



Tibet Society Newsletter

May 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

ICT President Briefs Parliamentary Group

The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet (APPGT) hosted a [roundtable discussion](#) on May 9th, led by Matteo Mecacci, President of the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), who presented the new ICT report [Access Denied: China's enforced isolation of Tibet](#). The report highlights the restrictions on access to Tibet for foreign media and human rights observers and calls for reciprocity of access as well as "an end to policies restricting Tibetan freedom of movement and speech". It urges "a deeper engagement by governments worldwide on China's Tibet policy".

Matteo Mecacci said, "It is crucial that the principle of reciprocity is implemented not just in terms of trade and the economy, but also in relation to freedom of movement, information and the exchange of peoples." The round table discussion



L to R: Tim Loughton, Chris Law, Matteo Mecacci and Riki Hyde Chambers

looked at the human rights issues arising from China's policies and discussed how such measures, which are highly political in nature, reflect an unwillingness by China to engage in reciprocal relations with other states, including the UK.

Matteo Mecacci is currently meeting parliamentarians across Europe to discuss the ICT report's findings and encourage MPs to take action. While European leaders and Parliamentarians, including French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela

Merkel, have referred to reciprocity as a key principle in terms of their bilateral relations with China, discussions have often stopped short of addressing the wider issues.

The APPGT group, which is co-chaired by Chris Law, MP for Dundee West and Tim Loughton, MP for East Worthing and Shoreham, saw one of its largest turnouts in over five years. An APPG is a group of MPs representing all major parties who wish to pursue a particular topic or interest. The Tibet Society works closely with the APPGT—it is one of the ways the Society can effectively work with MPs to inform them of the issues and lobby them to take action. Meetings are open to the public.

The ICT is based in the United States and works to promote human rights and democratic freedoms for the people of Tibet.

5 Years For Tashi Wangchuk



The Tibet Society has joined with Tibet advocacy groups, human rights campaigners and governments worldwide in [condemning the five-year prison sentence](#) handed to Tibetan language advocate Tashi Wangchuk.

They have launched an urgent [petition](#) to the five governments who attempted to observe Tashi's trial in

January this year but were denied access—the EU, US, UK, Germany and Canada—urging them to make strong, collective representations to the Chinese authorities for Tashi's release and to support his stated intention to appeal against his sentence.

Tashi, who has already spent two years in prison, was sentenced on 22 May on the charge of 'inciting separatism'. His 'crime' was to campaign for the right for Tibetan children living in Tibet to be educated in their mother tongue – as is their

right under the Chinese constitution and international law. He has never called for independence for Tibet.

Tashi was originally detained on 27 January 2016, soon after appearing in a *New York Times* video and his trial took place on 4 January this year. He is now not due to be released until January 2021.

Tashi's lawyers, who had limited access to him during his pre-trial detention, reported that during his time in prison he has been tortured and beaten and his family threatened by his interrogators.

The Panchen Lama: Still Missing

The Tibet Society submitted a written question on the fate of Tibet's missing Panchen Lama to the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth



Affairs on 16 May (through Chris Law, MP): "In light of a previous commitment

by the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs in 2000 to seek to obtain photographic evidence of Tibet's missing Panchen Lama, what steps is he taking to secure this date-verifiable material from the Chinese authorities?"

Tibet's Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, has been missing for 23 years. On the anniversary of his abduction, aged six, from Tibet on 17 May, Tibetans and Tibet groups have launched a new report [Missing for Over 20 Years](#). The report calls on world leaders to act "urgently and robustly" to confront China and demand that they:

- provide evidence of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima's well-being and specific whereabouts in the form of date-verifiable material.
- Allow independent access by a government or UN Special Procedures body to meet him.
- Release him unconditionally and guarantee his future safety.

The Panchen Lama is the second most senior figure in Tibetan Buddhism and since his abduction from his home by Chinese authorities the west has heard nothing despite repeated requests from world government officials, United Nations human rights experts and Tibet support groups.

Tibet News

Team Tibet in London!

The Tibet Football team has arrived in London ready to play in the Confederation of Independent Football Associations (CONIFA) 2018 World Cup. CONIFA is an international organisation responsible for the 2018 World Football Cup for states, minorities, stateless peoples and regions not affiliated with FIFA, the international governing body of association football that organises the World Cup. This year's CONIFA tournament is the biggest ever played outside FIFA with 16 teams from four continents taking part.



