

EU High Representative visits China for the first time on the occasion of EU-China Strategic Dialogue

EU High Representative **Federica Mogherini** paid her first official visit to China on from 5 – 6 May on the occasion of the 5th fifth round of the EU-China High Level Strategic Dialogue.

The trip to **China** took place in a special context, given the 40th anniversary of **EU-China** relations on May 6. High Representative **Mogherini** said that this was the moment to make plans for the future, stressing the huge potential of developing the political relationship beyond the already existing strong trade and investment pillar structure.

During the [press conference](#), held together with Chinese State Councillor **Yang Jiechi**, she briefly raised human rights issues, saying: "I am sure that we will also have a constructive exchange on human rights issues, but also on the

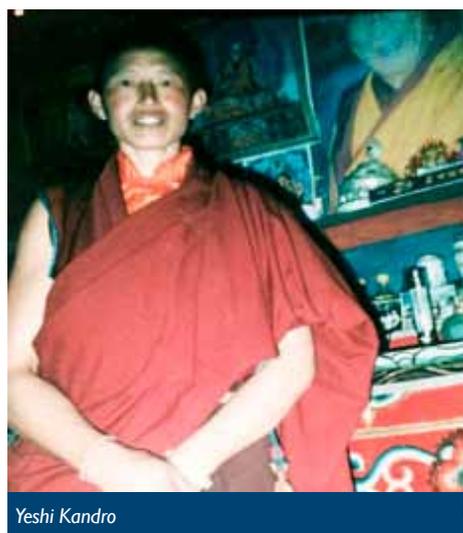
importance of fostering dialogue with and between different ethnic groups, as well as of enabling civil society activity."

Ahead of her trip to China, the **International Campaign for Tibet (ICT)** sent a letter to High Representative **Mogherini**, urging her to ensure that human rights issues should be at the forefront of her agenda and meetings with the Chinese government to set the tone and framework for future discussions.

Please read **ICT's** [press release](#) issued before Mrs. **Mogherini's** departure. ■

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Yeshe Kandro

ICT report on Tibetan survivors of self-immolations published as self-immolations continue in Tibet

A new **ICT** report, published on 19 March, reveals how Tibetans, who survived self-immolation, have faced violent treatment and disappearance. Furthermore, some families have been unaware whether their relatives survived or died years after they set themselves on fire.

The report, [‘Tibetan survivors of self-immolation: repression and disappearance’](#), documents cases of 20 Tibetans, who survived self-immolation in Tibet, and three in exile.

Some 139 Tibetans have set themselves on fire in Tibet since 2009, in addition to seven in exile, representing one of the

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biggest waves of self-immolation as political protest in the last 60 years. In most cases, self-immolators in Tibet have died on the scene, or afterwards in hospital. Some go to great lengths to ensure that they will not survive, such as wrapping barbed wire around their body and drinking or covering themselves with kerosene. ICT's report documents how the Tibetans who survive self-immolation can face extreme physical and psychological trauma due to repressive measures against them by the Chinese authorities.

The treatment of survivors of these self-immolators is in context with an intensified wave of repression in Tibet. Those allegedly "associated" with self-immolators, including friends, families and even entire communities, are being punished by the authorities. Two further self-immolations occurred in Tibet in April 2015.

A Tibetan nun aged in her 40s called



Yeshe Kandro set fire to herself on 8 April in Kardze (**Chinese**: Ganzi) and was believed to have died, according to Tibetan sources. According to the same sources, as she herself alight, she called for the long life of the **Dalai Lama**, for His Holiness to be invited to

Tibet, and for freedom for Tibet.

Yeshe Kandro set herself on fire near the monastery and police station in the county town in Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan, the Tibetan area of Kham. Police used fire extinguishers to douse the flames and took her away; Tibetan sources believe that she must have died given the intensity of the blaze.

Then on 16 April, a Tibetan man, known as **Neykyab**, set fire to himself and died in a village in Ngaba (**Chinese**: Aba) county in Sichuan.

At the site of his self-immolation, near his home, **Neykyab** displayed a photo of the **Dalai Lama** and the 10th Panchen Lama with offerings of butter-lamps and flowers, as well as a family photograph.

He was the 139th Tibetan to set himself on fire in Tibet since the current wave of self-immolations began in 2009. ■

New restrictions on freedom of religion in Tibet

In a statement made on April 8, Tibet's top Party official called for Chinese red flags to be displayed on all Tibetan Buddhist monasteries. This follows a call for monasteries and nunneries to become centres for propaganda made by the Tibet Autonomous Region Party chief Chen Quanguo the previous week.



