



**General Assembly**

Distr.  
GENERAL

A/HRC/7/NGO/23  
22 February 2008

ENGLISH ONLY

---

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL  
Seventh session  
Agenda item 3

**PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF ALL HUMAN RIGHTS, CIVIL,  
POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS, INCLUDING  
THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT**

**Written statement\* submitted by International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR),  
a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is  
circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[19 February 2008]

---

\* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the  
submitting non-governmental organization(s).

## **The Question of Religious Freedom in Tibet**

The Chinese authorities recognize that freedom of religion represents a basic human right as provided in its constitution and in the UN Charter, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action. The government's 2004 white paper on Regional Ethnic Autonomy in Tibet states, "Tibetans fully enjoy the freedom of religious belief." In reality, however, the government maintains tight controls on religious practices and places of worship in Tibetan areas.

### ***Incidents of Repression of Religious Freedom in Tibet***

Repression of freedom of religion by the Chinese government is not limited to the Tibetan Buddhist monastic community. It also extends to secular Tibetan society. Most Tibetans are not monks or nuns - they are farmers, herders, workers, traders, business operators, professionals, students, teachers, and government staff. In the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) about 98 percent of Tibetans live in secular society.[1] Despite government claims that Tibetans enjoy complete freedom to practice their religion, religious ceremonies and activities continue to be restricted in Tibet. For several years now, the Chinese authorities prevented ordinary Tibetans from participating in public religious observances, including the sacred Saka Dawa and Gaden Ngamchoe, birthday of the Dalai Lama and the 11th Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima.

For instance, on 12 December 2006, China's Lhasa Evening News published a joint announcement by the Office of the Chinese Communist Party Committee of Lhasa City and the Office of the People's Government of Lhasa City, in which Tibetan government employees, retired cadres and staff, members of collectives, and other workers and students were banned from taking part in the celebrations of the Gaden Ngachoe festival on 15 December, commemorating the death of the founder of the Gelugpa school of Tibetan Buddhist tradition.[2] The announcement concluded with the statement (in Chinese): "Everyone must conscientiously respect the government and Party committee's demand." [3]

In another directive, the Lhasa Party Committee in May 2007 forbade Tibetan school children in some Lhasa neighbourhoods from participating in Tibetan Buddhism's most

---

[1] <<Tibet>> Information Network, Background Briefing Papers: Documents and Statements from <<Tibet>> 1996-1997, 1998, 45. An article in the Tibet Daily, dated 4 November 1996, stated that there were 1,787 monasteries and nunneries in the TAR and 46,000 monks and nuns. According to the Tabulation on Nationalities of the year 2000 Population Census of <<China>> (Table 10-4), the Tibetan population of the TAR was 2,427,168 in 2000. (If the government enumeration of monks and nuns is accurate, then 1.9 percent of the TAR Tibetan population are Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns, and 98 percent are living in secular society.)

[2] The Dalai Lama belongs to the Gelugpa ('Yellow Hat') tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. When Tsongkhapa passed away in December 1419 at the age of sixty, he left 18 volumes of collected teachings which serve as the basis for studies in the Gelugpa tradition.

[3] <http://www.savetibet.org/news/newsitem.php?id=1077>

holy day, Saga Dawa,[4] or wearing “amulet threads” (blessing strings) received at Buddhist sites.[5] The prohibition continued as in 2006, when the government threatened to fire government employees who defied the ban, according to a U.S. Department of State report.[6]

On 15 October 2007, the Chinese authorities of Lhasa City issued an official order requiring students and government employees to refrain from seeking leave from their schools and offices to participate in the customary *Sangsol* ritual (an incense burning ceremony that involves offering tsampa in the air for success and good fortune) or else face expulsion from school, salary cuts, and even termination of their job.

