

European Parliament adopts resolution on Larung Gar and Ilham Tohti



A monk observes the Buddhist Institute of Larung Gar. (Photo: 2014, by Bodhicitta-CC-BY-2.0)

On 15 December 2016, the European Parliament adopted an urgency resolution on breaches of human rights, democracy, and rule of law in China, in which it urged the Chinese authorities to stop the dismantling at Larung Gar Tibetan Buddhist academy.

The peaceful Buddhist institution, located in Serthar (Chinese: Seda), in Kardze (Chinese: Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan (the Tibetan area of Kham), has been in the spotlight since July 2016, when the Chinese authorities implemented plans to halve the institute's population of thousands of Chinese and Tibetan religious practitioners, evicting monks, nuns and

students before destroying their homes, causing dismay amongst its residents.

Members of the European Parliament expressed their concerns at the increasingly repressive policies faced by Tibetans, and pressed the Chinese government to respect both its national and international commitments in the field of human rights. They

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also called on China to resume the dialogue with Tibetan representatives, which has been stalled since January 2010, "in order to find an inclusive political solution to the crisis in Tibet".

This resolution - the European Parliament's first on Tibet since 2012 - follows a visit of the Dalai Lama to the European Parliament in Strasbourg last September, where he met former President Schulz and addressed the Foreign Affairs Committee, calling on Europe to engage in 'constructive criticism' of China.

It also refers to the situation of the Uyghur people, and MEPs called for

the immediate and unconditional release of Ilham Tohti, a Beijing-based Uyghur scholar sentenced to life after being charged with separatism-related offences, and one of the four 2016 Sakharov prize nominees.

ICT welcomes the adoption of this robust resolution, which reminds the Chinese authorities of their human rights obligations, in particular the need to respect freedom of religion and belief in Tibet. It also appreciates the stand taken by Members of the European Parliament in the resolution, which also deplores the absence of the annual round of the EU-China human rights dialogue in 2016. Initiated in 1996, the 35th round

of this dialogue was due to take place at the end of 2016, as agreed by both the Chinese and the EU sides at their annual Summit in July this year, but it has been cancelled. This situation "creates a serious and inappropriate precedent, which should be addressed vigorously and publicly by the EU," said ICT's EU Policy Director Vincent Metten. Although it has so far failed to achieve concrete progress on the human rights situation on the ground, the dialogue remains an important platform for the EU to engage China on human rights, and to raise individual cases.

The full text of the European Parliament's resolution is accessible [here](#). ■

Tibetan pilgrims compelled to return from Dalai Lama's teaching in India

Thousands of Tibetan pilgrims have been compelled by the Chinese authorities to return to Tibet after travelling to India to attend His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Kalachakra ceremonies, which ran between 11-13 January.



Long life pills being distributed to the crowd attending the Long Life Offering Ceremony for His Holiness the Dalai Lama at the Kalachakra teaching ground in Bodhgaya, Bihar, India on 14 January 2017. (Photo: Tenzin Choejor, Office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama)

Chinese state media denied that Tibetans had been ordered to return, but said that the government certainly "does not encourage" them to attend, because "the India-based ceremony frequently degenerates into a political tool," according to the Global Times. Other reports state that the Chinese authorities have called the Kalachakra, a major religious empowerment attended by more than 100,000 people from across the world in the town where the Buddha was enlightened, 'illegal', and threatened jail terms of 10 days to five years to those attending or spreading news of the event.

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New ICT-FIDH Report: Dangers of China's counter-terrorism law for Tibetans and Uyghurs

On 15 November 2016, the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) and FIDH (International Federation for Human Rights) published a new report highlighting the serious human rights risks and counter-productive nature of China's new counter-terrorism law that was adopted just over a year ago.



ICT's EU Policy Director Vincent Metten presented the findings of the new report during a press conference at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan in Tokyo on 15 November 2016.

The report, [China's new counter-terrorism law: Implications and Dangers for Tibetans and Uyghurs](#), draws on ICT and FIDH's analyses of China's counter-terrorism strategy and legislation, as well as the findings of an [international round-table](#) held in June 2016. Experts at this round-table detailed how the Chinese government has sought to legitimize its repressive measures by passing legislation that intensifies the Chinese Communist Party's control over free expression and broadens the scope to suppress dissent in Tibet and Xinjiang.

