

FREE TIBET



Issue 94 February 2023

issn 1360-4864

freetibet.org



STAND WITH UYGHURS
STAND WITH TIBETANS
STAND WITH HONG KONGERS
STAND WITH TAIWANESE
STAND WITH UKRAINIANS
STAND WITH IRANIAN
STAND WITH ALL THE
PEOPLE RESISTING VIOLENCE
DICTATORSHIP OPPRESSION



• One banner, one message • Bringing Tibet to COP27 • Tibet's great DNA robbery •

CEO LETTER



Dear friends,

We do not stand with Tibet because it is easy. We do not stand with Tibet because it will give us some quick satisfaction. We stand with Tibet because it matters. It matters because of Tibet's unique culture and religion. It matters because Tibet is one of the least free countries on earth. And it matters because human rights and human beings matter.

Sometimes it is hard to see we are making a difference. But when I looked back since the last magazine I can definitely see our impact:

- Sources have informed us that our reporting and advocacy on repression in Drago County has had a genuine impact there.
- We revealed what the 'zero-Covid' lockdown is like in Lhasa, sharing rare video footage with the world.
- The UK government and Edinburgh City Council have moved to ban the Hikvision cameras used to monitor Tibetans.
- The UK's Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has backed our decade-long campaign and pledged to ban Confucius Institutes (China's propaganda and espionage centres disguised as academic institutions).
- G7 foreign ministers included Tibet in their closing statement after 19,000 of us signed a petition addressed to them.
- We were able to raise the climate crisis in Tibet with world leaders and experts at the COP27 climate negotiations in Egypt.
- **STOP PRESS:** Our objections to the new Chinese embassy being built in London resulted in the planning committee rejecting the application to build it!

This is only what I can share with you at this time. Much of our work has to be done under wraps to avoid endangering Tibetans and other allies. The trust and belief our supporters have in us mean we can do integral work behind closed doors while still making a difference. This work ensures that we stand together in unity with Tibetans and makes sure the Chinese Communist Party is held to account for their abhorrent occupation of Tibet.

Your support makes this work possible. Thank you for standing with Tibet at this crucial time.

Sam Walton, Free Tibet Chief Executive Officer

CONTENTS

3 Hikvision getting the boot

The UK government takes a stand against Hikvision.

4 One banner, one message

Free Tibet show solidarity with China's 'Bridge Man'.

6 Campaigns update

Protect Tibet's Children; Ban Chen; Confucius Institutes.

7 Advocacy update

Strengthening the advocacy for Tibet.

8 Bringing Tibet to COP27

Tibet Watch's Senior Researcher, Tenzin Choekyi, talks about her experience at COP27.

10 Tibet's great DNA robbery

How a US company is enabling China's repression in Tibet.

12 News from Tibet

Tibetan arrested for not registering WeChat group; Tibetan monk and former prisoner dies from wounds; Further arrests of Tibetans caught in possession of Dalai Lama images; Torture leaves prisoner in critical condition; Two monks imprisoned for religious offerings.

14 How we are supporting...

The Tibetan Community in Britain.

Front cover: Han-Chinese protesters express their solidarity with all those oppressed by the Chinese Communist Party including Tibetans at a protest in Trafalgar Square, London, October 2022.

Editor: Kelsi Farrington
Design: Catherine Quine
Print and mailing: Intygra

© Free Tibet 2023



ER82, The Link,
Effra Road,
London SW2 1BZ
+44 (0)330 016 8404
mail@freetibet.org
freetibet.org

Our vision is a free Tibet in which Tibetans are able to determine their own future and the human rights of all are respected. Free Tibet campaigns for an end to China's occupation of Tibet and for international recognition of Tibetans' right to freedom. We mobilise active support for the Tibetan cause, champion human rights and challenge those whose actions help sustain the occupation.

HIKVISION GETTING THE BOOT



The UK government takes a stand against Hikvision with Edinburgh City Council banning it entirely.

Our campaign to ban Hikvision is seeing victory after victory. In our last issue, we were proud to report that two UK government departments had committed to eliminating cameras manufactured by the Chinese state-owned security giant from their premises. Since then, the pace to ditch Hikvision across the board has only quickened.

In a stunning announcement in November 2022, the UK government stated that government departments should no longer install security cameras from companies like Hikvision that are subject to China's National Intelligence Law. Writing on behalf of the UK government, Oliver Dowden MP revealed that it had carried out a review of security risks and had subsequently instructed government departments to "cease deployment" of

security cameras from such companies. The review also recommended that departments "consider whether they should remove and replace such equipment where it is deployed on sensitive sites".

This is yet another monumental victory but one that still leaves plenty of work. Research by Free Tibet earlier this year, using Freedom of Information requests, found that Hikvision technology was being used in at least 227 (66%) UK councils. This latest government announcement leaves most councils unaffected. However, last October, Edinburgh City Council made the monumental announcement that it will be phasing out Hikvision cameras – making the city free of Hikvision technology by February 2023.