Since their arrival in London, the team has played friendly matches with the London Tibetan Football Club, Tottenham Hotspur's Youth Academy, and another Tibetan team from London as well as meeting members of the Tibetan community in Britain and attending a prayer service at the Tibetan Peace Garden with a reception afterwards at the Tibet Foundation.

Unprecedented Restrictions

The sacred month of Saka Dawa takes place in May and in Tibet the Chinese government has enforced a series of [unprecedented restrictions](#) this year in Lhasa, with officials on 24-hour watch for Tibetans engaging in devotional activities, according to the Chinese state media [Global Times](#). A leaked document reveals an order in eastern Tibet aimed at preventing Tibetan children from taking part in the festival. Issued by the Education Affairs Committee, the Municipal Peoples Government and the Municipal Education Bureau of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) it tells Tibetan parents not to take their children to monasteries or let them engage in any other religious events during this month. One school in Tibet is reported by *Radio Free Asia* as sending a notice to parents: "If your children miss any days of school, and are later found to have been

secretly taken to a monastery or religious festival, your family will be reported directly to the City Education Bureau... Action will be taken against anyone not complying with this order".

RFA reports that Tibetans are still observing this holy month despite the restrictions, another of their sources saying that on May 16, "an unusually large number of Tibetans were out walking devotional circuits on both the outer and inner ring roads of the Barkhor in Lhasa's old city centre".

A Monk's Testimony

The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) have published a report of a first-hand account of conditions inside the Chinese "re-education centres" in Tibet. A former monk, who remains anonymous for security reasons, and who spent four months in a re-education centre in Sog County in the Tibet Autonomous Region, has given evidence to TCHRD which validates anecdotal evidence collected by them over recent years.

The monk said he was among many other monks and nuns forced to abandon their religious studies, to attend the training – or their families would face severe sanctions.

He said the re-education centre was "a prison" and the education aimed at neutralising his faith and loyalty for His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Classes were conducted in Chinese and involved self-criticism. Inmates were subjected to torture, food deprivation, sleep deprivation, prolonged wall standing and beatings; he reported sexual abuse, particularly targeted at nuns. The food was so bad it made them ill. He spoke of people, "beaten up so severely with electric batons that they would lose consciousness" only to be revived and beaten again.

The monk finished, "Tibetans are human beings and are entitled to the right to freedom [...] We were arrested and detained without committing any crime. No legal proceeding [...] was observed".

Tsering Dhondup Gonkatsang

Tsering Dhondup Gonkatsang, a tireless champion of the Tibetan people, an activist for freedom in Tibet and a passionate and inspiring teacher, died in a car accident on 27 April on his way to work.

Tsering was born in December 1951 in Sharkhog in eastern Tibet. He served as

a teacher and headmaster at Tibetan Children's Village school in Dharamshala, India, and then, following higher education here in the UK he spent ten years teaching English at an International school in London. From 2001 he taught



Tibetan and organised cultural events as Instructor in Tibetan Language in the Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Oxford. He was also a Tibetan-English translator, filmographer, consultant for television and radio, Trustee of several Tibet related charities and published research on topics ranging from Tibetan medicine to historical documents.

His friends knew him as humble, joyful, compassionate and highly knowledgeable while his colleagues remember him for his energy, his enthusiasm and creativity as a teacher, and his inimitable sense of humour. To Tibetans, he was known as Genla (The Teacher). He was also renowned as a talented painter, writer and sportsman.

More Detentions in Tibet

Chinese authorities in Diru County in the Nagchu Prefecture in Tibet have detained and beaten 30 Tibetans, one of whom remains missing. They were detained for protesting against a mining project at the sacred mountain in Shakchu, Sebra Zagyen. In February, the village leader Karma refused to sign a document which would enable the mining to proceed and was detained—when news of the ensuing protest leaked, everyone suspected of involvement was detained on 2 April, the news has only emerged now because of communication restrictions in Tibet. The mountain is sacred and also home to several endangered species. Mining could also endanger the water supply for people living there.

Gangye, a Tibetan man in his 50s living in Trido Town in Sog County in Kham, was detained on 8 May after books by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and video CDs of the Kalachakra initiations by His Holiness were found in his house. His family say he has been under surveillance for some time and he and his two sons have been questioned in the past. His current whereabouts are unknown.