The new Chinese counter-terrorism law, in conflating 'terrorism' with an undefined 'extremism' linked to religion, gives scope for the penalization of almost any peaceful expression of Tibetan or Uyghur identity, acts of

non-violent dissent, or criticism of ethnic or religious policies. Moreover, *pro forma* references in the counter-terrorism law to human rights and the 'protection of ethnic culture' are rendered meaningless given the broad powers assigned to the authorities and the absence of independent judicial oversight over restrictive measures that can be applied. Overall, the new legislation and its implementation are believed by many to be provocative and deeply counter-productive, with fears that it is likely to heighten tensions and increase the risk of violence by individuals who feel they have no other recourse and nothing to lose.

In Tibet, despite the absence of any violent insurgency, an aggressive 'counter-terrorism' drive over the last

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This represents the most systematic crackdown linked to the Dalai Lama's teachings in exile so far, following a trend of increasingly hardline steps targeting devotion to him within Tibet. In 2012, the Chinese authorities launched a major operation to detain Tibetans attending the last Kalachakra in Bodhi Gaya, 'disappearing' many pilgrims for weeks or months on their return, and holding them for long periods of 're-education' in military camps and other facilities. In July 2014, when the Dalai Lama conferred another Kalachakra initiation in Ladakh, India, the religious teachings were for the first time described by the Chinese state as an incitement to 'hatred' and 'extremist action'.

This latest development is yet another example of the systematic restrictive measures imposed upon freedom of religion but also freedom of movement in Tibet. It is extremely [difficult for Tibetans to obtain passports](#), with few Tibetans in the Tibet Autonomous Region and other areas issued with passports, while others have theirs recalled. Late last year, the Chinese authorities further tightened controls on Tibetans, in some areas going from house to house to confiscate people's passports to prevent them from attending the Kalachakra in Bodhi Gaya. Once again this year, the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) will also [reportedly](#) be closed to foreign visitors between 25 February and 1 April, in an annual lockdown around the politically sensitive month of March, which marks the anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising Day (10 March) and the anniversary of the 2008 uprising (14 March). ■

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few years has resulted in increased militarization across the plateau. It has caused tremendous psychological problems among police officers involved in 'stability maintenance' and 'counter-terror' policies, as recently shown by a [document](#) published by

a People's Armed Police University College. "Studies have shown that during the normal carrying out of anti-terror and stability maintenance duties, psychological problems readily arise among officers," the paper states, adding: "There is cruelty in the anti-

terror struggle."

A recording of the press conference launching the report at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan on 15 November 2016 is available [here](#). ■

The Dalai Lama visits Mongolia

His Holiness the Dalai Lama spent four days in Mongolia in late November 2016, prompting huge crowds at his public events. His visit also sparked an angry response from China, leading the Mongolian Foreign Affairs Minister to ban the Dalai Lama from the country.

The minister, Tsend Munkh-Orgil, told the Onodoo newspaper that the government "feels sorry" for allowing the Dalai Lama to visit Mongolia in November, and that the Dalai Lama "probably won't be visiting Mongolia again during this administration," according to [Bloomberg News](#).

The Chinese government, which views the Dalai Lama as a separatist seeking to split Tibet from China and strongly objects to any visit by the Nobel Peace Prize laureate to other countries, had warned its neighbour ahead of the four-day visit by the Dalai Lama (which began on 18 November). China said the Mongolia visit should be cancelled for the sake of a "sound and steady" development of bilateral ties.

But Mongolia initially ignored the pressure, and although the Dalai Lama's visit was not made at the invitation of the Mongolian government and was purely religious in nature, China hit back by imposing fresh tariffs on commodity shipments from its northern neighbour and by closing

the Gants Mod border crossing, where nearly 1,000 trucks transport copper and coal pass through on a daily basis.

A traditionally Buddhist nation that has deep historical ties to Tibet, Mongolia has hosted the current Dalai Lama several times since 1979. But with its fragile economy increasingly dependent on China, its reaction was anticipated by many: Mongolian leaders are indeed seeking a \$4.2 billion loan from Beijing to pull the country out of a deep recession, and could not afford a confrontation with China.

"This is part of a near-global collapse in diplomatic capacity to handle certain kinds of pressure from China, which is, of course, far more acute for small, landlocked neighbors than major powers," Robert J. Barnett, a historian of modern Tibet at Columbia University, said.

