



Tibet Society Newsletter

February 2019

“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

We are delighted to report some changes to our Council

After 50 years as a dedicated and inspirational Society member, **Riki Hyde-Chambers** has stepped down from his 10-year stint as Society Chair. Riki’s contribution to the Society and to Tibet over the years has been immeasurable and we are delighted that he will be staying on as a member of the Society Council, and as our Hon President, so that we can continue to benefit from his wisdom and expertise.



Riki Hyde-Chambers

The new co-chairs are **Pempa Lobsang**, a professional accountant who has previously served as Chairman of the Tibetan Community in Britain and **Tomer Ben**, a publisher who has recently founded the International Jewish Buddhist Council.

Riki leaves us with this message: *This year is the sixtieth year of His Holiness’s flight and the exodus of Tibetan refugees. It is also the sixtieth year of*



Tomer Ben

the founding of the Society by British people with a first hand knowledge of a free Tibet. During the last sixty years countless thousands across the world have benefitted from His Holiness’s teaching and from Tibet’s spiritual heritage. But within Tibet, Tibetans cannot have the same access to the Dalai Lama or their spiritual heritage. So we have much to do so that the voice of Tibet can be heard.



Pempa Lobsang

International Mother Language Day: a Plea for Tashi

The Tibet Society joined a coalition of 11 Tibet and human rights support groups to send a letter to Chinese President Xi Jinping on International Mother Language Day, 21 February, with a plea for Tashi Wangchuk, the man spending years in prison for exercising his human right to ask for the children of Tibet to be educated in their mother tongue.

Some extracts from our letter follow: *The right of peoples under Chinese Communist Party rule to learn, develop and preserve their native languages is protected under China’s own constitution; Article 4, provides that ‘[e]thnic minorities’ right to learn, use and develop their own spoken and written languages is guaranteed in accordance with the law’ [...] and minority languages are protected under a range of other laws and regulations. They are also protected in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which your government ratified in 2001, most specifically in Article 13 on the right to education and Article 15, which*



protects the right to ‘take part in cultural life’.

Despite these agreements and protections, Tibetans continue to have their language rights systematically violated, as Chinese authorities increasingly marginalise the Tibetan language. [...] Learning in the Tibetan language has been removed from the curriculum in schools [...] fundamentally undermining the human rights of the Tibetan people.

The letter goes on to mention Tashi Wangchuk saying, *The appalling treatment of Tashi Wangchuk demands immediate action. As organisations dedicated to freedom of expression and*

human rights, we join the calls from around the world, from the United Nations and many of your trading partners, including the United States and the European Union, urging you to immediately and unconditionally release Tashi Wangchuk.

Wider action is also required to redress the harm done to the Tibetan language. We call on you to comply with international law and the Chinese Constitution and reverse the effective ban on the teaching of Tibetan. If the Chinese Communist Party’s stated commitment to minority rights is to be taken seriously, Tibetans must be allowed to learn and promote their language and be able to use it in their day to day lives.

We call on you to ensure that the Chinese government complies with its international obligations to respect the cultural and linguistic rights of the Tibetan people, and demand the immediate and unconditional release of Tashi Wangchuk.

Our letter was widely published around the world — the Hong Kong Free Press printed it [in full](#) and Free Tibetan Heroes posted a [video](#) on Facebook.

Confucius Institutes Under the Spotlight

The Society's [campaign](#) spotlighting Confucius Institutes is bearing fruit! We, along with Free Tibet, made a submission to the Conservative Party for their inquiry into Confucius Institutes. The [Conservative Party Human Rights Commission](#) has recently launched [a new report](#) calling for a review of “all agreements between British institutions and the Confucius Institutes”.

On the surface, Confucius Institutes are educational and cultural centres teaching Chinese language and promoting Chinese culture. They come with funding for the schools and universities concerned, but there have been numerous reports that these institutes are being used to silence discussions about “sensitive topics” including Tibet, Taiwan, Falun Gong and the Tiananmen Massacre of 1989.

