

# Tibet Brief

A report of the International Campaign for Tibet



September 2013

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© Office of Dalia Grybauskaitė

The Dalai Lama and the Lithuanian President, Ms Dalia Grybauskaitė, during their meeting in Vilnius, Lithuania on September 11, 2013

## Dalai Lama's Visit to Europe and Meeting with Lithuanian President

On September 8, 2013, the **Dalai Lama** landed in Latvia's capital Riga for a 12-day Europe tour, which also took him to Lithuania, the Czech Republic and Germany, to speak about non-violence, compassion and dialogue. During his tour the **Dalai Lama** also participated in a Human Rights Forum in Prague alongside Burmese democracy icon and fellow Nobel Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi.

In Latvia, he met with several Latvian Parliamentarians. During these meetings he highlighted the importance of Tibet's environment, Tibetan Buddhist culture, human rights, religious freedom, and Tibet as a buffer zone for China and India.

"We are committed to remaining part of the People's Republic of China, which could be of benefit in modernizing Tibet. However, we have our own language,

*which we love in the same way you love your own Latvian language. It is also the best language for explaining the subtleties of Buddhist philosophy. Our aim is the establishment of genuine Tibetan autonomy, as mentioned in the Chinese constitution. What we are asking is that they implement it,"* the **Dalai Lama** noted.

The Latvian Parliamentarians affirmed to continue their support to preserve Tibetan culture and identity, and thanked the Tibetan leader for his visit.

On September 11, the **Dalai Lama** travelled to Lithuania's capital Vilnius where he was welcomed by **Vytis Vidunas**, Indology lecturer at the Vilnius University Centre of Oriental Studies. Shortly after his arrival in Vilnius, the

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### ICT Europe

Vijzelstraat 77  
1017HG Amsterdam  
The Netherlands  
Phone: +31 (0)20 3308265  
Fax: +31 (0)20 3308266  
icteurope@savetibet.nl

### ICT Brussels

15, rue de la linière  
1060 Brussels  
Belgium  
Phone: +32 (0)2 609 44 10  
Fax: +32 (0)2 609 44 32  
info@savetibet.eu

### ICT Germany

Schonhauser Allee 163  
10435 Berlin  
Germany  
Telefon: +49 (0)30 27879086  
Fax: +49 (0)30 27879087  
info@savetibet.de

### ICT United States

1825 Jefferson Place, NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
United States of America  
Phone: +(1) 202-785-1515  
Fax: (202) 785-434  
info@savetibet.org

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## EU Special Representative for Human Rights' First Visit to China and Tibet



EUSR Stavros Lambrinidis

On September 8, 2013, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights (EUSR), Mr. **Stavros Lambrinidis**, went on his first official visit to China since the start of his mandate.

His 9-day visit included meetings with Chinese officials in Beijing and visits to Qinghai Province and the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR). During his visit, Mr. **Lambrinidis** regularly published updates on his Twitter account. Some of his activities included a meeting with **Chen Quanguo**, the Party Secretary of the TAR, a meeting with the Party Secretary of Lhasa, visits of the Jokhang and Sera monasteries and meetings with relocated nomads in Damxung. Issues discussed in Tibet were, among others, economic development, tourism, nomad resettlements, bilingual education, rights of expression and association as well as economic, social and cultural rights.

At the end of his visit the EUSR commented: *"During my visit the Chinese authorities allowed for meetings and open discussions with a broad range of stakeholders. I had the opportunity to be informed of progress on a number of important economic and social fronts, including poverty eradication and education. At the same time, I noted worrying trends in key areas of human rights concern, including the heightened monitoring and restrictions placed on freedom of expression on- and off-line, as well as the persecution, arrest, and detention of people for peacefully expressing their views or legally exercising their professional duties. Throughout my visit, I underlined the EU's readiness to continue to work with China in promoting respective adherence to international human rights obligations and standards."*

To read the EU's official press release on **Mr. Lambrinidis'** visit to China, [click here](#)

To follow the EUSR on Twitter, [click here](#)



The Dalai Lama and Aung San Suu Kyi at the Human Rights Forum in Prague.