Click [here](#) to read ICT's Vice-President Bhuchung K. Tsering's blog article about the long cultural and religious ties between Tibet and Mongolia. ■

Tibetans sentenced to long prison terms for involvement in Dalai Lama's 80th birthday celebration

Nine Tibetans have been handed sentences ranging from five to 14 years in prison for their involvement in celebrations for the Dalai Lama's 80th birthday last year.

In a group sentencing issued on 6 December 2016, Drugdra, a 50 year old Kirti monk who has served more than a year in prison following the 2008 protests, was sentenced to 14 years in prison. Monk and scholar Lobsang Khedrub, who had been released from prison from an earlier sentence in 2011 due to severe ill-health – probably due to maltreatment and torture – was sentenced to 13 years. Another of the Tibetans sentenced had already spent time in prison after being linked to one of the self-immolations at Kirti monastery.

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New self-immolation protest in Tibet in December 2016

A Tibetan man was heard calling for the Dalai Lama to return to Tibet as he set fire to himself. He died on 8 December 2016 in Machu town (Chinese: Maqu) in Gansu, the Tibetan area of Amdo.

The man, who has been named as Tashi Rabten, set himself alight in the vegetable market of Machu town where a relative, Tsering Kyi, set fire to herself in March 2012, according to the Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy. Video and images depicted a body engulfed in flames with a young boy looking on, and a woman standing nearby reciting prayers. A second video circulating on social media shows [police arriving to take away the body](#).

In a note written before his death, Tashi Rabten explained his reasons for resorting to self-immolation: *"In order to solve the issue peacefully, I was left with the only choice of self-immolating to warn people. What is necessary for Tibetan people is other people's blessing and show of concern"*.

It was the third self-immolation in Tibet in 2016, after Sonam Tso, a Tibetan

mother of five, burned herself to death in Dzoeye, Ngaba, on 23 March. There has been more than 145 self-immolations across the plateau since 2009.

According to Tibetan sources, Tashi's wife, two children and other relatives were detained by county police after they sought the return of his body. The Chinese authorities have responded to the wave of self-immolations across Tibet by punishing those allegedly 'associated' with self-immolators, including friends, families and even entire communities, resulting in a spike in political imprisonments, including one instance of the death penalty, and numerous cases of Tibetans being 'disappeared'. This is believed to have been a factor in the decreased number of self-immolations compared to previous years. ■

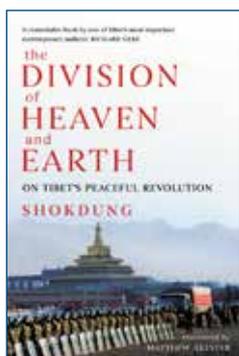
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The length of the sentences is all the more striking given that the birthday celebrations involved were apparently low-key. Kirti monastery, where the monks were from, is under lockdown and close surveillance, so major commemorations for the Dalai Lama would not have been possible there. The sentences follow previous incidents connected to the Dalai Lama's birthday in which Tibetans were arrested although not sentenced to such long terms. Notably in 2013, in Tawu in eastern Tibet, [police opened fire on Tibetans peacefully celebrating the Dalai Lama's birthday](#).

The Dalai Lama's 80th birthday, which took place last year, was regarded as particularly meaningful for Tibetans, and ceremonies in monasteries, the grasslands and in the heart of Lhasa were organized despite the dangers of punitive actions from the Chinese government for Tibetans who participated. ■

Reading Suggestion

The Division of Heaven and Earth - On Tibet's Peaceful Revolution, by Shokdung and Matthew Akester



Editor:
Hurst Publishers
Publication date:
December 2016

[The Division of Heaven and Earth](#) is one of the most influential and important books from Tibet in the modern era - a passionate indictment of Chinese policies and an eloquent analysis of protests that swept Tibet from March 2008 as a re-awakening of Tibetan national consciousness and solidarity.

Publication of the original Tibetan edition saw Shokdung (a pseudonym), one of Tibet's leading intellectuals, imprisoned for nearly six months, and the book immediately banned. This English translation is being made available for the first time since copies began to circulate underground in Tibet.

Written in response to an unprecedented wave of bold demonstrations and expressions of Tibetan solidarity and national identity, Shokdung's book is regarded as one of the most daring and wide-ranging critiques of China's policies in Tibet since the 10th Panchen Lama's famous '70,000-character Petition' addressed to Mao Zedong in 1962.

