

FREE TIBET

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free
TIBET

• Breaking Beijing's silence • When Tibet reached the World Cup • "Don't be evil" •



Free Tibet Director
Eleanor Byrne-Rosengren.

Dear friends

It's been a busy and eventful few months for Free Tibet. As I write this, the whole team is working hard to finalise preparations for London Tibetfest 2018. We're also preparing for a short speaking tour and for advocacy initiatives relating to China's Universal Periodic Review by the UN Human Rights Council in November.

We've also taken a little time to celebrate winning our campaign to get Liverpool FC to drop their deal with Tibet Water Resources Ltd. You can read all about this on page 6. Meanwhile, on page 4 you can read about how we thwarted China's attempts to have us censored and to disrupt the review being carried out by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Some people question the wisdom of taking on a behemoth-sized opponent like the Chinese government. Some people even ask us whether there is any point in what we do, whether we really think Tibet will ever be free. The answer is always an emphatic "yes". However, being able to point to campaign victories or political pressure that we've been able to generate always helps us to make the case. And success can also help to recruit new supporters.

So, I'm delighted to be able to share our recent successes with everyone reading this magazine. Please do take a moment to celebrate with us and remember to let your friends and family know that this is a campaign we can win!

While we're talking about friends and family, you'll find our latest catalogue inside this magazine and lots of good ideas for ethical Christmas gifts. I can't believe I'm mentioning Christmas while the sun is still shining but any time is a good time for sharing beautiful gifts and Tibetan culture.

With best wishes

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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.

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Abkhazia v Tibet.
CONIFA www.conifa.org





Drawn to the cause

This time last year, Free Tibet launched our most ambitious crowdfunding appeal yet – to raise over £10,000 for a short animated film about Tibet.

Here at Free Tibet we are great at letting the world know about what is happening inside Tibet. Through Tibet Watch's research team in Dharamsala, we have better access to the truth about the human rights abuses in Tibet than almost any other organisation in the world. Free Tibet is one of the world's leading organisations for disseminating this information – able to reach hundreds of thousands through our website, social media, email and mailing list.

However, when we ask our supporters how they first became interested in Tibet, it is not usually this kind of information that originally brought them to the movement. Sometimes it was a trip to Dharamsala that initially piqued their interest, or studying Tibetan Buddhism through the teachings of the Dalai Lama. Often though, we find that people's first contact with

Tibet was through a film such as Kundun or Seven Years In Tibet. The reason these films resonate with so many people is that they are rich, character-driven stories which touch on the issues surrounding Tibet and humanise them in a way that facts and figures can't. While their focus isn't on education, when the credits roll the viewer is left with a much greater understanding of Tibet and what has happened there. With that in mind, we wanted to create our own film like this – a short animated film which could be shared widely and freely, that people would want to watch simply because it was beautiful and well produced, but which would also leave them with a real sense of the hardships faced by those in occupied Tibet.

The crowdfunding campaign was a resounding success! We surpassed our target, raising over £15,000 in just a few weeks. Since then we have been hard at work, collaborating with writers, animators and sound designers to bring this vision to life. We expect to have the project complete before the end of the year, but for now, here are a couple of images to give you a sneak peak into the work we have been doing and what the final film might look like.



Top: A still from the film.
Left: Choosing eyes for the main character.

Breaking Beijing's silence



The Chinese government tried to censor us at the UN this summer. It failed.

In early August, China underwent its review by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This in itself is a fairly regular event; the Committee is one of a number of United Nations human rights bodies, set up to scrutinise every country in the world and their efforts to combat racial discrimination. The members of the committee, each of them a human rights expert, request information about what countries have done to improve their record on racial discrimination and raise concerns about human rights abuses. So when China's turn came, the Committee might have been expecting just another day at the office. What happened instead was far more unusual and Free Tibet was at the centre of it.

A key part of the Committee's work is gathering information. They invite human rights organisations and outside experts to send them information so they can take human rights abuses up directly with the country under review. A number of human rights organisations, external experts and civil society groups submitted reports, including Free Tibet and our research partner Tibet Watch. Our report documented a range of human rights problems including restrictions on Tibetans' freedom of movement,

tight controls on religious freedoms for Tibetan Buddhists and the declining use of the Tibetan language in schools, the legal system and local government.