Hikvision is a Chinese state-owned company and one of the largest manufacturers of surveillance equipment in the world. Thanks to campaigning by groups including Free Tibet, and driven by supporters like you, it has received growing scrutiny in the UK. Working with MPs, journalists and partners, we have been able to highlight the security risks the technology poses in the UK and the company's unethical use of surveillance footage against Tibetans and Uyghurs living under Chinese Communist Party (CCP) rule.

The negative publicity has had a clear impact on the company, which in August 2022 reported an 11% drop in profits for the first half of the current financial year.

Members of the Free Tibet team on their way to peacefully protest outside Hikvision UK headquarters, London, August 2022.



ONE BANNER, ONE MESSAGE

Free Tibet and activists from across the movement show solidarity with China's 'Bridge Man' in banner drop on Westminster Bridge.

On 13 October 2022, the eve of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s 20th National Congress, a lone protester made their way to Sitong Bridge in central Beijing and unfurled two banners.

One read: "We want food, not PCR tests. We want freedom, not lockdowns. We want respect, not lies. We want reform, not a Cultural Revolution. We want a vote, not a leader. We want to be citizens, not slaves."

And the other said: "Remove the traitor-dictator Xi Jinping!"

Within minutes, the protester – now widely referred to as 'Bridge Man' – was detained by Chinese authorities, and the banners promptly removed.

However, those few minutes of rare and brave resistance against the CCP within China were all that was needed for enough photos to be taken and shared widely on Chinese and then Western social media platforms. From there, a wave of solidarity with the Bridge Man spread around the world, both online and offline.

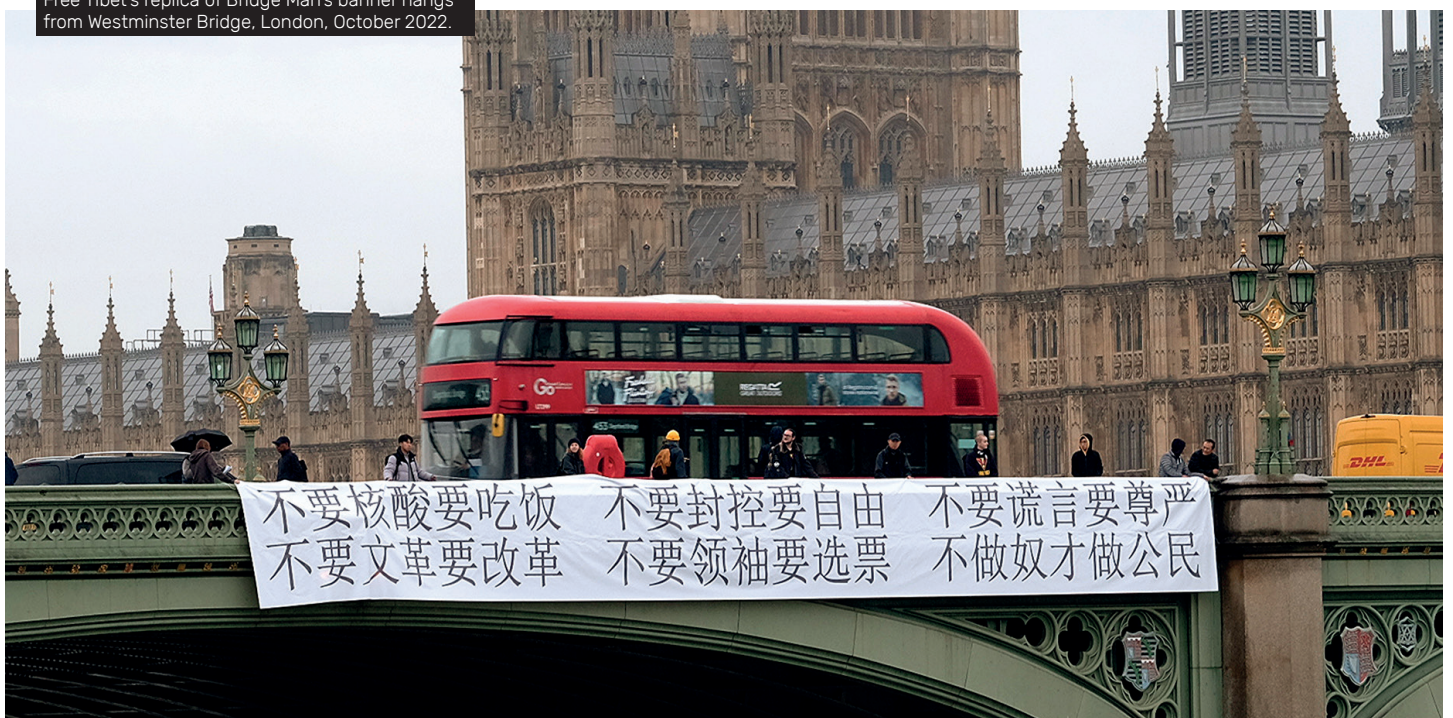
Free Tibet was quick to show its support as an organisation that revolves around standing in solidarity with those oppressed by the CCP. When the images from Beijing began to appear on social media, our immediate focus was on how Free Tibet could amplify the message that Bridge Man had bravely risked his life to display. We immediately had our own 22-meter replica of the original banner made.