These institutes are directly funded and directed by the Chinese government, which maintains overall control over the teaching materials used in classes and the teachers employed. There is growing concern worldwide that these institutes are promoting Chinese propaganda to our younger generation. An increasing number of universities have closed their Confucius Institutes in recent years.

The Tibet Society's [submission to the inquiry](#) called on the UK authorities to “seize this opportunity to highlight the ways in which these institutes are limiting discussions on Tibet in order to prevent censorship and protect freedom of expression”. Four of the ten suggestions in our submission have been included in the Conservative Party HR Commission recommendations:

- An investigation into claims that Confucius Institutes impede freedom of expression and academic thought in discussions – particularly in regard to the Tiananmen massacre, Tibet and Taiwan – in order to prevent censorship and protect freedom of expression.
- An investigation into whether British educational institutions, including universities and schools, with Confucius Institutes and classrooms, are involved in



discrimination and violate the Equality Act 2010 in their hiring processes;

- An investigation into whether Confucius Institutes are being used to monitor and intimidate students and/or teachers in the United Kingdom;
- A requirement that, where Confucius Institutes provide teaching in Chinese history or culture, a truly independent, holistic, balanced, and comprehensive curriculum is adopted, to allow for discussion of a diversity of topics, including Tibet, Taiwan and the Tiananmen massacre.

The Commission's [press release](#) dated February 18 notes that the report “calls for a review of all agreements between British institutions and the Confucius Institutes, concluding that these educational and cultural centres embedded in universities and schools around the world represent an extension of the Chinese Communist Party's propaganda efforts and ‘threaten academic freedom and freedom of expression’.

“The report notes that in 2007 the then head of propaganda for the Chinese Communist Party, Li Changchun, described Confucius Institutes as ‘an important part of China's overseas propaganda set-up’, and in 2010 Xu Lin, the director-general of the Hanban, an agency of the Ministry of Education which oversees Confucius Institutes, said that: ‘Confucius Institutes [...] are an important part of soft power. Because we want to expand our influences, we do not deny this. We agree.’ China's President at the time, Hu Jintao, endorsed Confucius Institutes as a way ‘to cultivate and prepare a group (or army) of people to make sure the

Chinese Communist Party will be in power in the future in China, and [...] increase our influence around the world’.”

The report also notes that “an increasing number [at least 27] of universities around the world have terminated contracts and closed Confucius Institutes.

“Incidents of censorship or suppression of discussion are highlighted in the report,

including the widespread ban on discussion in Confucius Institutes around the world of the three key ‘sensitive’ topics: the Tiananmen massacre; Tibet and Taiwan. Cases of employees of Confucius Institutes facing discrimination due to their beliefs are also detailed as a concern.

“The report makes ten recommendations, including calling for a suspension of further agreements between British universities and schools and Confucius Institutes until a review is completed. The report also recommends measures to ensure transparency from Confucius Institutes based in the United Kingdom.”

The report and its recommendations have been widely reported in the British and European media, reaching as far afield as the [Hong Kong Free Press](#).

[The Times](#), under the heading “Chinese whippers: Confucius Institutes are welcomed in Ireland even as other nations kick them out” writes, “The UK last month became the latest country to launch an inquiry into Confucius Institutes, centres located on university campuses around the world that are funded by the Chinese government. Beijing claims that these are educational facilities aimed at teaching the country's language and culture. Critics are concerned that they suppress free speech and spread propaganda.

“The FBI launched an investigation into American branches this year, and there is growing disquiet in Australia.” The article goes on to quote an assistant professor at Dublin University's school of politics, who says he would like “university administrators to realise that in dealing with China and inviting the Confucius Institutes on campus, you're putting academic freedom at risk.”

Chinese students are big business for Irish universities, says [The Times](#).

Tibet News



New Internment Camps

An exclusive satellite image published by *The Print* on 12 February has revealed three new forced re-education camps under construction in Tibet — camps that are becoming known by the term “gulag”, which likens them to the Soviet Russian forced labour camps of the last century. China claims that these forced labour camps are “Re-education Through Labour” (RTL) camps.

