



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

The illegality of everything: China's new campaign offers rewards for information on 'illegal content'

<https://www.savetibet.org/the-illegality-of-everything-chinas-new-campaign-offers-rewards-for-information-on-illegal-content>

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In a nationwide campaign in China against so-called “illegal content,” Chinese authorities are offering rewards to those who inform on others suspected of reading or speaking about, for instance, foreign newspaper articles or broadcasts about Tibet’s spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama.

Coinciding with the campaign, a series of graphic cartoons were distributed in the Tibetan capital of Lhasa, including one of a closed fist smashing into two people marked with the Chinese characters for “black (illegal)” and “evil.” The Dalai Lama is characterized as a leader of such “evil forces” by the Chinese authorities.

A circular on social media issued by the Chinese Public Security Bureau on Nov. 14 and obtained by the International Campaign for Tibet states that 30 boxes across Lhasa have been set up for citizens to report on such “criminal issues.”

The cartoons and encouragement to inform follow a new set of “Measures for Rewarding Informants in Efforts to Eliminate Pornography and Illegal Content” published on Nov. 16, 2018. According to a translation by ChinaLawTranslate, the measures include rewards to be given to people who “provide clues to any level of department for the elimination of pornography and illegal materials, so that they can open, monitor, and handle cases.”¹

The measures are so broad and all-encompassing that almost anything other than official state propaganda that is published, posted online or broadcast could be characterized as “evil” and “illegal” and subject to punishment.

The measures state that informers are to be offered rewards for providing information on, among other things, “that which is harmful to national unity, sovereignty, or territorial integrity; that which divulges state secrets, endangers national security or harms national honor or interests; that which incites ethnic hatred or ethnic discrimination, destroying ethnic unity, or infringing on ethnic customs

¹ The regulations in Chinese are at: <http://www.shdf.gov.cn/shdf/contents/708/388912.html> ChinaLawTranslate translation in English:

<https://www.chinalawtranslate.com/%E6%89%AB%E9%BB%84%E6%89%93%E9%9D%9E%E5%B7%A5%E4%BD%9C%E4%B8%BE%E6%8A%A5%E5%A5%96%E5%8A%B1%E5%8A%9E%E6%B3%95/?lang=en>

and habits; that which promotes evil cults or superstition; that which disrupts social order or undermines social stability.”

These sweeping categories cover almost anything deemed to differ from the position of the Chinese Communist Party state, official media or powerful regional or local officials. The encouragement to inform through the inducement of financial rewards further deepens and exacerbates tensions and distrust, which are already at high levels because of the climate of deepening oppression and total surveillance.

The measures follow a circular issued earlier this year urging the public to inform on people they suspect of being loyal to the Dalai Lama and his “evil forces” across Tibet. In the same way, this circular sought to compel citizens to act as part of the security apparatus of the state. Its significance is that it effectively made everyday and often devotional activities illegal by, for instance, targeting those who seek to encourage the use of the Tibetan language or protect Tibetan culture, calling it a “reactionary and narrow nationalistic idea.”

Official state newspaper the Global Times made this connection clear when it stated that the political struggle against the Dalai Lama is central to the Beijing leadership’s concerns and is carried out on a war footing, saying: “The spread of separatist gangs in Tibet is rampant [...] a campaign against the gangsters would deter off secessionist activities by the Dalai.”²

² ‘Chinese police circular urges public to report on loyalty to “evil forces” of Dalai Lama’, February 13, 2018, <https://www.savetibet.org/chinese-police-circular-urges-public-to-report-on-loyalty-to-evil-forces-of-dalai-lama/>