On 20 October 2022 – alongside our Tibetan, Uyghur and Hongkonger allies – we made our way to central London. Our banner was unfurled and hung off Westminster Bridge, with the Palace of Westminster (a symbol of British democracy) as our chosen backdrop (see photo).

Speaking at the Westminster Bridge protest, Tenzin Kunga, Free Tibet's Advocacy Officer, said:

"As a Tibetan, I can feel the frustration of that lone protester because Xi Jinping's 'zero-Covid [lockdown]' is taking a huge toll on the lives of my Tibetan brothers and sisters inside occupied Tibet, as well as making life miserable

Free Tibet's replica of Bridge Man's banner hangs from Westminster Bridge, London, October 2022.





We want food, not PCR tests.
 We want freedom, not lockdowns.
 We want respect, not lies.
 We want reform, not a Cultural Revolution.
 We want a vote, not a leader.
 We want to be citizens, not slaves.



Protesters gather at Trafalgar Square, London, to stand in solidarity against the CCP, October 2022.



for the Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslims [Uyghurs] in East Turkestan while dismantling all freedoms in Hong Kong.

“We are gathered here to also amplify the message that the CCP is a great threat to the freedom, liberty and democracy that we take for granted here in this free country.”

As part of Free Tibet’s action to amplify Bridge Man’s message, we offered to send our banner anywhere in the world. The banner, at the time of writing, had just landed in Australia, with requests from activist groups in France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Poland and the US, all wanting to stand in solidarity with Bridge Man and all those oppressed by the CCP.

Since the initial Bridge Man action, protests have spread across China, involving thousands of people defying the CCP in a way not seen since 1989. We hope to share more updates on this developing situation in the next magazine.

PLEASE DONATE TO SUPPORT TIBET TODAY

From our headline-making actions going global and banner drops off famous bridges to organising local protests and printing leaflets and placards, our actions make a difference. Over the past year we have been able to raise substantial awareness about the situation in Tibet and reach new audiences.

Will you help us continue making a difference? By donating to our cause, you will be enabling us to plan and deliver on some big actions this year. Here’s what your donations can do:

- £5** will cover the cost of printing 100 flyers to hand out at protests and actions
- £20** will contribute to travel expenses for activists from across the movement to the action
- £50** can help fund the production of bigger action items, such as banners and placards

Donate online at freetibet.org or complete the enclosed donation form.

CAMPAIGNS UPDATE

PROTECT TIBET'S CHILDREN

In the last magazine we shared details of how almost one million Tibetan children between four and 16 years old were being forced into residential schools where they are separated from their families and communities and subject to a strictly Chinese Communist Party (CCP)-approved education.

Over 10,000 people signed the petition, demanding that the G7 group of governments spoke out about this programme during their meeting in Germany in November. Our efforts paid off with the G7 raising concern about human rights in Tibet in its closing statement, although regrettably there was no specific demand that China shut down the residential schools. This campaign will continue throughout 2023.



XINHUA NEWS AGENCY

BAN CHEN

Just over two years ago, we launched 'Ban Chen' – a campaign calling on the UK government to impose sanctions on Chen Quanguo, who remains responsible for extensive crimes against Tibetans and Uyghurs.

Chen turned Tibet into the world's largest surveillance state and imposed policies designed to eradicate Tibetans' unique identity. He became a rising star in the CCP and was awarded a place among the party leadership in the Party's Central Committee. Chen seemed destined for further promotion. Then we intervened.

A staggering 13,000 of you supported our online campaign, demanding that the British government impose sanctions and a travel ban on Chen. Meanwhile, our behind-the-scenes advocacy saw UK MPs raising Chen and his human rights crimes in parliament. In an unprecedented move, the UK challenged Beijing by sanctioning four of Chen's deputies in March 2021.

News came last November that Chen had been cast out of the Central Committee. Instead of being elevated, Chen has been condemned to irrelevance. Whatever the reason for Chen's demotion, we can say that one of the CCP's leading lights has faced consequences for his human rights abuses. We will keep you updated with further developments, but for now, we would like to thank all the supporters who backed the Ban Chen campaign these past two years.

CONFUCIUS INSTITUTES

Following up on commitments made during his leadership campaign, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is looking to close Confucius Institutes in the UK.

Confucius Institutes are run by a body that responds directly to China's Ministry of Education and have repeatedly been found to teach a narrow and dogmatic version of Chinese history and culture, including stating that Tibetan is a Chinese dialect and that Taiwan is part of China, while airbrushing events such as the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests from history.

Free Tibet has been campaigning against Confucius Institutes since 2015 following concerns that the institutes were established without adequate consultation, that employees were being closely monitored and claims that some institutes were involved in bullying Chinese students in the UK.

There are currently 30 branches of the Confucius Institute operating across the UK. If they were to be closed, the UK would be following the lead of Denmark, Finland, Japan, Norway, Sweden and the US, who have all identified these institutes as attempts by the CCP to advance its political agenda.



Graffiti on the sign outside the University of Edinburgh's Confucius Institute.