The Party Secretary's comments should be seen in context of the strategy by **Beijing** to intensify CCP presence and control across Tibet. This follows unrest that swept across the plateau from 2008 onwards and has led to a more pervasive and systematic approach to 'patriotic education' and a dramatic increase in work teams and Party cadres in rural and urban areas. The Chinese government views loyalty to the Dalai Lama and religious faith as obstacles to its political objectives in Tibetan areas.

The **Chinese** Party state has moved from creating an oppressive environment in monasteries, nunneries and lay society to one that is wholly totalitarian – in which the state sees no limits to its authority, imposes a climate of fear, and strives to regulate every aspect of public and private life.

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The Chinese Communist Party requires monks and nuns to 'love their country' - in other words, to recognize the authority of the Party state above all other allegiances. *'Patriotism' to the PRC is an official requisite for registration at monastic institutions and for consideration by the state as a 'religious person'*. This opposes the priorities of a Buddhist practitioner, whose first allegiance is to their spiritual path and religion.

Moreover, new regulations issued in the Rebkong (Chinese: Tongren) area of eastern Tibet warn that activities such as praying and lighting butter-lamps for the **Dalai Lama**, or for those who

have self-immolated, are 'illegal' and will be penalized.

These measures heighten the dangers for Tibetans in the area, who have long sought to protect their cultural and religious identity and traditions with courage and resilience. Furthermore, they contravene international law and **China's** own constitution and legal provisions meant to preserve and promote the distinct identity of groups such as the Tibetans.

A full translation of the documents from Tibetan into English is available [here](#). ■

The impact of the Nepal earthquakes on Tibet

As the world's focus turned to Nepal after the devastating earthquakes, little is known about the situation in Tibetan areas close to the border, other than reports from the Chinese state media, due to tight information controls, restrictions on foreign visitors and lack of media access.

According to Xinhua news, the damage scale in Tibet from the earthquake in Nepal is 26 deaths with three people missing; 856 people were injured; nearly 300,000 people were affected; 2,699 houses and one temple collapsed. As of 6 May, some 39,943 homes, 242 monasteries and cultural relics were damaged.

The death toll may be lower than would be expected given the number of buildings destroyed. This may be because during this time of year many people in the area would be out in the fields carrying out agricultural work. But the figures still appear to be low, given the damage admitted in the state media. There are tight restrictions on information flow in the Tibet Autonomous Region due to the ongoing political crackdown, with severe penalties for passing on news that differs from official representations, and no independent non-governmental organizations are allowed to operate there.

The earthquake of 7.8-magnitude struck Nepal on 25 April, flattening large parts of the capital Kathmandu. It caused devastation across the impoverished Himalayan country and region.

The earthquake was felt strongly in the southern Tibetan city of Shigatse (Chinese: Rigaze), the Tibet Autonomous Region, especially in the Mount Everest (Chomolangma) region and towns of Kyirong (Chinese: Jilong), Tingri (Dingri), Nyalam (Chinese: Nielamu) and Dram (Zhangmu) at the Nepal border, on the other side of the Friendship Bridge. Following the main earthquake, an aftershock of 5.7 magnitude occurred later on the same day near the town of Shelkar (Chinese: Xiege'er, also called New Tingri) causing further damage. Further large aftershocks were recorded in Kodari, the first town in Nepal across the border from Tibet, on 27 April. According to various sources, 80% of

the buildings in Nyalam have either major damage or collapsed.

Following the quake, large convoys of military trucks were seen moving from Lhasa and Shigatse city, which were not affected by the earthquake, to quake-hit areas in the border regions.

The powerful aftershock on 27 April hit the town of Dram (Chinese: Zhangmu), which clings to the mountainside near the Nepalese border. The aftershock destroyed 10% of buildings in the town, causing cracks or other damage to "all buildings", according to a Chinese state media report. Pictures were posted in the state media of people being evacuated from Dram.

The political importance of handling relief efforts in this sensitive border area of Tibet was underlined in a statement on 30 April by senior leaders of the Tibet Autonomous Region, led by Party Secretary Chen Quanguo.