Then the strange events began. On 25 July, two weeks after we sent our submission, a member of staff at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights called us, informing us that our submission would be removed from the session's website. The decision to remove the submission was based on the fact that it contained a footnote referring to Tibet being "invaded" and "occupied" in 1950. Terms that are barely controversial were now being used to censor a human rights report.

The decision for a UN human rights body to remove a NGO submission is rare. Given China's long track record of trying to subvert efforts to scrutinise its human rights record in international forums, we have strong grounds to believe that the decision to remove the submission was taken after the Chinese government put pressure on the Chair of the Committee.

We protested this decision, contacting each member of the Committee and other UN staff. After a wait of over a week, the submission was restored to the website the day before China's

Left: The Chinese delegation criticised the Committee for listening to organisations like Free Tibet.
Right: Professor Gun Kut issued a robust response to the delegate's accusations.

review. Despite this victory, it soon became clear that the controversy was not over.

The review took place on 10 and 13 August at the United Nations in Geneva. China sent a particularly large delegation of nearly 50 people to flood the room. Committee members grilled the delegation on a range of topics: the status of the imprisoned language advocate Tashi Wangchuk; the limited use of the Tibetan language in education and the courts; and the need for an investigation into the death of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, a high-ranking Tibetan Buddhist monk and community leader who died in prison in July 2015 after being denied medical parole.

Remarkably, during the review, several members of the Chinese delegation appeared to question the Committee's work and attacked some of the organisations that had submitted evidence. One member of the delegation complained that members of the Committee had been relying on "certain political organisations which openly deny China's sovereignty and seek to split China" for their information, adding that some of these organisations had "connections with terrorist organisations." The representative also asked the Committee to censor organisations such as Free Tibet in the future, calling for the "careful screening of unsubstantiated materials from certain political groups who seek to split the state and incite confusion".

These remarks, along with the pressure on the Committee to censor Free Tibet's submission, highlight China's continued attempts to undermine the international human rights system. In recent years Beijing has been more assertive in its views that the current international human rights system is not universal and that nations that are not governed as democracies, such as China, should be exempt.

It was, therefore, heartening to see members of the Committee stand up for the human rights system and for civil society and human rights organisations like Free Tibet and Tibet Watch. Committee member Professor Gun Kut gave a strong closing speech in which he expressed "disappointment" at the accusations made by the Chinese delegation and their lack of cooperation with the process:

"I'm sure the high-level and large delegation from China does not consider this body of experts believing in various lies and repeating them in a dialogue with yourselves. I am sure you didn't come all the way from China to

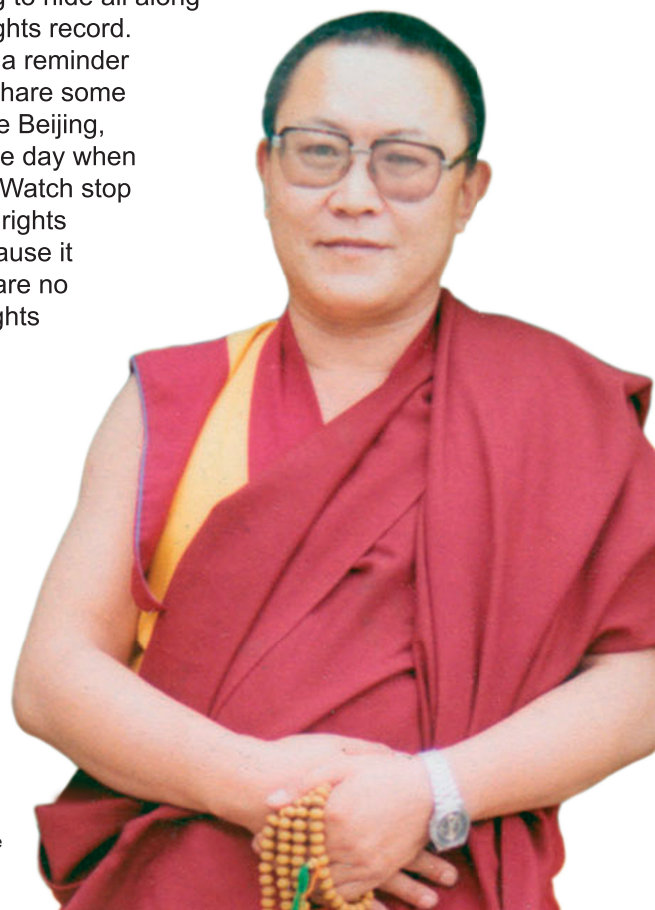


"I think we could have had a much better opportunity for a fruitful discussion."

basically say that everything is OK and that there is not much to be done. I think we could have had a much better opportunity for a fruitful discussion."

