out on, and speak with world leaders about, the struggles facing Tibetans in Tibet.

Does this announcement affect the Dalai Lama's spiritual role?

No. Recognized and venerated as the 14th reincarnation of the Bodhisattva of Compassion, his spiritual role is intact and inescapable. It is expected that he will continue to travel the world to give teachings.

Why is the Dalai Lama doing this?

He frames it as the culmination of a decades-long transition to democracy, which includes elections for an executive and the legislature. He also puts it in context of making the Tibetan people self-reliant for any eventuality, including his passing. He says, "it is necessary that we establish a sound system of governance while I remain able and healthy, in order that the exile Tibetan administration can become self-reliant rather than being dependent on the Dalai Lama."



What will happen to the dialogue with the Chinese government?

The nine rounds of dialogue have been between the Chinese authorities and the envoys of the Dalai Lama. This issue may become clearer as the parliament discusses matters like this.

What is the reaction of the Tibetan people?

In their reverence for the Dalai Lama, Tibetans almost universally follow his guidance. His wish to cede his governmental role has led to anxiety and debate within Tibetan exile community (the

reaction of Tibetans inside Tibet is difficult to assess), as they contend with the difference between his temporal and spiritual roles, and the responsibility that he is seeking to cede to them.

What is the next step in this process?

The Dalai Lama has asked that the Tibetan parliament in exile make changes to the Charter. Parliament is deliberating this issue. The executive cabinet (Kashag), which had on March 10 requested the Dalai Lama not to take such a step has now said that it is fully supportive of his endeavor.

Who will "succeed" the Dalai Lama?

There is no single answer as it is not a straightforward question. On the temporal side, the Dalai Lama is clearly handing over full governmental responsibility to the elected leaders of the exile population. On the spiritual side, the question falls to the religious process and politics of the reincarnation issue. Tibetans say his reincarnation is purely a religious affair guided by the Dalai Lama's instructions and senior lamas. The atheist Chinese government claims that only it can approve the next Dalai Lama.

We want to hear from you!

Please visit www.savetibet.org/survey to tell us a little bit about yourself and why Tibet matters to you. The survey is anonymous and will help us better communicate with our supporters. If you would like to receive the survey via mail, please send your request to us in the enclosed envelope.

ICT Open House is July 12

Save the Date

ICT's Washington headquarters will host an open house on Tuesday, July 12. Please plan on joining us to learn more about ICT's work and meet fellow ICT supporters.

Pass the Word — Help the Planet

When you're finished with this issue of Tibet Press Watch, please consider passing it on to a friend instead of throwing it out. Your thoughtfulness will not only ease our carbon footprint in the world, but help to spread awareness about the plight of Tibetans and the mission of peace and compassion of the Dalai Lama. Thank you.



On March 20th, Tibetans in New York City waited patiently in line to cast their ballots in private voting booths. The results of the election will be announced in late April.

Photo © Mary Beth Markey