

Tibet Society Newsletter

December 2018

"If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping with a mosquito"
His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama

News of the Tibet Society, what's happening in Tibet and the Tibetan Exile world, and news of His Holiness the Dalai Lama

Help Tibet Society This Winter!



Imagine that just expressing your identity was enough to land you in prison. Imagine if writing poems could see you arrested or calling for the use of your own language in schools could see you locked behind bars for up to 15 years. Imagine being banned from flying your own country's flag, or having to hide pictures of your spiritual leader. A leader the world recognises as a symbol of compassion.

Imagine having to flee your home at a moment's notice because of all this. You can only take the belongings you can carry as you make the perilous trek across the Himalayas to safety. Imagine arriving in another country and feeling alone. Not being able to call your family back home to let them know you're safe because they're at risk. Not being able to speak to them on

birthdays, New Year or just call to tell them that you love and miss them. This is the reality for Tibetans living inside and outside Tibet.

Support the work of Tibet Society today by giving a Christmas donation. Your gift will be used to further our work in standing up for the human rights of Tibetans.

Click [here](#) to donate.

Tim Loughton Raises Questions in Parliament



Tim Loughton, MP for East Worthing and Shoreham and co-chair of the All Party Parliamentary Tibet Group, raised two written questions in Parliament on 3

December:

Tibet: Official Visits

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, how many official requests have been made to visit Tibet in the last 10 years; and how many of those requests were granted.

Rt Hon Mark Field, Minister of State (Foreign and Commonwealth Office),

answered "We have made repeated requests to the Chinese authorities to visit Tibet in the last 10 years, but very few of those have been agreed or acknowledged. The British Ambassador most recently visited Tibet from 26–30 June 2017, with other EU Heads of Mission." He continued, "We believe it is important [our Ambassador] is able to visit all areas – including Tibet. We continue to press for the further access for British diplomats, as well as urging the Chinese authorities to lift the visit restrictions imposed on all foreigners.

China and Tibet: Journalism

To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign

and Commonwealth Affairs, how many UK journalists have been (a) denied access to and (b) expelled from (i) Tibet and (ii) China in the last five years.

Rt Hon Mark Field answered that statistics are not held, but that access to Tibet by all foreign passport holders is heavily restricted by the Chinese authorities, including journalists. He said, "We continue to urge the Chinese authorities to lift the visit restrictions imposed on foreigners.



Drop *Dragonfly*!



Stop Google Censorship

Almost 50,000 people join Tibet groups and corporate campaigners in demanding Google immediately drop *Project Dragonfly*, the censored China search engine

Just days after the launch of a global petition, Tibet groups and international consumer group SumOfUs, have already secured nearly [50,000 signatures](#) backing their calls that Google immediately drop *Project Dragonfly*.

Global pressure has been mounting on Google since [leaked documents](#) first showed the company is developing an app which would block internet users in China from searching for information about human rights abuses committed by the Chinese government. Searches for “sensitive” words, such as human rights, Tibet, Dalai Lama and Tiananmen Square would be heavily restricted in a bid to appease the Chinese government’s ruthless crackdown on freedom of expression online. The app would also facilitate Chinese state surveillance by [linking users’ search history with their telephone numbers](#).

The decision to launch a global petition comes after a coalition of 170 Tibet Groups failed to receive any response or acknowledgment [of a letter they sent to Google’s CEO](#), Sundar Pichai, over four months ago, alerting him of the serious human rights consequences of the project, the deteriorating human rights situation for those under Chinese rule and urging him to immediately cancel the project.

Tibet Society’s Gloria Montgomery said:

“It is utterly shameful that Google’s directors are doing China’s dirty work.

The tech giant should be connecting the world through the sharing of information, not facilitating human rights abuses by a repressive government determined to crush all forms of peaceful online dissent. Google’s directors must urgently take heed of calls from employees and tens of thousands of global citizens demanding that they immediately halt project dragonfly. If they don’t, Google risks irreversible damage to its reputation.”

“Google should be our ally, not our target” – Coalition of Tibetans, Uyghurs, tech and China experts join forces to [tell Google](#) to drop *Dragonfly*, its bespoke censored search engine for China

Tibetan, Uyghur and Chinese rights groups joined human rights advocates, digital tech and ethical consumer specialists in joint media briefings in London and New York on Monday 10 December 2018, the 70th International Human Rights Day, to launch a campaign to oppose and discuss Google’s development of a censored search engine, code-named *Project Dragonfly*. Among these representatives was Jack Poulson, a senior research scientist and former Google employee.

In order to develop this controversial search engine for the Chinese market, Google must comply with China’s tight censorship laws and intrusive programme of online surveillance, effectively facilitating the Chinese government’s repressive regime and compromising their commitment to human rights. Senior research scientist, and former Google employee, Jack Poulson, joined the panel of rights activists to discuss the reasons behind his decision to resign from the

company in August 2018 after he raised ethical concerns about this project.

The panelists highlighted how Chinese authorities are already imprisoning vast numbers of people for expressing their views online and urged Google to reconsider its plans to avoid becoming part of the “Chinese censorship infrastructure”.