**Dalai Lama** met with the Lithuanian President, Ms. **Dalia Grybauskaitė**, who is also currently holding the six-month rotating EU Presidency. Ms. **Grybauskaitė** described the private meeting, during which they discussed matters of mutual interest, as an honor. A moving video of the meeting between **President Grybauskaitė** and the **Dalai Lama** can be viewed [here](#).



The Dalai Lama and a group of Latvian Parliamentarians on the steps of the Latvian Parliament building in Riga on September 10, 2013.

The **International Campaign for Tibet (ICT)** highly welcomes the meeting and takes this opportunity, which shows the moral integrity and courage of **President Grybauskaitė** in meeting with the **Dalai Lama**, to once more call upon the EU to issue a common statement of solidarity in response to the bullying of European leaders by the Beijing leadership.

On this occasion, Euractiv has published an [article](#) by **ICT's** EU Policy Director, **Vincent Metten**, on the importance of this meeting and the need to reinforce EU solidarity on the issue of Tibet.

A few days before the **Dalai Lama's** visit, the Lithuanian Member of the European Parliament (MEP) **Leonidas Donskis** invited **ICT** to give a [lecture on Tibet](#) at the Magnus Vytautas University, in Kaunas. **Vincent Metten** gave a presentation on "Tibet's resistance to Chinese oppression." Around 150 students, including some from the Political Sciences Faculty, attended the conference. ■

## Shooting in Tawu on Dalai Lama's Birthday

Two Tibetan monks were shot in the head and several others seriously injured after Chinese police opened fire at a crowd gathered in Nyitso, Tawu, eastern Tibet, to peacefully celebrate the 78<sup>th</sup> birthday of the **Dalai Lama** on July 6.

Graphic images received by **ICT** show a monk with a severe head wound after the shooting in Tawu (Chinese: Dawu/Daofu), Kardze (Chinese: Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (in the Tibetan area of Kham) in Sichuan. The monk was identified as **Tashi Sonam** from Nyitso monastery. The other monk who was shot in the head has been identified as **Ugyen Tashi**. At least eight other Tibetans were seriously injured and 16 others were tortured and beaten after being detained by armed police, according to exile Tibetan sources. Graphic images of the head wounds of one of the Tibetans while he was being treated in hospital have emerged ([View photo](#) - **Due to the graphic nature of the image, viewer discretion is advised!**), but while Tibetan sources say the two shot in the head are still alive, no further information is known about their current condition.

The Tibetans, including laypeople, monks from nearby Nyitso monastery and nuns from Gedhen Choeling nunnery, had gathered on the lower slopes of a mountain regarded as



Tibetans celebrate the Dalai Lama's birthday.

sacred near Nyitso village to mark the **Dalai Lama's** birthday on July 6. Celebrating the Dalai Lama's birthday in accordance with Tibetan tradition, they burned incense, cast prayer flags (lungta) into the air and made offerings. Local Tibetans had burned incense at the top of the holy mountain earlier that morning, and later joined the rest of the Tibetans on the hillside to offer khatags (greeting scarves) to a photograph of the Dalai Lama.

Large numbers of armed police and soldiers were deployed, with one source reporting at least seven army trucks and police vehicles at the scene. The security forces attempted to prevent Tibetans from making their offerings and gatherings, but according to two Tibetan sources in exile, some Tibetans present argued

that burning incense was not a crime. Without warning, according to several Tibetan sources, the police opened fire on the unarmed crowd and used tear-gas.

According to the same Tibetan sources, a number of Tibetans were detained after the incident and at least 20 remain in custody in Tawu.