Nouredine Amir, the Chairperson, then drew the session to a close, but not before thanking members of non-governmental organisations and civil society for being present and noting the importance of their work.

Beijing's attempts to undermine the review backfired. Our report was not censored and the delegation's confrontational behaviour only served to draw more attention to what they were trying to hide all along – their dire human rights record. But it also served as a reminder that we and Beijing share some common ground. Like Beijing, we look forward to the day when Free Tibet and Tibet Watch stop talking about human rights abuses in Tibet. Because it will mean that there are no longer any human rights abuses in Tibet.



Tenzin Delek Rinpoche's case was raised by the Committee.

Campaigns update...

Victory! Liverpool FC drops the deal

For over a year, Free Tibet and its supporters have been pushing the directors of Premier League football team Liverpool FC to terminate a sponsorship agreement with Tibet Water Resources Limited. Now our efforts have paid off. The agreement ended this summer.

Tibet Water is a Chinese company that operates in Tibet, exploiting the military occupation to extract and bottle water from Tibetan glaciers before selling it on as a luxury product across China. The sponsorship deal, announced in July 2017, immediately provoked opposition from Tibetans, prompting us to contact Liverpool FC's owner and directors and ask for a meeting to discuss why the deal was bad for the club and bad for Tibet.

We were met with silence, but from there the campaign grew and grew, with other Tibet organisations, the Tibetan community in the UK, Liverpool fans and consumer group SumOfUs all getting involved. We handed out leaflets at matches, drove a mobile billboard in the streets around the club's stadium and generated masses of local and international press coverage.

In August, on the opening day of the new football season, an eagle-eyed Liverpool fan and Tibet supporter alerted us to some exciting news. Tibet Water, which had featured in the club's match programmes throughout the previous season, was absent from the list of sponsors. We have now obtained confirmation from the club itself that the deal was not renewed. We are grateful to our supporters and everyone who got involved in the campaign. This is a success we can all share.



In the field

At the end of the July, during a summer of scorching sunshine, we headed down to WOMAD festival in Wiltshire to spread Free Tibet's message.

Unfortunately, our camping excursion coincided with the wettest and windiest weekend in weeks. Yet even the weather could not stop us. Over the years Free Tibet has campaigned through worse! Nor did it stop the festivities.

The 40,000 strong WOMAD crowd braved the rain for music and dance from across the world. It was a great opportunity to talk to festival goers about our latest campaign efforts. We were especially keen to reach out to those who knew little or nothing about the situation in Tibet.

As always, the people at WOMAD were not only generous with their time but also with their spending at our stall. All of our merchandise sales and the donations we received will help fund future campaigns. Festival goers also helped us paint our very own mandala – which was still standing by the end of the festival!

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Our mandala at the start of the festival...and at the end.

Supplier spotlight

Read all about some of the fantastic suppliers that we work with in the Free Tibet shop

At Free Tibet, we work with some fantastic ethical suppliers to source some truly unique gift items. From doll-makers in Dharamsala to soap-makers in Scotland, we are always on the lookout for new and exciting products and suppliers for the Free Tibet shop. All of the products we sell are fair-trade and ethically produced, most are handmade and many are made by Tibetan refugees living in exile. You can find some of the most popular items – as well as some brand new additions – in our latest catalogue. We are proud to be supporting these organisations and in this issue we are showcasing the work of just three of the many great partners that we work with.



Vajra

Earlier this year, we formed a partnership with Vajra Books in Nepal. The team at Vajra work hard to source hundreds of rare and hard-to-find titles from the Himalayan region, both fiction and non-fiction. They specialise in books on Tibetan culture, religion and history, but also stock titles on topics as diverse as mountaineering, handicrafts and wildlife.