Tibet Society News

New Internship Programme Gets Underway

The first Tibetan internship programme to be launched in UK Parliament is underway and the two Tibet Society interns have been appointed, Thupten Thupten will be working with Chris Law, the Scottish National Party Member for Dundee West and Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet, and Tenzin Daesel Tashi will be with Fabian Hamilton, Shadow Minister for Peace and Disarmament and former Chair of the APPGT. Both MPs are committed Tibet supporters and this is a wonderful opportunity for our two interns.

Tenzin is just completing her degree in International Relations at the University of Westminster and has received awards for her community and human rights volunteer work with, among other organisations, Tibet Watch and Amnesty International. And as a member of the Tibetan Community in Britain Dance Group she has danced for His Holiness the Dalai Lama in the Royal Albert Hall!

Thupten is no stranger to campaigning for his country, having served as President of the Tibetan Youth congress in Delhi. Here in Britain, Thupten attended the London Metropolitan University and later Cambridge for his MPhil in Development Studies and has gained a wealth of experience and expertise in political and human rights issues.

We will hear more from Thupten and Tashi as their internship progresses.

Raising the Tibetan Flag

The Tibetan flag was raised on 6 May in Milton Keynes at the Nipponzan Myohoji Buddhist Temple for the fifth



consecutive year, organised by local Tibet supporter Catherine Mostyn Scott. Chonpel Tsering, the representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in the UK, everyone present, and their friends and families, for their support throughout the years. The Mayor of Milton Keynes, David Hopkins, said that Tibetans inside Tibet could be imprisoned for flying the Tibetan national flag and he was there to show his solidarity with Tibetans. The event ended with a team of flag bearers running around the lake to raise awareness of the flag.

Confucius Conundrum....

The Tibet Society will be submitting evidence to the forth-coming [Conservative Party Human Rights Commission Inquiry](#) into China's Confucius Institutes and their influence around the world, particularly in relation to their potential impact on academic freedom, freedom of expression and other human rights.

Detailed research by Tibet Society and Students for a Free Tibet has uncovered the extensive use of "soft power" by the Chinese government to influence the activities of UK universities through Confucius Institutes.

In Britain, there are at least 29 Confucius Institutes attached to major universities and 127 Confucius 'classrooms' in schools. There are 500 worldwide. Norman Baker, President of the Tibet Society, says: "The price our universities are paying for the money they receive is to allow the compromising of academic freedom and the application of employment terms which are totally inappropriate and probably illegal."

The Commission is screening the documentary film [In the Name of Confucius](#), followed by an oral evidence hearing/panel discussion, with invited experts to appear as witnesses.

Confucius Institutes exist to 'teach Chinese language and promote Chinese culture' – a Chinese equivalent of the British Council. Unlike their western counterparts, Confucius Institutes are directly funded and directed by the Chinese government.

The Inquiry will ask: Are Confucius Institutes a benign and even positive presence, enhancing better understanding and cooperation with China, or a negative influence, threatening and restricting freedom of expression, critical thinking and democratic values? It will examine to what extent Confucius Institutes give China influence in academic institutions, and what the implications are. It will look at the allegation that Confucius Institutes exist to spread the Chinese Communist Party's propaganda and to silence dissenting voices and examine the reasons why some educational authorities around the world are terminating relationships with Confucius Institutes.

The Conservative Party Human Rights Commission is a body established to highlight international human rights concerns, and thereby inform, advise and enhance the party's foreign policy, and to ensure that the importance of fundamental human rights is kept high on the political agenda.

Get Involved!

We value every single member of the Society, it is your support that enables us to carry on with our work for Tibet. Would you like to get more involved?



One very effective way you can get involved is to persuade just one person to

join the Society: every name counts when we lobby on behalf of you all. What else can you do? Join our vigils, protests and events, it sends a powerful message and it's fun! Or could you help with research or writing?

Want to know more?

Do you want to find out more? Check out these websites:

- [Free Tibet](#)—our partner UK-based Tibet support group
- [The UK Tibetan Community](#)
- [Tibetan Government-in-Exile](#)
- His Holiness the Dalai Lama's [official website](#)
- [Contact magazine](#)—up to date news of Tibet and Tibetan issues
- The [High Peaks Pure Earth](#) website provides insightful commentary on Tibet-related news and issues as well as translations from writings posted on blogs and social media in Tibet and the People's Republic of China.

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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