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Monks from Benchen monastery in Nepal distributing food and water

Party Secretary Chen referred to a direct message from China's leader **Xi Jinping** in his comments, saying: *"With the safety and well-being of the disaster area weighing heavily on the hearts of Secretary Xi Jinping and the Party central committee, and with the strong support of the central committee and national organs, the entire Autonomous Region Party, government, military, police and people will lead the first charge. This fully reflects the warmth of the motherland's great family and the advantages of the socialist system. When one area faces difficulties support will come from all directions, - a traditional Chinese value. We must study and implement the spirit and driving forces of the important instructions from Secretary Xi Jinping and other comrades from the central committee, redouble our efforts, fight continuously, and strive to win a complete victory in the earthquake relief field."*

The death toll of both Tibetans and Nepalese in more remote settlements and villages is not yet known. Rasuwa – a Tibetan settlement with a primary school and small clinic – was hit by the quake, and the Tibetan settlements of Tsagang and Bagang in the Sindupalchok district were also badly affected. The Nepalese Buddhist Federation and other groups are co-ordinating various relief efforts across the community, involving many Himalayan and Tibetan monks and nuns in active rescue and rebuilding work.

The Central Tibetan Administration in Dharamsala reported the deaths of three Tibetans in Nepal on 28 April. A report states that almost all Tibetans in Nepal are currently staying in tents outside of their homes in open areas, with people still unable to go back to their homes fearing more aftershocks. ■

Political prisoners focus

Tibetan writer Shokjang

At the beginning of April, exiled Tibetan media organizations reported the detention of Tibetan writer **Shokjang** in March. According to the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD), Shokjang was arrested on 16 March, just days after the 56th anniversary of the 10 March Tibetan National Uprising Day of in 1959.

Shokjang was arrested for sharing the following thoughts with the outside world:

"Gun-toting soldiers have surrounded Rebkong. They are frisking the Tibetans. Is this meant to protect public security? Or is this a deliberate ploy to provoke the people? If this is how they create the so-called social stability, how extremely terrifying this act is!"

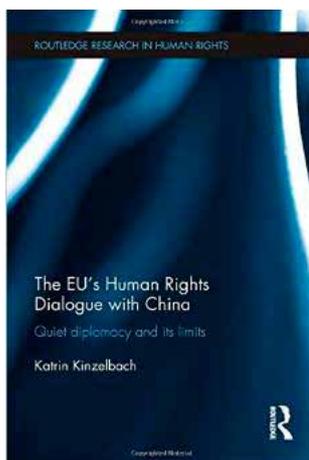


Tibetan writer Shokjang

So far there are no known formal charges filed against the writer. This is not the first time that the Chinese police has detained **Shokjang**. He was arrested for the first time in April 2010. Although media reports stated that the Chinese authorities accused him of having links with the Tibetan Youth Congress in Dharamsala – a euphemism for seeking Tibetan independence – the initial reason for his arrest was his contribution to the literary journal *Shar Dung Ri* ('Eastern Conch Mountain'), named after the famous snow mountain in Shar-Khog, Amdo. The journal, now banned, published articles, poems and essays by Tibetan writers including **Shokjang**. It strongly condemned, amongst other things, China's violent suppression of the 2008 Tibetan Uprising. ■

Reading suggestion

Katrin Kinzelbach: *The EU's Human Rights Dialogue with China: Quiet Diplomacy and its Limits*



This book provides the first detailed reconstruction and assessment of the European Union's responses to human rights violations in China from 1995 to the present day.

The EU uses a confidential, institutionalized dialogue to raise human rights concerns with China, but little is publicly known about its set-up, its substance, its development over time and its impact.

Using classified documents in the EU's historical archives and interviews with diplomats, officials and human rights experts in Europe, China and the United States, Kinzelbach lifts the veil of secrecy on the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue. The book also provides a rare insight into how the European Union and China conduct quiet diplomacy on human rights. Kinzelbach examines the evolution of dialogue and

the EU's internal debate on the merits of quiet diplomacy, drawing comparisons with the approach of other nations, notably that of the United States. In doing so, the EU's relative impact is concluded to be tenuous if not counter-productive. The book also chronicles and analyzes numerous human rights concerns that were raised in the period, ranging from structural issues to individual cases. ■

Upcoming Events

- ▶ **29 JUNE : EU-CHINA SUMMIT**
- ▶ **30 JUNE : OPENING CEREMONY OF THE EXHIBITION ON THE OCCASION OF THE DALAI LAMA'S 80TH BIRTHDAY IN THE EP**