The Central Tibetan Administration (CTA)’s Human Rights Desk [reports](#) that China is now converting monasteries to gulags, or constructing new monastery gulags which target Buddhist monks and nuns in Tibet, and that they are being built on remote sites and with high security features including thick walls.

According to the CTA, innumerable Tibetans have been detained and tortured in RTL camps since 1955 for opposing the human rights violations taking place in Tibet under Chinese Communist Party rule — and that this has been occurring since before China officially acknowledged the existence of RTL camps.

The Print published a previous article on 1 August, 2018 reporting on China’s political re-education centres — in this case focusing on the camps in the Muslim majority East Turkestan (Xinjiang) which have been set up to “re-wire the political thinking of detainees”.

The International Campaign for Tibet, the Washington-based Tibetan advocacy group, published a [report](#) on 14 February, saying that a new training camp for Party workers has been opened in Tibet’s Shigatse prefecture “intended to provide ideological training to some of the thousands of Party cadres who have been deployed across Tibet in recent years in private homes, monasteries and schools and in line with Chinese leader Xi Jinping’s agenda of deepening control”.

Most Influential

HH the Dalai Lama has been listed as one of the most spiritually influential living people for 2019. The London UK based bookshop Watkins has published its *Spiritual 100 List* in its February issue of *MIND BODY SPIRIT*, placing His Holiness third on the list.



Watkins aims to celebrate spiritual teachers, activists, authors and thinkers that change the world.

Tibetans Ousted

A new report by *Radio Free Asia* states, “Tibetan university graduates are facing increasing difficulty finding jobs in Tibetan regions of China, with Han Chinese flooding job markets and civil service exams slanted more and more toward Han applicants.” Quoting their local sources, they report that few Tibetans now find employment in the government sector in Tibetan areas, nor in private companies and corporations.”

Year of Tsongkhapa

2019 will be observed as the International Year of Tsongkhapa, commemorating the 600th anniversary of his death. The Geluk International Foundation has announced that the celebration is in recognition of the “extraordinary contribution” made to the world by the renowned 14th century Tibetan Buddhist master Tsongkhapa — the founder of the Geluk tradition.

Funding Sanctioned

The US\$17 million funding promised by the United States for Tibet and the Tibetan exile community has been signed by US President Donald Trump under the Consolidated Appropriations Act 2019. US\$8 million will go to Tibetans in Tibet and Tibetan communities in China, US\$6 million for Tibetans in India and Nepal and US\$3 million to the Tibetan institutions and governance in exile. Additional programmes are in progress under the US government.

Lockdown in Tibet

Tibet is in lockdown ahead of 10 March — the 60th anniversary of Tibetan National Uprising Day. Visas for foreign visitors to Tibet are unavailable until 1 April and Tibetans are being banned from taking part in religious activities as China takes measures to avert potential unrest at this sensitive time of year. This year marks 60 years since HH the Dalai Lama fled Tibet.

Democracy in Retreat

Freedom House has released its [2019 report](#) which says that for the 13th consecutive year, there is a “consistent and ominous” decline in global freedom,

and that democracy is in retreat. China remains a country “in the spotlight”. Tibet has been ranked the second least free country in the world for the fourth year in a row, after Syria. Freedom House is based in the United States and conducts research and advocacy on democracy, political freedom and human rights.

Art 4 Peace

The Art for Peace Awards 2019 has been presented to the Tibetan Community in Exile, recognising it as an exemplary community of harmony, peace and happiness. Art 4 Peace is a non-government organisation which promotes “World Peace and Love” through arts and artists “from every culture” around the world. Kasur Ngodup Dongchung from the Bureau of HH the Dalai Lama received the award on behalf of the Tibetan people in exile.

International Support

A worldwide coalition of Tibet support groups called on their governments earlier this month to adopt a resolution addressing human rights in China, with particular focus on Tibet, Uyghur and other ethnic minority regions at the upcoming session of Human Rights Council. They refer to issues raised in China’s recent Universal Periodic Review and say the international community must demonstrate that it “will defend the universality of human rights”.