ALAN WILSON / ALAMY

STRENGTHENING THE ADVOCACY FOR TIBET

Free Tibet's Advocacy Officer, Tenzin Kunga, provides an update on the work that has been accomplished since our last issue to build crucial relations and keep the movement at the forefront of parliamentary discussions.

The end of last year proved to be a busy one for my advocacy work on behalf of Free Tibet. On 2 November, I was able to meet with the UK's newly elected Chair of Foreign Affairs Select Committee, Alicia Kearns MP at Westminster Hall in London ahead of an event in parliament on China's Global Security Initiative where she was due to speak. Whilst congratulating her on a successful election campaign I urged her to support Tibet.

Meanwhile, on 17 November 2022, Free Tibet's Head of Campaigns, Policy & Research, John Jones, and I met with Carla Denyer – Co-Leader of the Green Party of England and Wales. While thanking her for expressing the Green Party's support for the Tibetan people's self-determination, I also urged her to consider acknowledging the crucial importance of the Tibetan Plateau in the global fight against climate change.

We briefed Denyer on the powerful work done by the all-female Tibetan delegation – including Tibet Watch's Senior Researcher, Tenzin Choekyi – and their efforts to bring the much-needed Tibetan voices to the table at COP27 in Egypt (see page 8) and explained Free Tibet's campaigning work including the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s mass collection of Tibetan people's DNA (see page 11).

Working together with other like-minded groups in resisting the CCP has also helped build strong networks. For example, I was able to meet with Dr Mark Clifford, President of The Committee for Freedom in Hong Kong Foundation, where we discussed ways to strengthen the collaborative campaigning work with Hongkongers.

Elsewhere, members of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet highlighted Tibet in various ways. For example, Lord David Alton of Liverpool, Crossbench Peer and a staunch human rights campaigner drew attention to the Human Rights Watch report about China's mass collection of Tibetan DNA through

his social media handles; Vice-Chair and Labour MP for Bristol East, Kerry McCarthy, tabled a Written Parliamentary Question on 20 September – asking Jesse Norman MP, the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, if he will hold discussions with his Chinese counterpart on the human rights implications of the mass collection of DNA from people in Tibet (including children). Norman responded by saying:

“We have noted the recent reports of mass DNA collection in Tibet, which we have discussed with NGOs. We continue to urge China to respect all fundamental rights across the People's Republic of China, including in Tibet, in line with both its own constitution and the international frameworks to which it is a party. On 14 June, a concerted UK lobbying effort helped to secure the support of a record 47 countries for a statement at the Human Rights Council that highlighted the human rights situation in Tibet and called on China to comply with obligations with regard to the protection of human rights.”

Here's hoping for an equally successful start to 2023, which we look forward to updating you about in the next issue.

To keep up to date with our advocacy work in real-time, be sure to follow us on Twitter and Facebook.



From left: Tenzin Kunga and John Jones meet with Carla Deyner; Tenzin Kunga with Alicia Kearns, MP.

The image shows the COP27 logo in large, 3D-style letters. 'COP' is in blue, '27' is in gold, and 'SHARM EL-SHEIKH EGYPT 2022' is in blue and gold below it. The background is a blue sky with a white grid pattern of vertical lines.

COP27 SHARM EL-SHEIKH EGYPT 2022

BRINGING TIBET TO COP27

Tibet Watch's Senior Researcher, Tenzin Choekyi, travelled to Sharm El Sheikh in November 2022 as part of an all-female Tibetan delegation representing their homeland and raising awareness of climate change in Tibet at the 27th United Nations Climate Change conference. Here, she talks to Free Tibet about her experience at COP27.

What was your initial impression of arriving in Egypt for COP27?

My first impressions were the pillars at the Sharm El Sheikh Airport, which were plastered with green posters by the Commercial International Bank (CIB). Paper decorations of palm trees and thawb (robes) hung from the roof. There were tourists queuing on one side of the immigration queue and then we, the COP27 delegates, were on the other side and being asked to register.

As part of this process, we were asked to download an official COP app and told that we would be given free sim cards with mobile data once clearing immigration. As I was heading to the Vodafone booth to get the sim, I switched on my own data and received an alert on my phone saying that the official COP app had security risks and that I shouldn't install it.

Then I turned around, only to see CIB advertisements again. This time, a green board with numbers, bragging: 'In 2021, carbon emissions were reduced by 22 per cent'. 'The Bank to Trust', it said beneath. I was then escorted to a resort village with rows of unseparated white houses, security guards, strange streetside installations and the sound of crickets.

How would you say you and other delegates were received or made to feel throughout your time there?

The reception at the airport, besides immigration, was great. There were buses and taxis arranged for the COP

attendees. But once I reached the hotel's big gate, I felt what the reports had been describing: a climate of fear. The security guard at the hotel would not let the taxi driver in, even though he was from there, and was telling him I needed to check-in. He proceeded to slowly walk around the taxi with a long rod. When I popped my head out to see what was going on, I saw a mirror at the end of that rod. He was checking the taxi for bombs. The taxi driver and I laughed, which did not please the security guard.