Bhuchung Tsering, Interim President of the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), said that "the decision to use such lethal force upon a peaceful gathering of Tibetans in Tawu participating in a religious ceremony on July 6, 2013 reveals the dangerous culture of impunity that exists in Tibet under Chinese rule. ICT urges the Obama Administration to raise this issue during the upcoming human rights dialogue with the Chinese Government and asks for an objective investigation. The international community, particularly the European Union, should also express its abhorrence of this act." ■



Troops gather at Tawu to prevent the religious celebrations of the Dalai Lama's birthday.

## Death Penalty for a Tibetan after the Death of his Wife in Ngaba

The Chinese state media **Xinhua** reported on August 16 that the Intermediate People's Court in Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture had sentenced a Tibetan man, 32-year old **Dolma Kyab** (Chinese transliteration: Drolma Gya), to death for 'killing his wife and burning her body to make it look as if she had self-immolated.' Full details of the circumstances of **Kunchok Wangmo's** death are not known. The imposition of the death penalty is rare in Tibet and there are concerns that the verdict may have been influenced by political circumstances.



Dolma Kyab

The death penalty for 'homicide' was handed down on August 15. According to Xinhua, "the court found that at 11 p.m. on March 11, **Drolma Gya** choked his 29-year-old wife **Kunchok Wangmo** to death with a scarf in their apartment in Zoige [Tibetan: Dzoge] County following an argument over his drinking." The Xinhua report also stated that **Dolma Kyab** "burned the body because he believed an apparent self-immolation would help him cover up the crime, as well as preserve his dignity and that of their daughter."

According to Chinese law, the case must now be reviewed by a higher court. If a first trial by an intermediate people's

court hands down the death penalty, the first appeal is conducted by a High People's Court and also by the Supreme People's Court. The higher courts have the power to change the verdict, including to impose a death sentence suspended for two years, which generally means life imprisonment. If the death penalty is upheld without reprieve, the execution is generally carried out shortly afterwards.

The circumstances of the case are still unclear due to the oppressive political environment and climate of fear in the area. According to some Tibetan sources, which could not be confirmed, Kunchok Wangmo set fire to herself late at night and died. Although details are not known, the authorities in Ngaba quickly sought to frame a case against Dolma Kyab, accusing him of killing his wife. Radio Free Asia and other Tibetan sources reported that on the morning after Kunchok Wangmo's death, security officials came to the family home and offered substantial bribes for Dolma Kyab to say that she had committed suicide due to family problems. The same sources say that his arrest followed his refusal to do so, although full details of the circumstances remain unknown.

The Xinhua report makes no mention of any evidence in this case other than a 'confession' by **Dolma Kyab**. It is known that torture is frequently used to extract confessions in China, and that Tibetan prisoners are often tried secretly behind closed doors without legal counsel of their own choosing. **Bhuchung Tsering**, ICT's Interim President, said: "The news of this death sentence raises serious questions, particularly in such a politically-charged environment. Given the secretive nature of the detention and trial of Dolma Kyab, it appears that he may not have received a fair trial and due process."

Recalling the EU's long-standing opposition to the use of the death penalty, the **International Campaign for Tibet** (ICT) calls upon EU Member States to seek an urgent review of the case. ICT, therefore, highly welcomes the [public statement](#) made on September 7 by the Italian Foreign Affairs Minister, **Ms. Emma Bonino**, calling on the Chinese authorities to stop the execution, underscoring the universal trend towards the abolition of the death penalty. ■

## New self-immolation of a Tibetan monk in Nepal

A 38-year old monk called Karma Ngedon Gyatso died after setting himself on fire at the Boudha stupa in Kathmandu, Nepal, on August 6, 2013.



Karma Ngedon Gyatso

**Karma Ngedon Gyatso**, who was unable to walk due to a severe disability, had arrived in exile from Tibet in October 2011. Tibetans who knew him describe him as deeply religious. It is the second fatal self-immolation by a Tibetan monk in Kathmandu this year after **Drupchen Tsering** set himself on fire in February, also at the Boudha stupa.