Owner Bidur Dangol takes pride in the fact that Vajra not only sells books but also operates as a publisher for authors whose work has struggled with major publishing houses. Bidur told us that the work of many of these authors may be too specialised for other publishers, but that they will always find a home at Vajra. Vajra is also famed in Kathmandu as a hub of intellectuals and academics, where anybody can drop by for discussion and debate!

Having worked in the industry for over 30 years, Bidur has a great eye for interesting and unique titles and we are delighted to be able to bring you some of their fascinating books on Tibet. See page 12 of the catalogue.



Dolls4Tibet

Dolls4Tibet was founded with the aim of empowering Tibetan and Indian women by offering skills training, meaningful employment opportunities and a support network for vulnerable new arrivals. The workshop is a small-scale, socially aware project which not only seeks to empower its craftswomen but also seeks to preserve Tibetan culture and language.

Dolls4Tibet was founded by Mona Bruchmann, who lives in Dharamsala with her Tibetan husband and two children. She told us that she first had the idea of a doll-making project for Tibetan women when hand-making a Bopa doll for her own daughter one Christmas. Dolls4Tibet employed their first Tibetan trainee in 2007 and the workshop now employs around 14 Indian and Tibetan women.

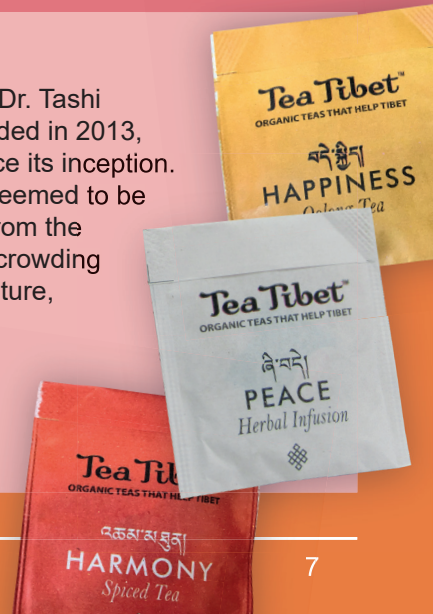
As one of our longest-standing partner organisations, we are incredibly proud to be working with Dolls4Tibet. Every purchase of one of their dolls or angel cards helps to support their fantastic work. You can browse the full collection on page 18 of the catalogue.

Tea Tibet

Tea Tibet is a US-based non-profit organisation co-founded by renowned Tibetan healer, Dr. Tashi Rabten and Stephen Lee, co-founder of the successful Stash and Tazo tea brands. Founded in 2013, Tea Tibet has been funding educational projects and orphanages for Tibetan children since its inception.

Tashi told us: "Tea has been an indispensable part of life in Tibet for centuries. There seemed to be no better way to help Tibet than to create a not-for-profit tea company with organic teas from the world's finest tea growing regions to help Tibetan educational institutions facing dire overcrowding and acute financial challenges. Our goal is to contribute to the preservation of Tibetan culture, while concurrently supplying Tibetan children with the best care and education possible."

Tea Tibet source and package only the finest fair-trade teas from the foothills of the Himalayas and invest 100% of their profits into helping fund organisations, including Tibetan Children's Village and Home of Hope. You can find their excellent range of teas on page 7 of the catalogue.



When Tibet reached the World Cup

The Tibetan football team may not have won the trophy but did win plenty of new fans.



The beautiful game redeemed some of its former glory in the early summer this year when the 2018 CONIFA Football World Cup was staged at venues across London. This idealistic footballing championship saw 16 teams from unrecognised nations and diaspora communities battle it out for the coveted rebel World Cup trophy. Among them was Tibet.

Spearheaded by CONIFA (the Confederation of Independent Football Associations) – an umbrella association for nations, minorities and football associations not affiliated to FIFA and representing 330 million people – the association prides itself on being a politically neutral, charitable organisation aiming for “everyone in the world to be able to enjoy and play football – no matter their race, religion, gender or politics.”

