



# TIBET LOBBY DAY

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## Current Situation in Tibet

### **TIBET-CHINA CONFLICT IS UNRESOLVED**

Irrefutable historic evidence confirms Tibet has always been an independent country. After a military invasion, the Chinese Communist Party claimed dominion over Tibet and rules over it with an iron fist. The Dalai Lama and the elected Tibetan leadership in exile advocate for the pragmatic Middle Way approach that avoids extremes to resolving this conflict. Tibetan leadership has proposed that Tibet would remain part of the People's Republic of China, while maintaining meaningful autonomy over their own affairs. This would bring long-term stability to the region by addressing the needs of both parties.

However, since 2010 the Chinese government has stymied negotiations by imposing poison pill preconditions such as demanding that the Dalai Lama proclaim that Tibet has been part of China “since ancient times”, which historical data and scholarly research demonstrates is inaccurate. Thus, the Tibet-China conflict remains unresolved.

### **HUMAN RIGHTS AND FREEDOM OF RELIGION**

China's vision of a world without human rights is on display in Tibet. Under Xi Jinping, human rights conditions are deteriorating dramatically in China, Tibet, East Turkestan, and Hong Kong. Freedom House's latest report lists Tibet as one of the least-free countries on Earth, worse than even North Korea. The State Department's 2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, released in early 2023, reported significant human rights abuses in Tibet under Chinese rule, including unlawful or arbitrary killings by the government; disappearances; torture and cases of cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment or punishment by the government; arbitrary arrest or detention; political prisoners; transnational repression against individuals located in another country; serious restrictions on freedom of expression and media, including censorship; serious restrictions on internet freedom including site blocking; substantial interference with the freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association; severe restrictions on freedom of religion or belief, despite nominal constitutional protections voided by regulations restricting religious freedom and effectively placing Tibetan Buddhism under central government control; severe restrictions on freedom of movement, and the inability of citizens to change their government peacefully through free and fair elections.

The State Department in its 2021 Report on International Religious Freedom released June 2, 2022, concluded that the Chinese Communist Party's “regulations control all aspects of Tibetan Buddhism, including religious venues, groups, personnel, and

schools, and which authorities said included Tibetans living outside the country particularly the Dalai Lama.”

Tibetan Buddhism focuses on a system of rigorous study that is being severely restricted by Chinese policies. Fortunately, the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan diaspora have been able to preserve and practice their religious heritage. Sadly, within Tibet this is not the case. Chinese policies threaten Tibetan Buddhism’s very survival. Tibetans are regularly persecuted for their beliefs. They can be arrested simply for owning photographs of the Dalai Lama. Inside Chinese prisons Tibetans are beaten and tortured for their beliefs. China is trying to coopt the Tibetan reincarnation system to further enervate Tibetan’s fundamental religious rights.

According to reports, the Chinese government has separated up to 1 million Tibetan schoolchildren from their families and communities, forcibly transferring them to boarding schools in Han Chinese provinces where they are cut off from learning their mother tongue, uprooting their ability to access their own language, religion, and culture. This inflicts severe trauma on the children, and if this generation can’t learn the ways of its own people, the Tibetan identity could soon disappear inside Tibet.

Combined, the above violations risk achieving the Chinese government’s goal of erasing the Tibetan’s ancient and unique civilization.

## **ENVIRONMENT DEGRADATION & WATER SECURITY**

Tibet is a unique and beautiful place rich with varied ecosystems, biodiversity and stunning landscapes, also boasting a host of natural resources China lacks. The most illustrative example of the Communist party’s plunder of these resources is water. The Tibetan Plateau is the source of the region’s major rivers, the healthy flow of which nearly 2 billion people rely on for food and economic development. Yet the CCP has and continues to erect numerous massive hydroelectric damming projects that allow literal control of the tap for South and Southeast Asia.

A telling example of Chinese authorities disregard for the environment, human rights, and religious freedom is unfolding before the world’s eyes. Currently, Tibetans are protesting in mass against a dam construction project in the eastern Tibetan area of Dege (Derge). The hydroelectric project will force the relocation of approx. 2,000 Tibetans from their ancestral lands and lead to the destruction of six monasteries holding numerous artifacts of religious significance, including murals that date back to the 13th century. In response to the protests, on February 23, Chinese authorities detained more than 1,000 Tibetans by force and now have deployed armed troops.

## **SELF-IMMOLATIONS**

An unprecedented wave of self-immolations in Tibet had begun after the Chinese government cracked down on human rights following mostly peaceful widespread protests by Tibetans in 2008.

Almost all the self-immolators called for freedom in Tibet and the return of the Dalai Lama to Tibet while sacrificing themselves. The Dalai Lama and the elected Tibetan leadership in exile have discouraged acts of self-immolation. They have also said that the underlying grievances of the Tibetan people need to be addressed.

However, instead of responding to the underlying causes, since 2012, Chinese authorities opted to punish those allegedly ‘associated’ with self-immolators, including friends, families and even entire communities, resulting in a spike in political imprisonments 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.