Graphic images show onlookers gazing down on the man's blackened body curled up in an area inside the stupa, an important pilgrimage circuit, where Tibetans go to prostrate and make offerings ([View images](#) - **Due to the graphic nature of the image, viewer discretion is advised!**)

Before setting himself on fire, **Karma Ngedon Gyatso** lit butter-lamps in a traditional form of prayer offering.

An Australian eyewitness wrote in a note to the Australia Tibet Council:

*"From the upper reaches of the stupa you can look down at Tibetan Buddhists praying, prostrating, and chanting within the stupa grounds. They are not visible to the thousands of people doing kora [circumambulation of the stupa] a few meters away on the outside. At around 7:30 am, while passing a secluded area - no one else around - I looked down to the left. Hidden from view was a monk sitting cross-legged. His lap was on fire and my first thought was, "Oh my god, he's accidentally set himself on fire with a butter lamp." Then he poured a bottle of fluid [kerosene/gasoline] over his head and went up in flames in front of me. He was silent as far as I could hear. I began to shout for help. He keeled over in a*

*crouched position, with a contorted face but he didn't cry out or scream at all. I kept shouting for help."* (Facebook, [Letter from an Australian who witnessed today's self-immolation](#)).

Tibetan exile sources confirmed that **Karma Ngedon Gyatso** was from Damshung (Chinese: Dangxiong) in Lhasa Municipality, Tibet Autonomous Region. He used his hands for mobility, dragging his paralyzed legs behind him. Although the Hindustan Times cited unnamed police officials alleging that he was 'mentally unstable' - a charge that has been leveled by the Chinese authorities at some of the Tibetans in Tibet who set themselves on fire - individuals who knew **Karma Ngedon Gyatso** told ICT that this was not the case.

Nepalese police took the monk's body to Tribhuwan University hospital where he was declared dead at around 8.30 am. There was soon a strong police presence in the stupa area, with some police carrying fire extinguishers. Some Tibetans have been questioned since the incident.

Tibetans live a precarious existence in Nepal, particularly in Kathmandu, where the Nepalese authorities are under intense pressure from the Chinese government to curb Tibetan activities. The situation for the 20,000 or so long-staying Tibetans in Nepal - many of whom have lived as refugees in Nepal since the early 1960s - has worsened dramatically since 2008. During the same period, the dangers for Tibetans escaping Tibet via Nepal have intensified as China seeks to close this essential gateway into exile. Beyond the economic and political factors that impact the lives of all in post-conflict Nepal, Tibetans experience other difficulties brought about by substantial and increasing Chinese influence on the Nepalese State. ■

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## Professor Jin Wei's Interview on Tibet

Proposals to display portraits of the Dalai Lama, end denunciation of the Tibetan leader, and lessen police presence in monasteries have been discussed at a series of meetings in Qinghai, according to several unofficial Tibetan sources. The news emerged following the publication of bold new suggestions of engagement with the **Dalai Lama** and critique of the current policy on Tibet by **Professor Jin Wei** from the Central Party School.

**Professor Jin Wei's** comments, published in *Yazhou Zhoukan* (Asia Weekly), a Chinese magazine in Hong Kong, on June 9, and the reported proposals for a new approach in Qinghai indicate that the current hardline policy on Tibet is being questioned and discussed within the People's Republic of China (PRC). Since the 2008 protests and following crackdown, Chinese and Tibetan officials and intellectuals are known to have expressed concern over the increasingly aggressive rhetoric against the **Dalai Lama** and its detrimental impact. **Professor Jin Wei's** analysis, which is unlikely to have been made without any official backing, reflects that among some policy advisors, scholars and officials, there is a view that the critical situation in Tibet merits an evaluation of the central issue of the **Dalai Lama's** engagement. Discussion on the Tibet policy was silenced under the leadership of **Hu Jintao**.