There were many instances like this where you were constantly reminded of your boundaries and limitations as delegates outside of the COP venue. The National Security Agency was taking notes of where we were from and oftentimes came with us in the taxi we were taking from the hotel to COP. One of the few times I felt genuinely at ease was at a simple Syrian restaurant where we went one evening.

Do you feel that on an international media scale, voices and issues from indigenous people and countries were heard/represented?

No. Civil society groups knew ahead of time that the Egyptian government's crackdown on freedom and democracy would further impede efforts to have their voices heard. There were no protests allowed in the streets. A week before COP27 started, Ajit Rajagopal, a climate activist from India – who started a peaceful solo march from Cairo – was detained along with his lawyer friend, who had been seeking his release.

Top: The COP27 Tibet Delegation Group, which included representatives from the Tibet Policy Institute, International Tibet Network, Tibet Advocacy Coalition, Students for a Free Tibet and Tibet Watch; Bottom: Tibet Watch's Tenzin Choekyi (right) meets the Global Young Greens' Delegation. COP27, Egypt, November 2022.

Any protests were allowed only within the official COP venue. We took part in one of them where all of us wore white shirts in solidarity. People who gave speeches were standing at the centre of what was deemed 'the protest ring', where they shouted the names of environmental and human rights defenders who had been killed.

To see the freedom of protesters restricted, like caged birds amid those matchbox-style conference halls, was very sad. And even sadder for us Tibetans, who were painfully aware that not a single Tibetan could travel from Tibet to COP27. The fact the Tibetan delegation only has Tibetans in exile and the diaspora makes it crystal clear how little space Tibetans were given at COP.

What do you think about the outcomes of COP27 that are being touted by the United Nations?

Despite all the outcomes of COPs (this one and others), scientists have said that it is not enough and the key players in the fossil fuel lobbyists and their PR firms are accelerating the climate crisis – pushing the earth closer and closer to its tipping point. Yet, there was an increase of 25 per cent in these groups represented at COP27 compared to COP26.

The language of these climate talks feels very superficial because it focuses on nations pledging their commitment in dollars. But money has no inherent and independent value in and of itself. You can see the financial might of nations with the number of security guards surrounding them at these conferences. But I think all people, including non-human living beings, deserve life and death with dignity.

Animals, for example, are becoming extinct far away from these COP venues where only humans talk about their own existence yet lack the understanding that national and monetary solutions alone don't work. Although human activities caused the climate crisis, the solutions cannot be human-centric and nation focussed. Humans act as if we are at the centre of this world, yet we have lost touch with basic human values – our solutions are often deeply selfish and lack the expansive outlook of interdependence that grounds our reality.



Not a single Tibetan could travel from Tibet to COP27.



As Free Tibet is an NGO that champions non-violent protest and actions, what was your perception of the situation in Egypt and their stance on activism and protests?

Before I went to Egypt, I was following news about the pro-democracy Egyptian-British activist Alaa Abdel Fattah's hunger strike from prison. He had been arrested by the National Security Agency during the 2019 Egyptian protests and had begun a hunger strike six months prior to COP27.

On the first day of COP, he stopped drinking water. A few days later, his sister – who had been doing a sit-in protest outside the UK Foreign Office – flew to Sharm El-Sheikh and spoke at a press conference. When the floor opened to questions, I witnessed the Egyptian authorities take over this time to hurl disrespectful and threatening words at her.

Along with the standing protest I mentioned earlier, these were two peaceful actions that caused no physical harm to anyone else and were simply speaking truth to power.

The COP venue itself was about half an hour away from our hotel and the roads all the way to COP were empty. There were no signs of protests. However, at the entrance gate, there were several people dressed in white carrying a banner calling for veganism. But it looked more like a staged protest to give a semblance of what is perceived to be the norm in Western COPs. They were just standing there hardly saying anything and their banner had the link to a website of a TV channel that had sponsored them.



Tibetans ask for nothing less, nothing more, than what is their human right – freedom to be who they are in their land.

Were you given the opportunity to speak up about the situation in Tibet during COP27? And if so, do you feel that those present were receptive and interested?

Two other Tibetans from our team were given opportunities to talk about Tibet at side events. But other than that, nobody approached us with an opportunity to speak, let alone speak about Tibet. So it was more of a situation of taking opportunities when the floors opened for questions and going directly up to people, countries' pavilions, side events and organisations of interest to us and asking for a meeting.

There were instances where we had to sit back and observe, and others where we had to insert our voices. Some responded positively and expressed sympathy. Others who had more time to deeply listen shared interest and willingness to continue to be in touch with us.

I felt that the answer from Agnès Callamard, Secretary General of Amnesty International, following my question (which you can hear on our social media channels) was to the point and it was from the stage, not behind closed doors. So I valued the honesty in her response.

In what ways do you think Tibet could be made more visible in the global arena of big players such as at COP and future climate change-related events?

I think we need to have scientific studies that quantify the percentage of glacial melt from Tibet that flows into the rivers – from the Ganges to the Yellow River – that then drains into the Indian and Pacific oceans. A consensus of research findings on this would help us back up the Alliance of Small Islands if the sea level rise is not just from the melting of the north and south poles but also from the Tibetan Plateau (also known as the third pole), and the impact on Tibet also being at the heart of it.