Politics may have been absent from the pitch but passion certainly was not with Tibet's opening match against title-holders Abkhazia proving to be a colourful clash. Tibet, selected by CONIFA organisers as a wildcard, lost 3-0 but won plenty of local fans. Large numbers of supporters provided colourful support during the match, played in late May in intense sunshine at the art-deco grounds of Enfield FC in north-east London. All six of Tibet's matches during the competition would be well-attended as the community showed their support match after match.

The first game against the reigning champions was always going to be difficult, but those at the game saw that the Tibet team, despite the lack of match practice, held its own and gave a credible performance. In the next match against Northern Cyprus, who would go on to be the runners up in the competition, Tibet even scored their first goal. 38 minutes into the match, with Tibet 1-0 down, Kalsang Topgyal beat his man, cut inside and slid the ball home from a tight angle. Northern



Tibet's results

Group B

31 May – Abkhazia 3 : Tibet 0
 2 June – Northern Cyprus 3 : Tibet 1
 3 June – Karpatalya 5 : Tibet 1

Lower bracket 9th-16th place

5 June – Ellan Vannin DNP Tibet (no match)
 7 June – Tibet 1 : Kabilya 8
 9 June – Tibet 1 : United Koreans in Japan 1
 (1-4 on penalties)



Cyprus scored two second-half goals to take the victory. Meanwhile, Tibet's third defeat, to eventual champions Karpatalya, saw them finish bottom of a fiendishly difficult group.

The competition was not over for Tibet, who played three more matches to determine their final ranking in the competition. Tibet began climbing the score board. On the final day played the United Koreans in Japan for 11th place. Despite a close fought match with a goal from both sides, it came down to penalties and the Korean team prevailed.

Twelfth place was an admirable feat given the Tibet team's lack of experience and the players' lack of match practice together, as well as the country's relatively short footballing history. Tibet's first international match only took place in June 2001 when the team played in Copenhagen against Greenland. Denmark refused to cancel the match despite threats from China that it would cut off trade.

Chinese pressure on the football team has only grown in the years since then. According to the tournament director, Paul Watson, several sponsorship deals had been arranged to help fund the competition, but all of the main sponsors dropped out after requesting that Tibet be removed from the competition, something that CONIFA steadfastly refused to entertain. As we described in the last magazine, China has stepped up its attempts to marginalise Tibet, putting pressure on companies to purge their websites and adverts of references to Tibet and punishing governments who host the Dalai Lama. Despite its politically-neutral atmosphere, the CONIFA World Cup appears to have become the latest target. As Watson told Sky Sports before the competition started, "People are scared

to sponsor an event like this because they're afraid of offending China."

Despite these difficulties, the presence of Tibet – one of the better-known countries in the competition – helped raise the profile of the CONIFA World Cup while the tournament also helped Tibet. The CONIFA World Cup allowed Tibetans to represent themselves and make new friends, in the local communities where they played and with their fellow competitors. As Passang Dorjee, Chairman of the Tibetan National Sports Association, said: "Our team means a lot to our community – Tibetans have no human rights in Tibet and we are refugees in exile so we are keen to show our rich culture and religion to the world. Meeting other people from stateless places across the world gives us energy and provides us with motivation."

Clockwise from below: The Dalai Lama blesses the Tibetan football team before they fly to London; Tibet celebrate after scoring their first World Cup goal against Northern Cyprus; the team in action against Northern Cyprus, Kabylia and eventual winners Karpatalya (CONIFA, 2018).





“Don’t be evil”

Google’s planned return to China is ominous, but technology can also help Tibet.

Sergey Brin, co-founder of Google, was born in 1973 in the Soviet Union. He maintains that his experience of life under a totalitarian dictatorship formed his outlook on the world, as well as helping to guide the philosophy of the world’s most popular search engine.

Times have changed – and so has the company. Earlier this year, reports emerged from inside Google that the internet giant was hatching plans to develop a new search engine in China that would comply with the government’s draconian censorship laws. The app, codenamed ‘Dragonfly’, would automatically identify and filter ‘blacklisted’ websites already blocked in China, as well as any search terms pertaining to human rights, Tibet, democracy and the Dalai Lama.