News of discussions on a softer approach to the **Dalai Lama** in Tsolho (Chinese: Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai (the Tibetan area of Amdo) emerged on a Chinese website and from Tibetan sources in the area following three meetings held

in a monastery in Chabcha (Chinese: Gonghe) and the provincial capital of Xining.

Concerns were expressed by participants at the meeting about the "ultra-leftist" religious policy imposed since 2008, which has led to "*Lamas, masters, monks and nuns having to make unimaginable derogatory statements against the 14<sup>th</sup> incarnation of the Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, including calling him a wolf wearing religious garments, and so on.*" (The **Dalai Lama** is often described as a 'wolf in lama's robes' in official Chinese media). This led to one of the main proposals of the reported draft document, which is that such denunciation would need to stop. A report about the meeting, written in Tibetan, stated: "*Henceforth, if one is a believer, there is no need to make derogatory statements against the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama; similarly there is no order from the authorities to denounce or criticize him.*"

Another proposal followed a discussion about police presence and strong security at monasteries, linked to patriotic education campaigns. Tibetans at the meeting suggested that monasteries should be allowed to operate without so much scrutiny and management from outside, except in cases of politically 'unstable' monasteries, and that internal mediation should be attempted first following disputes.

According to the sources, it was suggested that the new experimental approach should be implemented from August onwards in three counties in Tsolho – Tsigorhang county (Chinese: Xinghai), Gepasumdo county (Chinese: Tongde), and Mangra county (Chinese: Guinan).

According to the unofficial sources on the meetings, a further proposal was made about monks and laypeople being allowed to display pictures of the **Dalai Lama**. As a matter of fact, the 1994 Third Tibet Work Forum, a major policy meeting, led Party members to prohibit the possession of photographs of the **Dalai Lama** and other religious symbols. The extent of the ban and whom it should be applied

to was ambiguous—partially in order to increase its intimidating effect—and its implementation was erratic. But in principle, pictures of the **Dalai Lama** could not be displayed in any government office or accommodation. As of today, virtually no images of the **Dalai Lama** are on public display in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), although they are still kept in private homes. Photographs can still occasionally be found in monasteries and nunneries, although they are hidden when patriotic education work teams arrive.

**ICT** is unable to confirm reports circulating on social media that monks in Ganden monastery, in Lhasa, and in areas of Kardze (Chinese: Ganzhi), Sichuan, may have been told that they are allowed to display images of the **Dalai Lama**.

The new approach in Qinghai may have been advised as an 'experiment', and justified as an attempt or tactic to prevent further Tibetan self-immolations. Although the discussions indicate there is more space for raising suggestions that challenge existing policy, it is not known whether the proposals will be implemented and so far there is no evidence of relaxation of Beijing's current tough policies on Tibet.

There has been no official announcement, both at the provincial and central level in China, about this reported new approach. The meetings in Qinghai are not mentioned on any official websites or in key state media and the hardline position of the United Front Work Department – the Party department involved in dialogue with the **Dalai Lama's** representatives until talks stalled in January 2010 – is unchanged, with the mission on its website reading that one of its key priorities is to pursue the 'struggle' against the Dalai Lama.

The Chinese authorities are known for practicing alternate waves of concession and hardline policies, called 'fang-shou', meaning 'soft-hard'. This sometimes takes the form of backing off from stronger language after a

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Political prisoners focus

Tsultrim Kalsang



Tsultrim Kalsang

According to information published by the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD), on July 12, 2013, a Tibetan monk from the Nyatso Zilkar Monastery has been sentenced to 10 years in prison in Dzatoe (Chinese: Zaduo) town, Tridu (Chinese: Chenduo) County in Jyekundo (Chinese: Yushu), Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province.

**Tsultrim Kalsang** (25 years old) received a prison sentence based on an 'intentional homicide' charge, which is frequently used by the Chinese authorities to crack down on self-immolation protests and to persecute critics of Chinese policies in Tibet.

Local sources say **Tsultrim Kalsang's** charges are possibly related to the twin self-immolation protest carried out by two Tibetan youths in Dzatoe township on June 30, 2012. Both **Ngawang Norphel**, 22, and **Tenzin Khedup**, 24, died of their injuries.