TIBET BRIEF

A REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET



JANUARY 2017

Political Prisoner Focus

Tsegon Gyal



A recent photo of Tsegon Gyal

In December 2016, Tsegon Gyal, a prominent former Tibetan political prisoner, was charged with 'inciting to split the country', after the Chinese authorities detained him incommunicado for more than two weeks at Kangtsa (Ch: Gangcha) County Detention Centre in Tsojang (Ch: Haibei) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai Province, the Tibetan province of Amdo.

According to [information received by the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy \(TCHRD\)](#), Tsegon Gyal, also known as Gangshon Atse, was charged with the crime on 24 December. A copy of his arrest warrant was sent to his family on the same date. He had been held in custody by officers of the Tsojang Prefecture State Security Bureau since 9 December, after his arrest in Dashi (Ch: Ha'êyan) County in Tsojang for unknown reasons. If the charge is proved, it could

be considered a crime of 'endangering state security', punishable by up to 15 years imprisonment.

Tsegon Gyal was born in 1963 to a family of nomads in Kangtsa region in the Tibetan province of Amdo. A successful journalist known for his devotion to the welfare of his community and fellow Tibetans, he had been sentenced in 1994 to 16 years in prison for 'espionage and counter-revolutionary crimes' for setting up, along with Lukar Jam and Namlo Yak Dhungser, the "Association of Domed Youth Committed to Sacrificing lives" a group accused by the Chinese authorities of conspiring with outsiders to organize Tibetan independence activities in Tibet in May 1993. He was eventually released in 1999, in what was seen by many as an attempt from the Chinese authorities to present a favorable image to the international community to ensure a smooth handover of Hong Kong from the United Kingdom.

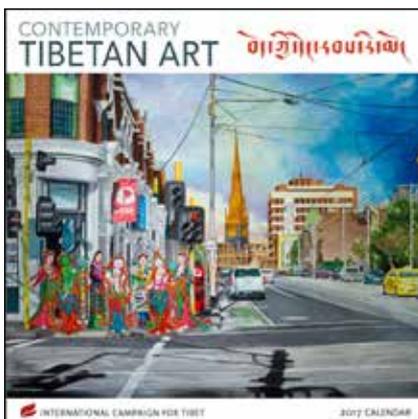
Since his detention, he has not been allowed to meet with his family and relatives, nor has he been provided access to legal representation. TCHRD, which has expressed concern about the poor health condition of Tsegon Gyal (the result of severe torture he previously endured in Chinese prison), reported that he has now launched a silent protest, refusing to respond to the State Security Bureau officers who have been holding and interrogating him. ■

UPCOMING EVENTS

- ▶ **7 FEBRUARY:**
Conference on reincarnation in the European Parliament (*for more information and registration, please contact the Office of Tibet at tibetbrussels@tibet.net*)
- ▶ **8 FEBRUARY:**
ICT-FIDH-UNPO Conference on counter-terrorism in China in the European Parliament (*click [here](#) to register for the conference*)
- ▶ **21 FEBRUARY:**
Conference (in French): "Variations tibétaines sur l'art de ne pas être gouverné" at Université Libre de Bruxelles (*click [here](#) for more information*)
- ▶ **24 FEBRUARY**
International Symposium (in French): "Par-delà le religieux et le politique : Théâtre et littérature au Tibet aujourd'hui" at Université Libre de Bruxelles (*click [here](#) for more information and registration*)
- ▶ **27 FEBRUARY**
Losar (Tibetan New Year)
- ▶ **27 FEB. - 24 MARCH**
34th Session of the UN Human Rights Council
- ▶ **10 MARCH:**
58th Anniversary of the Tibetan Uprising of 1959

ICT 2017 Wall Calendar available!

The International Campaign for Tibet wishes you a happy, healthy and prosperous 2017!



Still looking for a calendar for this year? Have a look at ICT's 2017 wall calendar! It features the works of 12 contemporary Tibetan artists who offer an exciting glimpse into a new realm of Tibetan cultural expression. While Tibetans have little say in many of the rapid changes being driven by the Chinese government in Tibet, they have been dynamically active in areas such as music, art, literature, and film, working not only to preserve their culture but also to redefine and push the boundaries for new meaning and expression of Tibetan identity in the 21st century. While contemporary Tibetan art was a relatively unknown field 20 years ago, today there is growing interest and appreciation for it and an accompanying upsurge in exhibitions and symposiums taking place around the world.

You can buy the calendar from our [webshop](#) for just 10€ (including shipping), and each purchase will help support ICT's work! Tashi Delek!