



Tibet Society Newsletter

March 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

Lobby Week: a Week of Events and Rallies to Support Tibet

5 March: Wreath Laying

A [wreath laying ceremony](#) was held at the Innocent Victim's Memorial at Westminster Abbey on 5 March, organised by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet in conjunction with the Tibet Society. The wreath was laid in memory of all Tibetans who have lost their lives as a result of China's occupation of Tibet since 1950 and to commemorate the 60th anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising that began in Tibet's capital city Lhasa, on 10 March 1959.

The Reverend Anthony Ball, Canon in Residence at Westminster Abbey, and Khenpo Kadrak Ngodup Sonam, Member of the Tibetan Parliament-in-exile delivered prayers to mark the occasion. Khenpo Kadrak Ngodup Sonam is part of a four-member Tibetan Parliamentary delegation who are currently visiting the UK from 4-11 March.

Hon Chris Law MP (SNP), co-chair of the APPGT, reiterated his continued support for the Tibet issue; also attending were Rt Hon Tim Loughton, MP (Con, and co-chair of the APPG); Hon Kerry McCarthy, MP and Hon Karen Lee, MP (both Lab). They were joined by members of the Tibetan Community in the UK, Free Tibet and other Tibet support groups, as well as members of the Tibet Society.

4 March: [Early Day Motion](#)

Sponsored by Chris Law, with 13 other MPs co-sponsoring

6 March: [Scottish Parliament](#)

The Tibet Society attended a

[Parliamentary Reception](#) to mark *The Future of Tibet, Heartland of Asia* Exhibition at the Scottish Parliament. This exhibition aims to raise awareness about the situation in Tibet and the importance of the region to the global environment. The reception was hosted by Linda Fabiani MSP, Speaker of the Scottish Parliament, in conjunction with the Scottish Centre for Himalayan Research. Mr Sonam Frasi, Representative of the Office of Tibet in London, said, "The future of Tibet to the whole world is far more important



than is recognised. Tibetans have preserved and looked after the plateau's ecology for centuries. Tibetans have observed an ethical, preservative approach to the mountains, lakes, rivers, its flora and fauna... [but] over the past 60 years, China has continuously exploited the natural resources of Tibet." Also at the reception were Hon Patrick Harvie MSP and leader of Scottish Green Party; Hon Ross Greer (Green); Hon Maureen Watt MSP and Hon Angus MacDonald (both SNP) as well as Free Tibet and other Tibet support groups.

10 March: [Rally & Cultural Evening](#)

Hundreds of Tibetans and supporters attended a rally and march from Westminster to the Chinese Embassy, followed by a cultural evening. Speakers and guests included the Speaker of the Tibetan Parliament-in-



exile, Acharya Yeshe Phuntsok, and Mr Sonam Frasi, Representative of the Office of Tibet in London as well as the Chair of the Tibetan Community UK. Statements from the [APPGT](#) and the [Tibet Society](#) were read during the event.

11 March: [APPGT](#)

The four visiting Tibetan Parliamentarians briefed members of the [All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet](#) at the Houses of Parliament. The meeting was chaired by Tim Loughton MP and attended by MPs Karen Lee and



Kerry McCarthy. The Tibetan delegation, led by the Deputy Speaker of the Tibetan Parliament-in-exile, Acharya Yeshe Phuntsok, briefed the meeting about the Tibetan resistance to mark the 60th anniversary since the Tibetan National Uprising of 1959 and stressed the need for continued support for the
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Lobby Week *continued*.....

APPGT continued.....

Tibetan cause. Tibetan Member of Parliament Mr Sonam Norbu Ratsa addressed questions regarding the stateless nature of the Tibetan community, notably in Nepal, where they face barriers to school enrolment, employment and celebrating their cultural traditions. The British MPs expressed their commitment to raising this issue in Parliament. The meeting was also attended by Tibet support groups, including Free Tibet, Tibet Society supporters and members of the public. The Tibet Society is the Secretariat for the APPGT.

March 14: European Call

The Tibet Society was instrumental in facilitating British support for a European Union call for the adoption in Europe of a similar act to the recently adopted United States Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act. British Members of Parliament signatories included Chris Law, Tim Loughton, Kerry McCarthy and Karen Lee.

A group of European parliamentarians [published an opinion piece](#) on 14 March in [EURACTIVE.com](#), a platform for European news and politics, calling on their countries to instigate legal proceedings to rebalance their

relationship with China by passing a similar reciprocal access act that would give the same free access for European citizens to visit Tibet as their Chinese counterparts enjoy in Europe.

The report stated that the situation in Tibet has remained critical over the last six decades, but that awareness of the conditions of Tibetan people living under Chinese rule – including the tragic self-immolation of over 150 Tibetans – has reduced over the last decade. “It’s high time that we in Europe demand unfettered access to the region for our citizens in keeping with our values and in support of a more balanced relationship with China” said the report.

The report also stated that foreign diplomats, parliamentarians, journalists and even UN officials are often denied permission to visit the Tibetan Autonomous Region, saying that even when visits do take place they are highly controlled and supervised. Conversely, Chinese citizens visiting Europe have freedom of movement anywhere within the European Union.

The signatories urged European leaders to focus more on the reciprocity of freedom that Chinese people enjoy in Europe, rather than focusing only on trade and equal access to markets for foreign investments.

Foreign Affairs Committee Inquiry

The Tibet Society, together with the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), has [submitted a report](#) to the [Foreign Affairs Committee](#) inquiry into autocracies and UK foreign policy.