The plans would represent a major shift in Google’s policy. The company, whose code of conduct for years famously began “Don’t be evil”, withdrew from China in 2010 after a hacking scandal. In the following years Google was adamant that it would not carry out any self-censorship. However, Sundar Pichai, Google’s CEO since 2015, has sought to further grow the Silicon Valley giant and climbing China’s so-called “Great Firewall” appears to be a key part of this aggressive expansion plan.

There has been widespread opposition to the plan. In August, Free Tibet joined over 170 Tibet groups in expressing its opposition to ‘Dragonfly’ and the negative effects that it would have for Tibetans.

That same month, more than a thousand Google employees signed a letter highlighting their dissatisfaction with the proposals. In the letter they demanded high-ranking Google executives review the firm’s ethics and transparency policies. Many Google employees are members of the Association of Computing Machinery, the code of ethics of which states that: “computing professionals should take action to avoid creating systems or technologies that disenfranchise or oppress people”, and “use their skills for the benefit of society.”

The struggle to scrap this project is likely to rumble on, but it is clear that, even for a corporate behemoth like Google, the potential of cracking the Chinese market is too alluring and lucrative to resist. Recent examples of corporate entities capitulating to Chinese censorship – from website content through to advertising campaigns – include Cambridge University Press, Mercedes Benz and Marriott Hotels, as well as 40 airlines seeking a larger slice of the China air travel sector, including British Airways and Lufthansa.

Growing numbers of businesses appear willing to turn a blind eye to China’s human rights



abuses, and 'Dragonfly' has the potential to directly assist Beijing's efforts to clamp down on freedom of expression and the ability of Tibetans to spread information. At the Chinese Communist Party National Congress last year, President Xi Jinping used his opening speech to lay out a vision of total party control, including even tighter controls over the internet.

This censorship is accompanied by a sophisticated system of mass surveillance within Tibet itself. The Chinese Communist Party's dream, in which the authorities in Beijing know everything that goes on in Tibet and the outside world knows nothing, may never be fully realised, but they are certainly doing their best.

Yet even in this apparently water-tight corner of the world activists are finding ways to ensure that a trickle of information continues to leak out. Chinese netizens – and their counterparts in Tibet – are finding ways to circumvent China's extensive censorship and surveillance apparatus. Their writings, photos and videos, smuggled out of Tibet at great personal risk, help expose ongoing human rights abuses. It is this crucial information that counters the pervasive Chinese government narrative that asserts all is harmonious within its borders.

Despite having no physical access to Tibet, groups like Free Tibet are finding new ways to support Tibetans' courageous work, sometimes by utilising technological advances themselves. Recently Free Tibet was able to highlight the damage caused by forced demolitions at Larung Gar Buddhist Institute, using satellite technology to bypass the police checkpoints that had been set up around the community. More recently we captured the devastating impact of the fire at the Jokhang temple in February, defying the media blackout Beijing had imposed.

Much of the work that goes into ensuring that Tibet stays in focus is the result of hard work undertaken by Tibet's 150,000-strong diaspora. Some experts now argue that this refugee community, who live in over 30 countries, are beginning to form a 'digital country' – one in which 69,000 people cast online votes for their government-in-exile in 2017 and who increasingly use the web to broadcast cultural gatherings, like the Kalachakra festival, to audiences across the globe.

The use of technology to resist oppression can be seen around the world, even in its most remote corners. In parts of the majestic Amazon rainforests, indigenous activists have found an inventive way to keep tabs on illegal loggers. By attaching recycled mobile phones to giant trees across the junglescape campaigners can be alerted to the high-pitched sounds of chainsaws in operation – a simple solution to a growing threat.

From mobile phone technology hidden deep within tropical ecosystems through to silent satellites scoping the giant skies above Tibet, technology is helping to lift the veil on injustice worldwide. Technology may help undemocratic regimes tighten their own hold on power, but it also allows those resisting repression to fight back.



Opposite: Google headquarters in Beijing in 2009; Sergey Brin. Above: Free Tibet used satellite technology to track demolitions at Larung Gar. Below: Sundar Pichai; President Xi Jinping.



Going over their heads satellite technology exposing China's lies

Free Tibet has already used satellite imagery to great effect – documenting the demolitions at Larung Gar (see above) and exposing the true extent of the fire damage at the Jokhang temple in Lhasa (see previous issue). Now, thanks to the generous donations of supporters, we have turned the lens on the exploitation of the Tibetan environment and shown the extent of lithium extraction at Chabyer Tsaka Lake. Increased demand for lithium means China has big plans to scale up extraction across Tibet, with huge risk to livestock, crops and people.