The other way is understanding the culture and religion of Tibet, which encompasses a worldview that revives values and ways of finding inner peace which is not dependent on fleeting pleasures that we either buy or are sold to us for materialistic and capitalist means. Happiness would be as thin and brittle as glass if objects and products truly defined our experience of this life, which is not eternal. Understanding the timelessness of these truths, being conscious of inner values and protecting the oasis of spiritual communities would help protect Tibet.

Public statements and coordinated actions from the governments that really support Tibetans on the basis of the terms and conditions of Tibetans would be crucial too. We have been sidelined for far too long. But knowing that our struggle has remained constant for seven decades with a leader who folded their hands in respect to all the leaders of the world, and who neither made money from contracts nor took weapons, I find strength from that wisdom and truth. So I hope governments see Tibet for what it is, what its people call for.

In 2023, COP28 will be held in Dubai. How do you think this will impact the Tibetan movement and delegates like yourself and others being able to participate?

I don't think Dubai recognises Identity Certificates, which means Tibetans still holding that travel document would not be allowed into Dubai. The discrimination Tibetans face at airports is very heartbreaking. Tibetans are told to queue behind everyone for extra scrutiny. This document is what the citizens of a nation would call a passport, but for Tibetans, it is a reminder that Tibet still remains under occupation.

What would you want someone who is new to Tibet and the way climate change is affecting the local landscape and Tibetans in Tibet to know?

Tibet remains under China's occupation seven decades on. The generation who escaped Tibet into India, Nepal and Bhutan are now in their old age. The younger generation of the diaspora is found across the world nowadays and is still keeping the issue alive. For there to be a future, Tibetans' current experience of the climate crisis urgently deserves to be known. There will also be no Tibet to return to if what defines Tibet and its people – their history, culture and religion – are being exterminated by the CCP. Tibetans ask for nothing less, nothing more, than what is their human right – freedom to be who they are in their land.

Dear supporters,
My trip to COP27 would not have been possible without the donations so many of you made in direct response to Free Tibet's ask. Tibetan representation at international events like COP is so important. With your support, I was not only able to represent my home country but also raise awareness about the impact of climate change in Tibet at a global event.
Thank you,
Tenzin Choekyi

TIBET'S GREAT DNA ROBBERY

How a US DNA company is enabling China's repression in Tibet.

Tibetans living under China's ruthless occupation spend every day of their lives being watched. A typical day could see a Tibetan scrutinised by police on the street, picked up on numerous security and surveillance cameras, monitored by a neighbourhood watch committee or spied on over the phone or internet. Chinese Communist Party (CCP) officials call this "stability maintenance", a strategy that not only sees Tibetans arrested for peacefully protesting, but monitored – and detained – before they can even protest.

This dystopian "pre-crime" philosophy would once have been limited to the pages of science fiction novels, but China is taking it to new extremes.

As many as 1.2 million Tibetans have had DNA samples taken, without permission, by police since 2016. That is according to a report by the University of Toronto's Citizen Lab released in September 2022. The DNA Database storing Tibetans' information can be accessed at any time by the Chinese government and used on the grounds of public health, national security and public interest – all of which have a very flexible

definition in occupied Tibet, where the police act with total impunity.

Harvesting the DNA of over a million Tibetan adults against their will is already the behaviour of a government that knows no restraint. But, consider a report by Human Rights Watch, also released in September, which found that in some areas of Tibet authorities were systematically collecting blood samples from children at kindergartens. In at least one part of Tibet, DNA was being collected from all boys over the age of five.

The entirety of this magazine could easily be filled with reasons against this massive DNA drive. It is wildly disproportionate, giving police unprecedented access to the personal information of more than a million Tibetans, many of them too young to even consider committing a crime. It is racist, specifically targeting Tibetans and treating them as potential troublemakers simply based on their identity. It is unlawful, violating Tibetans' rights to privacy under international human rights standards and it is even likely to contravene China's own Criminal Procedure Law.

One person who should be troubled by this is Mark Casper, the CEO of Thermo Fisher Scientific. The billion-dollar US company supplies DNA testing kits to police around the world and Chinese police forces in particular seem to be satisfied customers. Police forces across Tibet have bought large quantities of Thermo Fisher Scientific equipment, with one agreement in September 2022 seeing them purchase equipment worth \$160,000 (£132,300).



Authorities are systematically collecting blood samples from children at kindergartens.



This is not the first instance of Thermo Fisher Scientific equipment being used by Chinese police forces to carry out repression. The company's sale of DNA kits to police in the Uyghur region (referred to as 'Xinjiang' by the Chinese government, but known to Uyghurs as their homeland of East Turkistan) prompted investigations from the United States Congress, Human Rights Watch and the New York Times. The company eventually claimed it had halted the sales, citing "fact-specific assessments". There is nevertheless evidence that sales continue.