Tibetan Language Classes Banned

Officials in Nangchen County, Qinghai province have banned informal Tibetan language classes being taught in monasteries. An order was issued calling on Communist Party cadres responsible for managing monasteries in the region to “understand the harmful nature of monasteries running open schools.”

Tibetan students returning home during the winter holidays have, in recent years, brushed up on their native language by studying poetry and literature with monks and other volunteers at monasteries, these classes are not political. The Chinese state media, the *Global Times*, says the classes were “unnecessary because claims made by various monks in the area that Tibetan students studying in other parts of China have few opportunities to expose themselves to their native language were false”.



Tibet Society News and Campaigns

Tibetan Uprising Day: 60th Anniversary

The Tibetan National Uprising is commemorated annually by exiled Tibetans and Tibet supporters on 10 March, the anniversary of the 1959 uprising in Lhasa when tens of thousands were killed and HH the Dalai Lama fled to India. Our events will remember all victims of the Chinese occupation of Tibet as well as calling for an end to China's oppressive policies and for action from the international community.

Show your support for Tibet by **joining our events!**

March 4 – 10 is lobby week! You *can* make a difference — give or send our postcard (see below) to [your MP](#), or write to her/him using the text from the postcard (available from the Tibet Society).

Tuesday, March 5: Wreath-Laying Ceremony, London

The Tibet Society and the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet (APPGT) will host a Wreath-Laying ceremony at the Memorial to All Innocent Victims of Oppression, War and Violence at Westminster Abbey to remember the Tibetans who have died under China's occupation of Tibet.

Sunday March 10: Tibet Freedom March and Rally (from 1:30pm)

Gather from 1:30pm on Richmond Terrace, London SW1 (opposite Downing Street). March starts at 2:30pm. Rally from approx 4pm outside the Chinese Embassy, 49-51 Portland Place, London W1B 1JL.

Sunday March 10: Tibet Uprising Commemoration (doors open 5:30pm, finishes 9pm)

A Tibetan cultural evening and a great way to wind up after the rally! Refreshments will be available. Venue: Mahatma Gandhi Hall, Indian YMCA, 41 Fitzroy Square, London W1T 6AQ
A **Tibetan parliamentary delegation** will be in the UK during Lobby Week and the Uprising anniversary events. The delegation will be: Acharya Yeshe Phuntsok, Deputy Speaker of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile; Khenpo Jamphal Tenzin; Khenpo Kada Ngedup Sonam; Mr Sonam Norbu Ratsa.



A Date for Your Diary!

The next [APPGT](#) (All Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet) meeting is on 11 March from 12—1pm at Portcullis House in the Houses of Parliament. The delegation from the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile will be there and it is a particularly important meeting as it coincides with the 60th anniversary of Tibetan Uprising Day. Members of the public are welcome, this is a great way to show your support for Tibet in Parliament. It's free but you need to [book your ticket](#) by March 10.

Losar Celebrations!

5 February was Losar — the Tibetan New Year — with celebrations taking place around the world, although restrictions on the festivities were reported from Tibet with police in the streets of Lhasa and government workers forbidden to visit monasteries.



His Holiness the Dalai Lama greeted Tibetans inside and outside Tibet with his Losar message, "Despite facing through a challenging period, we have successfully drawn admiration and recognition for the unique culture and religion of Tibet. This is chiefly due to the valour, courage and indomitable spirit demonstrated by Tibetans inside Tibet and the unity observed by all the Tibetans worldwide. Hence I wish to thank you all for preserving the unity of the three traditional provinces of Tibet."



Tibetan Community (UK) North celebrates Losar

In Dharamshala, seat of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile, Tibetans and supporters gathered for celebrations in Tsugla Khan, the main temple

in Dharamshala, with Losar messages from the Kashag, or Cabinet, and Sikyong Lobsang Sangay, President of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile.



Celebrations with the Tibetan community UK in London

The Tibet Society, the world's first Tibet support group, was founded in 1959. The Society seeks justice for Tibet through parliamentary lobbying, campaigns and actions.

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