On 14 October 2007, the day prior to this notice, Lhasa City authorities cancelled the on-going prayer session and dispersed the many elderly Tibetans who usually assemble to perform prayers outside of the Ramchoe Temple. An official notice was also issued by the Lhasa City government office to all the heads of the municipal neighbourhood committees, directing people from their respective areas to refrain from taking part in any religious activities, such as the customary observance of *Sangsol*, holding group prayers at monasteries, or any act of revelry that week in light of the US Congressional Gold Medal Award Ceremony for the Dalai Lama to be held in Washington, DC on 17 October 2007. The regulation and control over monasteries in the surrounding areas of Lhasa City were intensified accordingly.

On the morning of 17 October 2007, thousands of People’s Armed Police (PAP) personnel were deployed at the Drepung Monastery on the outskirts of the Tibetan capital, Lhasa, to prevent monks from peacefully honouring their spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, who was awarded the highest civil honour in the United States of America, on the same day.

### ***Patriotic Education Campaign***

The Chinese authorities continue to dictate “patriotic education” activities for monks and nuns on a regular basis at monasteries and nunneries. There have been several credible reports in the recent times about work teams conducting mandatory political training for monks and nuns at specific religious sites in advance of important anniversaries or events. Although the government does not contribute to the monasteries’ operating funds, it retains management control of monasteries through the Democratic Management Committees (DMC) and local Religious Affairs Bureaus (RAB). In this way, it oversees the daily operations of major monasteries.

In an August 2006 interview, Zhang Qingli, the party secretary of the Tibet Autonomous Region, attacked the Dalai Lama’s Buddhist credentials, accusing him of being a “false

---

[4] Saga Dawa falls on the 15th day (the full moon) of the 4th month of the Tibetan lunar calendar. The day commemorates both the enlightenment and passing away of the Buddha. Saga Dawa fell on June 11 in 2006 and on May 31 in 2007.

[5] <http://www.tchrd.org/press/2007/ps20070519.html>

[6] U.S. Department of State, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices — 2006, China.

“Government officials reportedly ordered Tibetans working for the government to refrain from going to temples during the Saga Dawa festival in May or risk losing their jobs.”

religious leader” who has led Tibetans astray and done “many bad things . . . that contradict the role of a religious leader” since he fled into exile in 1959.[7]

In a May 2007 speech to about 600 party members in Lhasa, Zhang stated that “From beginning to end . . . we must deepen patriotic education at temples, comprehensively expose and denounce the Dalai Lama clique’s political reactionary nature and religious hypocrisy.”[8] Patriotic education (“love the country, love religion”) is an open-ended campaign that began in 1996 with the goal of ending the Dalai Lama’s religious authority among Tibetans.

Patriotic education sessions take place periodically at different religious institutions throughout the Tibet region. During the sessions, which can last weeks or even months at a time, monks and nuns are required to pass examinations on political texts, to agree that Tibet is historically a part of China, to accept the legitimacy of the Panchen Lama installed by the Chinese government, and to denounce the Dalai Lama.

The Labrang Monastery, a large and historically important monastery in Gansu Province, was subjected to “patriotic re-education” in the spring of 2007. During this period, political indoctrination replaced religious studies and the refusal by resident clergy to denounce the Dalai Lama resulted in the expulsion of hundreds of monks. As a result, the number of clergy was reduced to about 1,300 from a total of 4’000-5’000 monks before the “patriotic education” session began. Jigme Gyatso, a monk from the Labrang monastery, revealed through a telephone interview in March 2007, that “year by year, the practice of teaching and studying of the Dharma [the Buddhist religion] is deteriorating.” [9] The confiscation by the Chinese authorities of the basic sustenance of the monastery, formerly derived from its herds of cattle and sheep, grazing-land and woodland, has made the monastery dependent upon donations from tourists and pilgrims.

In mid May 2007, in addition to numerous ordinary monks, the chief abbot Khenpo Tsanor, (70) of Dungkyap Monastery in Gade County, Golok Prefecture, Qinghai Province was forced to step down from his position as chief abbot for refusing to sign a document denouncing the Dalai Lama.