Armed police first detained **Tsultrim Kalsang** on September 1, 2012 from his monastic residence. He was detained along with four other monks. At the

time, 60 vehicles full of armed police forces raided Nyatso Zilkar Monastery, searched the monks' residences and confiscated some computers and CDs.

After being first detained, **Tsultrim Kalsang** spent about 10 months in uncertainty, as his case was referred to various procuratorates who took time to draw up the charges. After about a month in detention, he was briefly returned to his monastery due to failing health. However, he was called for interrogation twice in Siling (Chinese: Xining) city and was detained for four months at a stretch for further questioning.

**Tsultrim Kalsang** was born 1988 in Nyatso Village in Tridu County. He is the son of Athub and Dokar Tso, and became a monk at the age of 10, in 1998. After finishing his studies at the Zilkar (White Dew) monastery, in 2004, he joined the great Sera monastic university in Lhasa, where he further engaged in Buddhist studies for some years. During the 2008 protests in Tibet, the Chinese police kept him in custody for around six months, after what he was forced to return to his hometown. ■

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propaganda offensive.

In her interview **Professor Jin Wei** also referred to the need not to politicize religion. Saying that it is a mistake to treat religious and nationalities issues as "political" ones, she advised that the new leadership "must exercise caution in dealing with Tibet-related work".

In a rare assertion, **Jin Wei** acknowledged that the **Dalai Lama** is a "key figure in Tibet-related issues", called for restarting talks with his representatives, and even gave a framework for this dialogue, suggesting a discussion on allowing the **Dalai Lama** to visit Hong Kong or Macau purely in his capacity as a religious leader.

**Professor Jin Wei's** comments deserve close attention, even though it is notable that the comments were published in Hong Kong, rather than in Beijing, where she specializes in ethnic and religious affairs at the Central Party School. **Jin Wei** is unlikely to have expressed these views without backing, even though she refers twice to the need for talks between the **Dalai Lama** and the Chinese side as a 'personal view'. The Central Party School, which specifically trains officials for future leadership posts in the Communist Party, is headed by **Liu Yunshan**, one of the seven-member Politburo and head of the propaganda department. China's top leader, Xi Jinping, was president of the school from 2007 to 2013.

While **Jin Wei's** article promotes a softer approach, she also acknowledges the intractability of the struggle as a core concern to the CCP when stating that on the level of the **Dalai Lama's** 'challenge' to 'China's sovereignty and territorial integrity' since leaving Tibet in 1959, "The contradiction between us and the **Dalai Lama** Clique is antagonistic and irreconcilable." ■

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*This number's reading suggestion*

**New Human Rights Watch Report:  
"They Say We Should Be Grateful".  
Mass Relocating and Relocation  
Programs in Tibetan Areas of China."**

On June 27, 2013 **Human Rights Watch** published its new report on Tibetan nomads' forced resettlement.

Since 2006, under plans to "Build a New Socialist Countryside" in Tibetan areas, over two million Tibetans have been "relocated" – through government-ordered renovation or construction of new houses – in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), while hundreds of thousands of nomadic herders in the eastern part of the Tibetan plateau have been relocated or settled in "New Socialist Villages."

This new **HRW** report documents extensive rights violations ranging from the absence of consultation to the failure to provide adequate compensation, both of which are

required under international law for evictions to be legitimate. The report also addresses defects in the quality of the houses provided, absence of remedies for arbitrary decisions, failures to restore livelihoods, as well as a disregard for autonomy rights nominally guaranteed by Chinese law in Tibetan areas. ■

To read the full report, [click here](#).



## Upcoming Events

- ▶ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child session on China: 26 – 27 September
- ▶ China's second Universal Periodic Review at the UN Human Rights Council: 22 October
- ▶ EU Tibetan Youth Leadership Program in Brussels: November 2013