Dr Jack Poulson said, “In August of this year, it became clear through public reporting that Google had secretly decided to reverse course and build a version of its search engine [*Dragonfly*] which would censor for, and comply with the surveillance requests of, the Chinese government. More than 700 of current Google employees have now risked their careers by publicly standing in opposition to *Dragonfly*. It is time for Google to uphold its own principles and publicly end this regressive experiment.”

These media briefings took place in London and New York, just ahead of a US Congressional Hearing that will examine Google’s transparency and accountability related to its data collection and use and dozens of organisations and individuals have issued an Open Letter: [Response to Google on Project Dragonfly](#), ahead of this hearing.

Has Google dropped *Project Dragonfly*?

Some press reports are giving rise to speculation that *Dragonfly* may have been dropped. “Google has reportedly ‘effectively ended’ plans for a censored search engine in China” says the *BBC* in [an article](#) dated 18 December. It quotes [The Intercept](#) – the American online news site which describes itself as providing “Fearless, adversarial journalism that holds the powerful accountable” – as saying the Google has been “forced to shut down a data analysis system it was using” to feed the project. The *BBC* does go on to suggest that Google’s ambitions in China are not over, despite quoting Google as saying it has “no immediate plans to launch a Chinese search engine”.

The Intercept cites an “internal rift” within Google as the cause, saying “members of the company’s privacy team raised internal complaints that it [the data analysis system] had been kept secret from them”.

Since then, nothing has been confirmed.

The campaign continues!

Tibet News



Two Self-immolations in Tibet

Reports of two self-immolations by young men in Ngaba in Amdo, eastern Tibet have emerged. On 8 December, DrugKho, 22, self-immolated in protest against Chinese rule in Tibet outside Ngaba County Public Security Bureau. The only information that has been made available is that DrukKho is from Soruma in Ngaba and that he was a former monk from Kirti Monastery which is located near the site of his self-immolation protest, and where he was known as Choekyi Gyaltsen. A later report from the *Tibetan Review* suggested that DrukKho was alive following his protest, but no information has come through about how he is. *The Tibet Post* originally reported the incident, saying DrugKho shouted slogans calling for the long life of the Dalai Lama and freedom in Tibet after setting himself alight. They have also reported a lockdown in the area.

A second self-immolation reportedly took place the following day, 9 December. Gedun Gyatso, who is thought to be a 17 year old monk, set himself on fire in Heroes Street in Ngaba. No further details about Gedun Gyatso or his protest have been reported, although it appears that he did not survive.

Getting information about protests in Tibet is increasingly difficult as the Chinese authorities have imposed a communications clampdown and in addition they are known to harass and even detain family members and friends of people who self-immolate.

Reciprocal Access: Now Law!

[The Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act](#) is now law in the United States. It was passed unanimously by Congress on 11 December before going to President Trump who signed it into law on 19 December. It will, in theory, make Tibet more accessible for American officials, journalists and citizens.

The law targets Chinese officials responsible for keeping US diplomats, reporters and ordinary nationals out of Tibet, especially Americans with Tibetan origins, and denies them entry to the US. It is based upon the principal of reciprocity, demanding equal rights regarding entry for US citizens into the Beijing-ruled Tibetan

Autonomous Region, as Chinese citizens enjoy open access to the US.

Chinese state run media, the *Global Times*, published a statement demanding a retraction of the law. In the piece, Ling Shengli, secretary general of the International Security Study Centre at China Foreign Affairs University, said the law was “the typical US way of meddling in the internal affairs of other countries through legislation”.

Two Tibetans Beaten and Detained

Two Tibetans have been detained in Tibet in two separate incidents. Both were arrested at the roadside after being beaten by Chinese police.

The first was A-nya Sengdra, 47, a popular Tibetan activist and campaigner against local government corruption, who has been held in detention since 4 September. His lawyer says Sengdra is in very poor health, and quotes him as saying “I did not commit any crime; I simply appealed to the higher authorities on the wellbeing of the local people”. Sengdra is charged with “picking quarrels and provoking trouble”; his detention has been extended to 12 January.

Sengdra’s wife Yangkyi is quoted as saying that the arrest is “a reprisal for his activities to defend the rights of local Tibetan nomads”.

“Provoking trouble” is known to be increasingly used under article 293 of the Chinese Criminal Law to persecute activists defending human rights and criticising government policies.

The second arrest is that of Sangay Gyatso, a 17 year old monk from Kirti, who was detained on 10 December after carrying out a lone peaceful protest on the main street of Ngaba Town in Amdo. He is reported as calling for freedom for Tibet and staged his protest to coincide with Human Rights day and the anniversary of the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Passers by formed a crowd at the scene and are reported as saying that Sangay was severely beaten by police before being taken away. His whereabouts are unknown but he is believed to be in hospital.

Sangay Gyatso is from a nomadic family in Ngaba; his father’s name is Jekar Soepa and mother’s Wangkho.