### ***Measures for the ‘Regulation on Religious Affairs’***

The 56 articles of the “Tibet Autonomous Region Implementing Measures for the ‘Regulation on Religious Affairs’” (hereafter TAR 2006 Measures), issued by the 11th Standing Committee of the Tibet Autonomous Region People’s Government on 19 September 2006, entered into force on 1 January 2007.[10] Instead of guaranteeing the freedom of religious belief as claimed, the TAR 2006 Measures enforce compliance with

---

[7] “TAR Party Secretary Accuses the Dalai Lama of Being a ‘False Religious Leader,’” CECC, China Human Rights and Rule of Law Update, September 2006, 14.

[8] “China Vows to Tighten Security in Tibet,” 20 May 2007, Reuters.

[9] “Tibetan Monastery Feels Ever-Tighter Curbs,” 9 March 2007, Radio Free Asia. Available at: [http://www.rfa.org/english/news/social/2007/03/09/tibet\\_monastery/](http://www.rfa.org/english/news/social/2007/03/09/tibet_monastery/)

[10] An English translation of the complete text of the “Tibet Autonomous Region Implementing Measures for the ‘Regulation on Religious Affairs’” is available at:

<http://www.cecc.gov/pages/virtualAcad/index.phpd?showsingle=84503>

The Chinese text is available at the website of the Legislative Affairs Office Information Center:

<http://www.chinalaw.gov.cn/jsp/contentpub/browser/contentpro.jsp?contentid=co1016799055>

government regulations and policies with respect to religious organizations, religious personnel, and religious citizens. In particular, it provides officials with the legal backing to intensify restrictions and subjects religious organizations, personnel, and citizens to state control and repression.

For instance, authorities can initiate punishments for “illegal activities such as those that harm national security or public security,” a catch-all phrase that can include expressions of religious devotion to the Dalai Lama, or for sharing, viewing, and listening to any type of recorded media about him. Another punitive measure with potentially broad impact empowers local governments to order religious organizations to “disqualify” as a registered religious professional any monk or nun who, in “serious circumstances,” does not fulfill regulatory requirements on travel.[11]

In mid-May 2007, citing the violation of Articles 13 and 48 of the TAR 2006 Measures, a colossal Guru Rinpoche statue nearing completion at the Samye Monastery, Dranak County, Lhoka Prefecture, Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) was forcibly demolished.[12] In an attempt to avoid the leakage of the information, Chinese People's Armed Police (PAP) immediately transported the rubbles of the statue to an unknown place. PAP also banned pilgrims, devotees and foreign tourist from visiting Samye Monastery.

A further instrument of state control was introduced under the title of "Management Measures for the Reincarnation of Living Buddhas in Tibetan Buddhism", issued by the administrative affairs conference of the State Administration of Religious Affairs on 13 July 2007, and implemented on 1 September 2007.[13] In stipulating that all reincarnated lamas (tulkus) must have government approval, the measures deliberately target one of the core belief systems of Tibetan Buddhism. As such, they reveal the government's agenda to undermine and supplant the Tibetan religious hierarchy and weaken the authority of legitimate Tibetan religious leaders including the Dalai Lama.

In view of the above situation, the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR) urges the UN Human Rights Council to take the necessary steps to ensure that the Chinese authorities:

1. Allow the Tibetan people to freely practice its religion as granted in its Constitution and guaranteed by other major international covenants and treaties, to which it is party;
2. Put an end to the “patriotic education” campaign;
3. Refrain from demolishing religious statues and release unconditionally all Tibetan political prisoners;
4. Receive the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief on a follow-up fact-finding mission to the country.

-----

---

[11] Articles 46 and 53, respectively. For the text of the Articles cited, see Footnote 10.

[12] <http://www.tchrd.org/press/2007/ps20070604.html>

[13] An English translation of the full text has been published at the following address:

<http://www.savetibet.org/news/newsitem.php?id=1159>

For a copy of the Chinese text, see: <http://news.sohu.com/200070802/n251386214.shtml>