Satellite imagery presents a golden opportunity for progress in the Tibetan struggle. Locating secret prisons, showing the scale of major protests, and tracking the mobilisation of Chinese troops at Tibetan festivals are some of the ways we might use this technology.

Action | Give today using the form that came with this magazine (UK only) or by visiting www.freetibet.org/overtheirheads and help us make further use of satellite imagery.

News update...

Tashi Wangchuk's appeal denied

The imprisoned language rights advocate Tashi Wangchuk is set to remain in prison after an appeal against his five-year sentence was rejected in August.

Tashi Wangchuk was formally sentenced in May after a court found him guilty of "inciting separatism". The conviction was based on an interview that he conducted with the New York Times in late 2015 about his efforts to promote the teaching of the Tibetan language in his local area.

Shortly after his guilty verdict, Tashi Wangchuk was visited by one of his lawyers. His lawyer reported that Tashi was in good health and was determined to fight his prison sentence. An appeal against the decision was filed. However, on 13 August Tashi's lawyer tweeted that the sentence had been upheld and that Tashi is due to remain in prison until 2021.

According to translated court documents obtained by Free Tibet, the judge rejected the appeal because Tashi Wangchuk "subjectively had the intention of inciting separatism, and objectively undertook actions to incite separatism". He added that Tashi Wangchuk, "distorted the truth while being interviewed by foreign media".

Despite these claims, Tashi Wangchuk has always insisted that this work was non-political and no evidence has been produced to suggest that he has committed a recognisable crime. His case continues to garner international attention, with Tibet groups, human rights organisations, United Nations experts and linguists around the world continuing to demand his release.



Tashi Wangchuk.

Political prisoners released

There has also been good news from Tibet, with a number of Tibetan political prisoners being released since our last magazine.

Dashar, imprisoned in Lhasa's notorious Drapchi prison, was released in May, two months late. He was arrested in March 2008 after taking part in the uprisings that month in Lhasa. He was subsequently found guilty of separatism and espionage and sentenced to 10 years in prison.

Tibetan monk Lobsang Tenzin was released in June after serving seven years of a ten-year sentence. He and two others were found guilty of inciting the self-immolation of fellow monk Phuntsok in 2011. Phuntsok was the second Tibetan known to have carried out a self-immolation protest in Tibet.

There were three release in August. Gonpo Tseten was released from prison after serving 10 years of a 12-year prison sentence. He was arrested for spearheading protests in March 2008 in Utsu Chugrar. While in detention he was tortured and interrogated. Although he is free from prison, he is now subject to surveillance and deprivation of his political rights.

Musician Gonpo Tenzin, arrested in 2013 after authorities deemed his music to be separatist, returned home to Driru County in Central Tibet. He received numerous greetings and good wishes on social media following his release, although messages and photos were later deleted. Namkha Jam, imprisoned for allegedly leaking information on self-immolations to the Tibetan community in exile, was also released after six years in prison.



Gonpo Tseten,
Lobsang Tenzin,
Dashar,
Gonpo Tenzin,
Namkha Jam.

Tightening controls on Tibetan Buddhism

There have been renewed efforts to control Tibetan Buddhist institutions in 2018 with a raft of new laws and restrictions being issued across Tibet. This follows President Xi Jinping's calls at the Communist Party's National People's Congress in late 2017 for "separatist" movements to be crushed and religion to be put under greater state control.

Free Tibet has documented inspections carried out by Chinese authorities in Tibet's monasteries as well as re-education sessions and examinations for monks.

In July, around 200 young Buddhist novices were expelled from Dza Sershul Monastery in Sershul Town, eastern Tibet. Across Tibet authorities have also sent around notifications which restrict children's involvement in religious activities and festivals.



Monks at Sera Monastery during examinations; TAR Party Secretary, Wu Yinje at Neunang and Tsurpu Monasteries.