At Free Tibet, we had to raise our concerns with Thermo Fisher Scientific, and seeing as the company had recognised its errors in selling equipment to police repressing the Uyghur people, we hoped they would show some understanding and reverse course in Tibet. It quickly became clear that we were not going to get straight answers or an acknowledgement from the company that their products posed a risk to Tibetans.

As is our way, when we are ignored we tend to get noisier. An online petition released in mid-November quickly took off with 3,000 signatures in a matter of days as the campaign exploded into a global coalition involving over 100 Tibet groups. We flooded our social media with material explaining the inhumanity of China's harvesting of Tibetans' genetic information and how companies like Thermo Fisher Scientific are enabling it and briefed MPs about this worrying situation, hoping to enlist their support.

By the time that this magazine goes to print, we will have visited company offices around the world – both to make some noise and to speak to Thermo Fisher Scientific staff, who design the company's products but are likely to be unaware about their dangerous application in Tibet. As with previous successful campaigns, talking to staff is one of the best ways to make change from the inside out. And of course, it is also a perfect opportunity to tell them all about Tibet.

This campaign is only just getting started with plenty of work ahead of us. Thermo Fisher Scientific can expect to be hearing lots more from Free Tibet, and supporters like you, in 2023. To take part in the campaign, visit freetibet.org/hands-off-tibetans-dna

OUR CAMPAIGNS WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE WITHOUT THE REGULAR SUPPORT OF OUR DONORS. THANK YOU.

None of the successes from our campaigns could be achieved without the regular support of our donors. Thank you.

Regular donations are relentless blows against the unchallenged authority of the Chinese Communist Party. They are what keeps us going. By becoming a regular donor, you can help us devise long-lasting, impactful campaigns. With your donations, we are better able to be urgent and reactive, right when we need to be.

NO GIFT IS TOO SMALL AND EACH DONATION IS VITAL

To become a regular donor please complete and return the enclosed form in the freepost envelope.

P.S. If you have not already signed up, make sure to leave your email address on the form to receive updates on our campaigns, appeals, events and the impact we have together.

EMPOWERING THE TIBETAN COMMUNITY IN THE UK

Instead of our usual 'Supporter Spotlight', we wanted to highlight some of the important work Free Tibet has been doing to support and engage with other Tibetan groups since our last issue.

Free Tibet is widely connected with the various Tibetan groups across the UK. One such group is the Tibetan Community in Britain (TCB). Last August, the TCB organised its first in-person event since Covid-19 lockdowns. The summer picnic, which was held at the Hill End Outdoor Education Centre in Oxford, took place on 27-29 August 2022. More than 250 Tibetans gathered for the picnic and a range of outdoor activities were planned to make it a special occasion.

Free Tibet ran a block-printing session, where 300 T-shirts (using linoleum blocks cut out) were decorated with Tibet-related messaging such as: "Free Tibet" and "Where is the Panchen Lama?", as well as Tibetan script and Free Tibet's new logo. The Tibetan community members actively thoroughly enjoyed the activity, which took place on both days of the picnic.

With an aim to tap into the emerging potential and to provide training opportunities within the Tibetan community, particularly among its youth, Free Tibet ran a media training session last October. The TCB selected 10 Tibetans of varying skills and ages for this one-day training event, which was led by Free Tibet's media expert Will Hoyles and held at the Jamyang Buddhist Centre in London. Will created a bespoke training program with a perfect balance of theory and practise. And, at the end of the session, each participant recorded a three-minute interview that was individually reviewed and feedback on by Will.

One of the participants, speaking on the other attendees' behalf, offered a Tibetan *khata* (ceremonial scarf) in thanks to Will and encouraged Free Tibet to offer more skills-based training for the community, which we fully intend to do.

Meanwhile, Free Tibet was also busy organising a screening of a film by a former Tibetan political prisoner, Ngawang Choephel in London. After discussions with the filmmaker, an exclusive screening of *Tibet in Song* was shown at The Lexi Cinema in north west London on 5 November 2022 to a near-full-capacity audience of mostly non-Tibetans. After the 86-minute film was screened, the audience was able to join a discussion with Free Tibet's CEO and Advocacy Officer about Tibet. Questions ranged from the film, the current situation inside Tibet, the resistance movement and more.

We look forward to even more activities in 2023 and updating you about them as and when they happen.

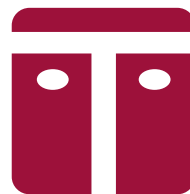
If you would like to get involved with any actions, or if you have any ideas about how you can share your skills/expertise with the Tibetan community, please email us at mail@freetibet.org

Top: Tibetan community member shows off their screen-printed t-shirt in Oxford, August 2022.
Bottom: Media training participants pictured with Free Tibet's media expert, Will Hoyles (centre), in London, October 2022.



NEWS FROM TIBET

China works hard to keep news of their abuses in Tibet hidden. Thanks to the crucial work by our research partner Tibet Watch, we are able to shine a light on what is really happening in Tibet.



TIBET WATCH
བོད་གནས་ལྷ་ཞིབ་

TIBETAN ARRESTED FOR NOT REGISTERING WECHAT GROUP

A Tibetan man named Lotse was arrested on 25 July 2022 in Sershul County, eastern Tibet, for failing to register a WeChat group he had created several days earlier. Named "Happy 80th Birthday", the online chat group had around 100 members from across Tibet.

