



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Climate of total 24-hour surveillance as restrictions intensified for Tibetan Buddhist festival in Lhasa

<https://www.savetibet.org/climate-of-total-24-hour-surveillance-as-restrictions-intensified-for-tibetan-buddhist-festival-in-lhasa/>

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The Chinese authorities are imposing unprecedented restrictions this year for the Saga Dawa (the holy fourth month for the Tibetan Buddhists) in Lhasa, with officials on 24-hour watch for Tibetans engaging in devotional activities, according to the Chinese state media.

China does not allow Tibetans who are Communist Party members to take part in religious activities, but this year the ruling is being enforced much more strictly than before in a political climate of total surveillance. An announcement on May 25, 2018 by the Chinese English-language Global Times stated that this year there is “enhanced supervision of order and public security during the festival by assigning officials 24 hours a day and prohibiting Party members from taking part in the Saga Dawa religious activities”. Also, an order in eastern Tibet asked parents not to participate in or take their children to monasteries or religious events during this period.

A professor at Tibet University, Xiong Kunxin, was cited by Global Times as saying that the security measures, which were already rigorous, “have improved, especially in important and crowded places during the festival such as the Potala Palace.” The Jokhang Temple in Lhasa is of profound significance as a place of pilgrimage during the entire month of Saga Dawa, on the 15th of which the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha is believed to have taken place.

As the religious festival month began on May 16, 2018, the authorities in Chamdo (Chinese: Changdu) in the Tibet Autonomous Region circulated an order prohibiting families from engaging in any of the religious and devotional practices associated with the holy month. This ruling will deeply affect Tibetan families; devotional practices and altruistic behavior are particularly important during Saga Dawa. It is believed that during this month, all positive and negative actions are multiplied a hundred thousand times.

A notice to parents of children at the Chamdo City #2 Municipal Kindergarten stated that “in order to advance their ideological education” children should not be taken to monasteries or religious events, and that parents should also not attend those events themselves. In a reminder of the stringent powers of the security state, the notice warned that: “The higher authorities will be covertly watching, and those who break regulations will be dealt with”.

The notice was published on the Lhasa People's Government website:

<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1103979.shtml>

A translation of the notice is included in this International Campaign for Tibet report, 'Monks who studied in India banned from teaching in Tibet; new ruling bans schoolchildren from religious activity', May 17, 2018, <https://www.savetibet.org/monks-who-studied-in-india-banned-from-teaching-in-tibet-new-ruling-bans-schoolchildren-from-religious-activity/>