HR Commissioner visits Tibet

Dr Bärbel Kofler, the German Federal Government Commissioner for Human

Rights Policy and Humanitarian Aid, visited Tibet from 6—7 December, where she chaired the German-Chinese Human Rights Dialogue in Lhasa. She is one of very few foreigners who have been allowed to visit Tibet in an official capacity. Before her visit, Ms Kofler is reported as saying that conditions in Tibet give her “great cause for concern” due to restrictions on traditional Buddhist culture and “excessive controls.”



She stated that Tibet was an appropriate place for human rights dialogue given the critical human rights situation in the country. She held that: “There are numerous reports of excessive controls, punishment of relatives for the crimes of family members, prohibition of normal religious freedom and ‘patriotic education’ which give me great cause for concern.”

China’s HR Boast

The Chinese government released a new [White Paper](#) on 12 December on the Human Rights situation in China entitled “Progress in Human Rights over the 40 Years of Reform and Opening Up in China”.

In its Foreword, the White Paper states “the CPC [Communist Party of China] has [...] worked to safeguard the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of the people, respect human values and dignity, and promote the well-rounded development of the people [...]. China has showed respect for, protected and promoted human rights in the course of reform and opening up. It has blazed a trail of development in human rights that [...] created new experiences and new progress in safeguarding human rights”. It also states that China has “earnestly fulfilled its international human rights obligations, fully participated in international human rights affairs, actively promoted reform of the global human rights governance system, worked hard for the building of a global community of shared future, and made a consistent contribution to the international cause of human rights.”

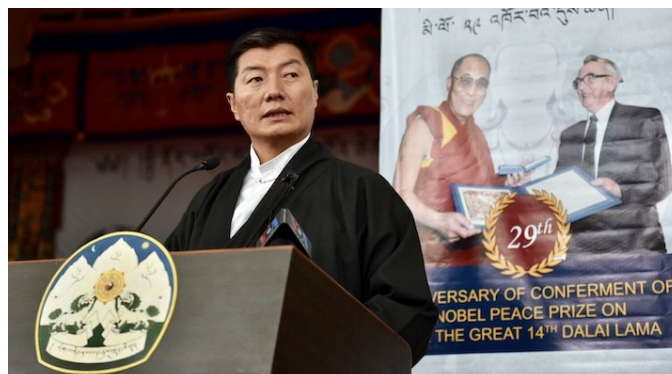
Human Rights Day

Human Rights Day, 10 December, is celebrated in the Tibetan community as the anniversary of the day His Holiness the Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize



Tibetan communities across India paid tribute to their spiritual leader with ceremonies, performances and offerings and in the Dalai Lama's Temple, Tsuglakhang, in McLeod Ganj, Dharamshala in India, Tibetans and supporters gathered for the annual Himalayan Festival. The two-day festival is organised by the Indo-Tibetan Friendship Association and the Tibetan Settlement Office, Dharamshala and featured cultural performances of Nepali, Tibetan, Punjabi, and local Gaddi folk songs and dances.

The festival was started in 1995 to celebrate the international recognition of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's peace initiatives with the award of the Nobel Prize for peace



on 10 December 1989. It is aimed at bringing different cultures and people across the Himalayas on a common forum, and foster understanding, appreciation, exchanges, and dialogue among the people of the region.

The Kashag (Cabinet) of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile released statements thanking His Holiness the Dalai Lama for his leadership and acknowledging his international work for world peace.



A Joint Solidarity Statement

UN Human Rights Declaration: 70 Year Milestone – Stand Up for Human Rights for All People Under Chinese Rule

Tibet Society was one of 21 Tibet advocacy organisations making a [statement on Human Rights Day](#), 10 December, summarised here:

As the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is commemorated, there will be much reflection on how far the world has come since 1948, when this “milestone document, which underpins all international human rights law” was created.

One United Nations Member State that stands out as a significant exception against the advancement of human rights is surely China [...] China's dedication to creating the ultimate police state is without compare. For decades, Tibet has been China's laboratory for repression; a place where the Chinese authorities have tested, and sought to perfect, systems of mass surveillance and abject control.

Faced with the reality of this crisis of repression, we can draw hope from the determined resistance of those who live under China's rule [...] we are outraged that it is also almost 70 years since China invaded or took control of Tibet, East Turkestan and Southern Mongolia, and during these decades of occupation we have witnessed wave after wave of resistance to China's brutal rule in myriad ways, including by a new generation, raised entirely within the Chinese system with no memory of freedom, risking everything to demand their human rights.

[As] the authorities try to suppress and control people through intimidation, coercion and violence, the more their desire for freedom and their resistance will grow [...] Creative non-violent strategies and tactics of defiance are being tested by some of the most courageous people in the world.

It is time for the international community to [...] stand up to the Chinese government [...] taking action together to defend human rights, democracy and free speech and stand up to Beijing as one. If they do it will be far more difficult for China to retaliate in the ways we have seen them act in the past.

If those who live directly under China's rule can, time and time again, stand up to one of the most powerful nations on earth led by a violent regime, can't the rest of the international community do more?

The Tibet Society, the world's first Tibet support group, was founded in 1959. Funded by its members, it has been working for over 50 years to seek justice for Tibet through parliamentary lobbying, campaigns and actions.

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