A source confirmed that Lotse, 57, was forcefully taken away from his home to the county police station that morning by Chinese police. They stated that Lotse had failed to formally register his WeChat group with local regulatory authorities.



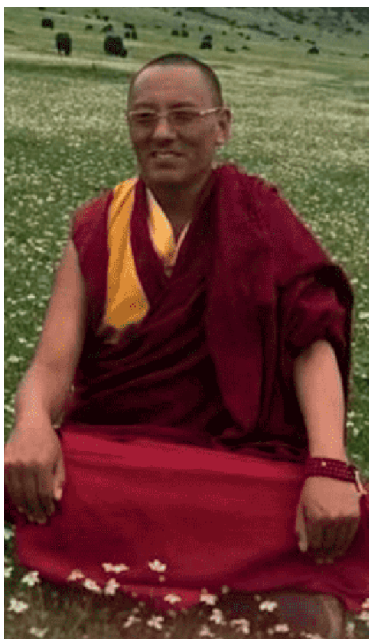
TIBETAN MONK AND FORMER PRISONER DIES FROM WOUNDS

There was more sad news in November 2022 with the death of Tibetan monk and former political prisoner, Geshe Tenzin Pelsang. He served six years in prison between 2012 and 2018 and during which time he was beaten and tortured.

A source confirmed to Tibet Watch that his health had worsened in the preceding months and that local authorities had prevented him from accessing vital medical treatment.

Police arrested Geshe Tenzin Pelsang in April 2012 with no explanation. They would later claim that he was the ringleader of protests that took place in Drago County that January. He was held incommunicado for 10 months before being charged with involvement in political crimes and sentenced to six years in prison. Following his release in 2018, he was barely able to walk and stand by himself due to his treatment in prison.

During his life, Geshe Tenzin Pelsang studied Tibetan Buddhism in Tibet and India and served in various roles at the Drago Monastery, most recently as the treasurer.



FURTHER ARRESTS OF TIBETANS CAUGHT IN POSSESSION OF DALAI LAMA IMAGES

Chinese police arrested Karma Samdup in Nagchu, northern Tibet, on 12 August 2022 for possessing photos of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Police confiscated photos of the Dalai Lama found in his car and another that he wore as an amulet in the form of a pendant.

He has been charged with separatism, the usual charge for Tibetans found in possession of photos of the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader, whose image is banned in occupied Tibet.

Karma Samdup's detention follows the arrest of two sisters, also in Nagchu. Zumkar was arrested at her home last June for alleged possession of images of the Dalai Lama and her sister Youdon was arrested a month later.



TORTURE LEAVES PRISONER IN CRITICAL CONDITION

Norzin Wangmo, a Tibetan political prisoner and mother of three children, has been left in a critical condition after being denied access to immediate medical treatment. Last June, the month after her release, doctors declared her injuries to be beyond treatment. She is currently in near-death condition at Xining Hospital.

In May 2020, after allegedly sharing information with Tibetans in exile about a self-immolation protest, Norzim Wangmo was arrested. She was interrogated for 24 hours while in police custody. Her family was granted access to see her only once, in a brief meeting in which Norzim Wangmo was in handcuffs and surrounded by police. Later that month, she stood trial in secret, was found guilty and was sentenced to three years in prison.

While serving her sentence, Norzin Wangmo was forced to undergo reform through labour, and was tortured. After her release, she was no longer able to stand on her own feet and needed support on both sides to get up and walk.

Her three children, aged between two to five, are now being cared for by Norzim Wangmo's husband.



TWO MONKS IMPRISONED FOR RELIGIOUS OFFERINGS

Two monks from Kirti Monastery were sentenced to prison last July for making religious offerings. Rachung Gendun (left) and Geshe Sonam Gyatso (right) were both detained in April 2021 for purportedly sending money to pray "for a deceased soul" to the Dalai Lama and Kirti Rinpoche – the exiled abbot of Kirti Monastery, who now resides in India.

Rachung Gendun was arrested on 1 April 2021 at Kirti Monastery, where he had been enrolled since he was five years old. He was interrogated for three months during which time his family didn't know where he was. In July 2022, he was sentenced to three years in prison.

Geshe Sonam Gyatso was arrested two days later in Chengdu. He spent a year in interrogative detention before being sentenced to two years in prison.

The criminalisation of online prayer donations is part of the CCP's control of Tibetan Buddhism on the internet and part of a wider program against Tibetan's freedom of religious expression.

There are always new ways to support Free Tibet, over in the Free Tibet shop:

shop.freetibet.org



**DOUBLE
YOUR
DONATION**



TIBET WATCH
བོད་གནས་ལྷ་ཞིབ་

**TIBET
MATCH**

13-20 MARCH 2023

freetibet.org/tibetmatch



freetibet.org
[/freetibetorg](https://www.facebook.com/freetibetorg)
[@freetibetorg](https://twitter.com/freetibetorg)