



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Dalai Lama commends ICT's 30 years of service and calls for preservation of Tibetan culture

<http://www.savetibet.org/dalai-lama-commends-icts-30-years-of-service-and-calls-for-preservation-of-tibetan-culture>

September 17, 2018

Supporters and friends from across the world gathered in the Netherlands this weekend for a heartfelt public conversation between the Dalai Lama and International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) Chairman Richard Gere in honor of ICT's 30th anniversary.

The event, which took place on Sept. 16, was held inside a packed stadium of more than 12,000 people in Rotterdam. It ended with ICT President Matteo Mecacci announcing a new grant by ICT to support the Dalai Lama's vision of secular ethics.

In welcome remarks at the beginning of the event, ICT Europe Executive Director Tsering Jampa gave a passionate overview of ICT's work to advance the Tibetan cause and to support the Dalai Lama's efforts for a negotiated solution to China's oppression of the Tibetan people.

"As the largest Tibet support group," Jampa said, "we are working to keep the issue of Tibet alive on the world stage." (See the full text of her remarks at the end of this report.)

Richard Gere and the Dalai Lama

Gere began his conversation with the Dalai Lama by recalling that he had once been a student of Zen Buddhism, but that after meeting the Dalai Lama in the 1980s, his life "radically changed" and was "set on a path."

Gere also recalled how the Dalai Lama felt that the Tibet crisis could be solved through international support, which led to the foundation of ICT in 1988.

The Dalai Lama expressed his thanks to ICT, saying that the organization is "very, very helpful in making clear about the Tibetan issue. I really appreciate. So thank you."

The Dalai Lama also said that his gratitude extended to Gere personally, saying: "Right from the beginning, you are really fully involved, so I really appreciate it and thank you."

Survival of Tibet's culture and environment

At the event at the Rotterdam Ahoy venue, the Dalai Lama drew attention to the importance of supporting Tibetan Buddhist culture, saying that the elements of that culture “are treasures of the world. The preservation of Tibetan Buddhist culture, this ancient knowledge, I really feel this is something really worthwhile to preserve, and there is real potential to share with more human beings.”

The Dalai Lama also reflected on his memories of Tibet, which he was forced to flee in 1959 after China invaded and occupied the country.

He illustrated the historic scale of suffering in Tibet by mentioning killings in eastern Tibet and torture and arrests in the 1950s. He then reflected on the current situation, saying “human beings must have compassion” for the crisis humanity is undergoing presently.

Pointing to reasons for hope for the survival of Tibetan Buddhist culture, the Dalai Lama mentioned the awarding of Geshe degrees (the highest monastic degrees) to Buddhist nuns for the first time, as well as the efforts by monasteries across the Himalayan range to become “learning centers for believers or non-believers.”

The Dalai Lama also drew attention to Tibet's importance as the source of most of Asia's major rivers, saying: “Now my main concern is the environmental issue. One of my Chinese friends, an ecologist, wrote an article mentioning global warming [in Tibet], [which is] as much as the South Pole or North Pole. So we really need special care of the environment. And some Indian ecologists, they say [because] Tibet is high altitude, dry climate, once damaged, the ecology can no longer revive. Therefore it is very important. I used to tell my Indian friends, we are the supplier of water to millions of Indians. Already there are signs that snowfall has reduced, a clear sign of global warming.”

Science and secular ethics

Gere and the Dalai Lama also discussed the importance of the Nalanda tradition of ancient India, which is still studied in Tibetan monasteries. Gere said the Nalanda school in India “was the greatest university of its time; the greatest minds in Asia came to Nalanda to study. It was a vast, walled city with gates at cardinal points, you had to win debate to get in—an extraordinary visionary place of learning.”

This led to a discussion about ideas pioneered by the Dalai Lama in education, via the Mind and Life scientific and Buddhist dialogues and new curricula in schools to teach children emotional and social skills focusing on how to develop compassion.

Gere paid tribute to the Dalai Lama, saying: “His Holiness interacts with world-class scientists in different areas; he interacts with these ideas at a high level. These ideas would clash and find a way to get larger and more inclusive. And this became part of the norm of scientific dialogue. His Holiness has been at the center of that.”

ICT initiative to support Dalai Lama Institute

Gere concluded the conversation by drawing attention to the plight of Tibetan people in Tibet, saying, “Please remember the people inside Tibet. ICT is a vehicle you can trust to help the Tibetans inside and outside Tibet. So please help them.”

Mecacci, ICT’s President, then announced an initiative by ICT on its 30th anniversary to offer a financial grant to the Dalai Lama Institute for Higher Education in Bangalore, India to launch a program on secular ethics, which is one of the core messages of the Dalai Lama.

