



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

International Campaign for Tibet welcomes statements in support of Tibetan language advocate Tashi Wangchuk – United Nations experts call for immediate release

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June 6, 2018

The International Campaign for Tibet welcomes recent statements by the United Nations experts, governments, parliamentarians worldwide and civil society organisations in support of the Tibetan language advocate Tashi Wangchuk. Today, six United Nations human rights experts [issued a statement](#), condemning the five-year jail sentence handed to Tashi Wangchuk by a Chinese court for his work promoting cultural and linguistic rights of the Tibetan people.

In their statement, the experts – five United Nations Special Rapporteurs and the Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention – “strongly urge the Chinese authorities to comply with their international human rights commitments, to grant Mr. Wangchuk immediate release and accord him an enforceable right to compensation and other reparations.” The experts further state: “Governments should under no circumstances undermine or repress legitimate human rights advocacy and action, such as in this case, using national security, public order or anti-terrorism discourses.”

The International Campaign for Tibet welcomes the strong statement by the UN human rights experts. ICT’s Head of UN Advocacy Kai Mueller: “Tashi Wangchuk’s peaceful advocacy for cultural rights is protected by international law and the charges held against him are utterly absurd. We call on governments, parliaments and UN expert bodies to continue to call for his release. We welcome this strong statement by the UN experts as well as those by governments, parliamentarians and civil society in support of Tashi Wangchuk.”

Overview of statements by governments and parliamentarians

On May 22, the [US State Department stated](#): “We are deeply disappointed that the Chinese government convicted Tashi Wangchuk, an advocate for Tibetan language education, on the charge of “inciting separatism” for exercising his fundamental freedom of expression in calling on the government to give greater attention and resources to teach the Tibetan language in Tibetan areas. We urge Chinese authorities to release Tashi Wangchuk immediately, and to protect the distinct religious, cultural, and linguistic identity of Tibetans.”

On May 23, [the EU called](#) for the immediate release of Tashi Wangchuk: “Chinese human rights defender, Mr Tashi Wangchuk, who was detained in January 2016, was convicted of inciting separatism and sentenced to five years' imprisonment by the Yushu Intermediate People's Court on 22 May 2018. Mr Tashi's rights under China's Criminal Procedure Law and international law obligations to a fair trial, to be tried without undue delay, and to mount a proper defence, were not fully respected. We expect the Chinese authorities to respect the right to freedom of expression of all citizens as recognised by China's Constitution and in line with China's international law obligations, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. China also needs to ensure that ethnic minorities enjoy equal rights, including freedom of expression and belief, as mandated by the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which China ratified in 1981. Tashi Wangchuk and other detained and convicted human rights defenders and lawyers including Ilham Tohti, Wang Quanzhang, Li Yuhan, Huang Qi and Yu Wensheng must be released immediately.”

[In a statement](#) on June 1, the German Commissioner for Human Rights, had called “on the Government of the People's Republic of China to release Tashi Wangchuk without delay and to respect the cultural and religious rights of the Tibetan people. This also includes not hindering the work of the institutions of Tibetan Buddhism such as the Larung Gar and Yachen Gar teaching institutes and not suppressing the Tibetan language and culture.”

[The government of France stated:](#) France regrets the five-year prison sentence handed down to Tashi Wangchuk on May 22 by the Yushu Intermediate Court for inciting separatism. Tashi Wangchuk played a key role in protecting the Tibetan language under the laws of the People's Republic of China. France is committed to the protection of human rights. It believes that dialogue between the Chinese authorities and the local population is critical to achieving a lasting solution to the tensions in Tibet while fully respecting the cultural and spiritual identity of Tibet, within the framework of the People's Republic of China.

Concerned about harsh sentencing of Tibetan language rights activist Tashi Wangchuk, the Chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights, [Pier Antonio Panzeri, stated:](#) "I am gravely concerned about the verdict of a Court in the Chinese city of Yushu, sentencing Mr Tashi Wangchuk to 5 years imprisonment on charges of inciting separatism. Mr Tashi Wangchuk undertook fully legitimate work advocating for the linguistic and cultural rights of Tibetans, as it became known through a documentary film published by the New York Times. The peaceful activity of promoting the use of the Tibetan language in local schools should never be punished as this is a basic human right guaranteed by the Chinese constitution and legal system. It is highly regrettable and unjust that Mr Tashi Wangchuk already had to spend two years in detention. I call on the Chinese authorities to respect the basic principles of a fair and transparent trial and guarantee meaningful consideration of the facts during the appeal phase. I would like to draw attention to the European Parliament's resolution of January this year which called for the release of Mr Tashi Wangchuk and for the charges against him to be dropped".