The submission explores some of the ways in which the Chinese authorities are using technologies to assist with repression inside Tibet and what the UK government can do to hinder this development, including by securing access to Tibet. It looks at ways in which the Chinese government is attempting to interfere in the domestic affairs of the UK, saying that British diplomats, journalists and citizens are prevented from freely entering Tibet, but Chinese delegations, state media and tourists are able to travel without obstruction in the UK.

The submission includes recommendations on what the UK and its partners could do to address these concerns and rebalance British—Chinese relations, including: seeking access to Tibet; ascertain the level of discrimination suffered by British citizens of Tibetan origin; monitor censorship experienced by the British press in China and to request information on visas granted to Chinese delegations visiting Britain, to compare with visas granted to British delegations to Tibet.

Panchen Lama: 30 Years Old

[Gedhun Choekyi Nyima](#), the 11th Panchen Lama, will be 30 on 25 April. He was abducted by the Chinese authorities from his home in Tibet at the age of six and neither he nor any members of his family have been seen since.

The [BBC One Show](#) are to screen a short film about Gedhun Choekyi Nyima’s case **on 24 April**; the film will unveil a new forensic image of how he may look now, as well as looking at his case.

Gedhun Choekyi Nyima is Tibet’s 11th Panchen Lama, the second highest authority in Tibetan Buddhism after the Dalai Lama. On 14 May 1995 Gedhun Choekyi Nyima was recognised as the Panchen Lama by the Dalai Lama; just three days later he was ‘removed’ from his home, along with his family, by the Chinese authorities.



Tibetan Buddhists believe in reincarnation, and the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama have traditionally played leading roles in the recognition of each other’s reincarnation.

China tightly controls religion in Tibet and, despite being an atheist

government, the Chinese Communist Party has stated that it, rather than Tibetans, will control Tibet’s religious affairs; including ruling on the reincarnation of Tibetan Buddhist leaders.

This enforced disappearance is part of efforts by China to assert its political control over the reincarnation of Tibetan Buddhist leaders.

The Panchen Lama’s location remains unknown. For over two decades the Chinese government have denied requests from United Nations human rights experts and governments for access to Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his family, claiming that he was leading a normal life and does not wish to be disturbed.

In November 1995 China proclaimed a different boy to be the 11th Panchen Lama: he is overwhelmingly rejected by the Tibetan people.

Tibet News



Uprising Day Around the World

Tibetans and supporters around the world marked Tibetan Uprising Day, the 60th anniversary of the uprising in Lhasa in 1959, with rallies, speeches and marches. Parliamentarians in many countries used the occasion to call on China to stop their human rights abuses in Tibet.



In Dharamshala, Members of Parliaments from India, the European Union, Canada, Peru and Taiwan gathered in the courtyard of Tsuglagkhang, the main temple in Dharamshala, for a ceremony to mark Uprising Day. They pledged to champion the voices of Tibetans inside Tibet and declared renewed support for the Central Tibetan Administration's efforts to resume dialogue with the Chinese government based on the Middle Way Approach.

And in Delhi, 150 Tibetan protestors were arrested outside the Chinese Embassy and later released.



Restrictions in Tibet

Reports of a heavy clampdown in Tibet ahead of Uprising Day speak of restrictions on travel, questioning of pilgrims and banning of social media chat in addition to heavy policy presence and surveillance as China attempts to curb any display of Tibetan patriotism or resistance to Chinese rule. Meanwhile, the Indian *Hindu* newspaper has reported that "China is barring foreign travellers from Tibet over a period of several weeks" and that travel agencies had told them that foreign tourists would not be allowed back into Tibet until 1 April.



Women's Uprising Day

The Tibetan Women's Association in India commemorated the 60 year anniversary of Tibetan National Women's Uprising Day, which took place on 12 March 1959 in Lhasa, Tibet. The TWA event in Dharamshala kicked off at Tibetan Martyrs Pillar outside Tsuglagkhang, the main temple in Dharamshala, with speakers and an exhibition depicting 60 years of the Tibetan struggle in exile and the brutal torture faced by Tibetan women prisoners in Tibet. TWA then led a march down to lower Dharamshala to spread awareness of the events of 12 March, 1959 and to remember thousands of brave Tibetan women who protested in front of the Potala Palace on that day. TWA's message is that the younger generation of Tibetan women should strive to fulfil their dream of freedom for the people of Tibet.

On 12 March 1959, thousands of Tibetan women took to the streets of Lhasa, protesting against the illegal occupation of Tibet by the Chinese regime. Tibetans observe the day as Tibetan Women's Uprising day.

China Under Scrutiny at the UN

The 40th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) took place in Geneva between 25 February and 22 March. China is a member and is under scrutiny for its human rights practices, particularly in the regions of Tibet and Xinjiang.

With reference to China, members of the Council had previously made 350 recommendations regarding human rights practices being conducted there, including reference to the rule of law and freedoms of expression, assembly, association, and religion. Members of the Chinese delegation merely "noted" these proposals.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Ms Michelle Bachelet told the Council on 6 March that her office was continuing to seek full access to carry out an independent investigation into numerous recent reports of enforced disappearances and arbitrary detentions, particularly in Xinjiang – in January, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson claimed that UN officials would be welcome in Xinjiang so long as they obeyed Chinese law. In a typically ambiguous official statement to the Council, China welcomed anyone "free of prejudice" to visit Xinjiang or Tibet but warned of any attempts by visitors to undermine social stability in those regions.

Alongside the Council session Dhondup Wangchen and a Tibetan delegation led a side event to highlight 60 years of gross human rights violations in Tibet. Dhondup, who served a six-year arbitrary prison sentence for making an exposé documentary about the situation in Tibet prior to the Beijing Olympics in 2008, spoke about the ongoing suppression of human rights and freedom of expression in Tibet and paid tribute to those continuing to peacefully resist the Chinese occupation of Tibet to this day.



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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