The text of the announcement (which can be seen below) was mounted like a Tibetan thangka painting and presented to the Dalai Lama jointly by Mecacci, Jampa, and ICT Europe Board Chair Jan Anderson. ICT Europe Board Member Christa Meindersma closed the proceedings by offering thanks to everyone involved in organizing the event. She said, “Presenting the facts about Tibet is at the heart of ICT’s work. Thank you for coming here today. If you feel inspired by this conversation and the work of ICT, and if you care about saving Tibet’s unique culture, language and environment, please join this movement.”

ICT’s event was immediately followed by a public talk by the Dalai Lama on “Why Compassion is Essential in our Troubled World.”

[Read a report about the conversation on the Dalai Lama’s website.](#)

Text of remarks by Tsering Jampa, ICT Europe Executive Director

Thank you, everyone. It is wonderful to be here and a privilege to welcome you all to this very special event.

I am Tsering Jampa, the Executive Director of the International Campaign for Tibet in Europe. It is truly an honor for me to be making this very brief introduction today.

How deeply fortunate we are, here in this room—in this lifetime—to be in the presence of one of the greatest world leaders of our time, His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Your Holiness, we are profoundly grateful for your leadership, your wisdom, your compassion, and for your vision of a world in which conflict is resolved through dialogue, where religious harmony replaces religious strife, and where the oneness of humanity is respected.

It is needed more than ever, in a world riven by conflict and tyranny. Our nonviolent path is not a passive process; it requires courage. Your Holiness, it requires us to follow your example.

At the International Campaign for Tibet, this is our guiding light.

ICT was founded to fulfill your vision, and this year, we commemorate our 30th anniversary of serving the Tibetan people and Your Holiness.

The ICT community, now worldwide over 100,000 strong, connects caring individuals, who act for Tibet and peace and justice across the world.

Starting from one office in Washington, DC in 1988, under your inspiration and guidance, today we have offices in Amsterdam, Berlin, and Brussels, and staff in London and Dharamsala.

As the largest Tibet support group, we are working to keep the issue of Tibet alive on the world stage to support Your Holiness' efforts for a negotiated solution for the Tibetan people. We are active at the United Nations, directly challenging China's attempts to block support for Tibet. We work on Tibet with the European Union, which you have always admired as a symbol of peace and unity, today threatened by China's 'divide and rule' strategy.

We work at the highest levels, from the White House to foreign ministries across Europe. We engage our supporters, ensuring the voices of Tibetans inside Tibet are heard.

ICT campaigns for the release of political prisoners, knowing the importance of solidarity and compassion for those who can feel most isolated. We have helped to secure humanitarian assistance for refugees and development programs for Tibetans inside Tibet and outside Tibet.

We work with a younger generation of Tibetan change-makers, training and mentoring the future leaders of Tibet. We brief journalists worldwide and our reports and research have helped shine a spotlight on the appalling situation inside Tibet.

In Tibet, China has instituted increasingly hardline policies that undermine Tibetan culture and religion. There is a deep climate of fear, with even very young children being indoctrinated in Chinese Communist Party propaganda.

Since 2009, more than 140 Tibetans have set fire to themselves, an act emerging from the anguish of oppression.

But even so, during all these years, the Tibetan people's spirit is not crushed. In particular, the younger generation is continuing the challenge to the misguided policies of the Chinese government.

We at the International Campaign for Tibet are determined to meet the new challenges we face in serving Tibetan people and Your Holiness. We must find new ways to tell Tibet's story.

A concerted effort, inside and outside Tibet, is needed now for a lasting solution for Tibet. We must build stronger international support for Tibet with likeminded countries across the world, with institutions, but also with individuals working together towards this common goal.

Let us rejoice in Your Holiness' presence and re-dedicate ourselves knowing, as the Indian political leader Jayaprakash Narayan said many years ago, "Is Tibet lost for ever? No. A thousand times no. Tibet will not die because there is no death for the human spirit."

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the International Campaign for Tibet to wish Your Holiness a long life and may all your aspirations be fulfilled.

Text of the citation read by ICT President Matteo Mecacci

To: His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Your Holiness,

Tashi Delek. The International Campaign for Tibet, on the occasion of our 30th anniversary, is honored to offer a grant of \$50,000 towards the promotion of your Holiness' core message of the importance of secular ethics, which is a great inspiration and service to humanity.

ICT will make this grant to the Dalai Lama Institute for Higher Education based in Bangalore, India. The fund will be specifically allocated towards the Institute's special curriculum on Secular Ethics, aiming to educate the Tibetan leaders of the future in these universal moral values.

This offering is in recognition of Your Holiness' lifelong dedication to peace and nonviolence, your consistent efforts to promote secular ethics, and the dynamic leadership to the Tibetan people and an inspiration to the international community.

Your Holiness, we thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your wisdom and compassion, which are a strong motivational force for all of us, in cultivating such an attitude towards a better future for all.

The International Campaign for Tibet,

Rotterdam, 16 September, 2018