

Shugden demonstrators damaging broader Tibetan issue

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His Holiness the Dalai Lama arrives in the United States for a series of programs, which include celebration of his 80th birthday. Thousands of North Americans will be gathering in California and New York to participate in the different events highlighting the Dalai Lama's contribution to the promotion of human values, religious understanding and leadership of the Tibetan people.

In these circumstances, the International Campaign for Tibet is dismayed by the planned demonstrations by some Buddhists in the name of "International Shugden Community" aimed at undermining the work of the Dalai Lama.

While we leave it to learned Buddhists to comment on the validity of the issue, our concern is that the Shugden demonstrators are causing great damage to the broader Tibetan issue. The people of Tibet continue to suffer under a ruthless and brutal Chinese regime, as can be seen from our reports on torture and collective punishment that Tibetans have to undergo. Our recent report, '[In the Teeth of the Storm](#),' details how a new generation of Tibetans is paying a high price for the peaceful expression of their views.

On account of this, over 140 Tibetans in Tibet have self-immolated while calling for the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and freedom for Tibet. The latest was Sangye Tso, age 36, who set fire to herself on May 27 and left a note saying: "Long live His Holiness the Dalai Lama, where is the Panchen Lama, and freedom for Tibetans."

The Chinese government looks upon the Dalai Lama as the source of their inability to legitimize their rule in Tibet and have been attempting to sever his connection with the Tibetan people. They have clearly identified the Shugden group as a force that can aid them in this campaign, as [seen from our report on a recent Chinese directive](#). Just weeks ago a former president of the Shugden group, Ven. Tsering Tashi, revealed that monetary incentives have been provided to the group by Chinese government agents. The Shugden demonstrators are thus contributing to the fulfilment of the Chinese Communist Party's agenda of undermining the authority of the Dalai Lama.

The demonstrators are attempting to spread seeds of discord and confusion among the public by misusing terms like religious freedom and human rights to define their issue. We feel the Shugden controversy is complex and people need a deeper understanding. His Holiness the [Dalai Lama's website](#) and that of the [Central Tibetan Administration](#) and the [Tibet Houses](#) cover the historical development of this controversy.

Right now the time is for all those concerned with the survival of Tibetan religion and culture to look at the real cause for the suffering of the Tibetan people. If the Shugden demonstrators are genuinely concerned about religious freedom and human rights of the Tibetan people, they will serve the cause better by working to alleviate the plight of the Tibetans in Tibet, rather than focusing on their parochial interest. By their own admission, they are spending much energy and resources for the sole purpose of slandering His Holiness the Dalai Lama.