Tibet's environment under strain as tourists pour in

More concerns have been raised that China's push to increase tourism in Tibet is damaging the environment. Towards the end of July, video footage emerged of tourists dumping rubbish at Chaka Salt Lake in north-eastern Tibet.

The lake is regarded as a site of great natural beauty and has seen a huge influx of tourists, with around 40,000 people visiting per day during peak season. Footage uploaded by tourists and shared widely online shows one of the effects of such a high number of visitors. In the video, the edge of the lake is littered with waste, mostly discarded plastic shoes which are used by tourists to walk on the salt-sand. Currently, 200 cleaners are working at the site, collecting up to 12 tons of discarded rubbish per day.



Litter at Chaka Salt Lake.



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Letters



FRANCOIS DE HALLEUX

If you have a question or comment that you would like to see published in the next magazine, do get in touch with us by email at letters@freetibet.org, over the phone on 020 7324 4605 or by post to:
Letters, Free Tibet,
28 Charles Square,
London N1 6HT.

Please note we cannot guarantee publication of each letter we receive. Thank you!

Hello,
Two years ago I heard about what was happening at Larung Gar. I was afraid and upset. In October, I will be travelling in Sichuan. If possible, I would like to stop at Larung Gar, a kind of pilgrimage. To remember. Do you know if tourists are allowed to go there? Or is it forbidden, due to the current situation?

Many thanks for your reply
Terry

Dear Terry,
According to our latest information, there are checkpoints on the roads leading to Larung Gar and tourists who do not hold any form of Chinese ID are likely to be turned away. This might have changed but all I can say for sure is it would be risky – we received a couple of reports last year from tourists who were denied entry. The closest you are likely to get for now is Serthar Town, the nearest urban area to Larung Gar.

We have not spoken to anyone this year that has tried to visit Larung Gar, so if you do decide to try and visit and you are allowed to enter then we would be very interested to know. But as I say, more likely than not you would be stopped.

I hope this helps a little bit. Best wishes,
John

Dear Free Tibet,
About a year ago, I came to learn about the current situation of Tibet. Since then, I have become really interested about this country and have learned about its beautiful culture, which I hope to see with my own eyes by visiting this amazing country someday.

However, I also learned about the current situation with China and found it shocking, I believe it's totally incorrect what China is doing. They destroy their religion, their way of living, their beliefs, they disappear kids who haven't done anything wrong, they disappear people who own a Tibetan flag, something that is their total right to have. They have no right to do any of this, nor any arguments for what they are doing. They should not be allowed to destroy Tibetans' lives like this.

When I learned about the situation, I started talking to people about it, and I was really surprised they didn't even know that Tibet exists. The situation in Tibet demands to be known by the whole world, and also demands action from people all over the world.

I am writing to thank you, Free Tibet, for what you're doing: sharing information about what is happening there, something that is really done by the media, raising money by selling Tibetan gifts, which help people to learn more about Tibetan culture, organising demonstrations and many other things.

I know Tibet will be free someday, please keep up the amazing work, keep informing people about what is happening in Tibet so that everybody gets to take action against this situation.

Thank you for reading this,
Maria



JESSE ROCKWELL

Supporter activities

Walking for Tibet

In August, Tim Cullen walked the entire length of Hadrian's Wall in his Free Tibet T-shirt to help raise awareness of the situation in Tibet. You can find these exclusive T-shirts in the catalogue accompanying this issue, or in our online shop.

Our Director, Eleanor, and her husband, Mathias, also walked for Tibet in September. The pair successfully completed the Thames Bridges Trek, a 25 kilometre walk along the Thames, crossing every bridge between Putney Bridge and Tower Bridge. They managed to raise £874 for Free Tibet's research partner Tibet Watch as well as fly the flag for Tibet across central London.



Raising the flag in London

On 3 September, the London borough of Waltham Forest Council marked Tibetan Democracy Day by raising the Tibetan flag. A crowd of 80 people watched the flag being raised, including representatives from Free Tibet and the UK's Tibetan community, along with the Mayor, Councillor and Leader of Waltham Forest Council. Members of the Council and the Tibetan community expressed their joy at the occasion and celebrated the steps taken by Tibetans to build a democracy outside of their country before a rendition of the Tibetan national anthem. The ceremony was followed by a performance of Tibetan dancing and music from several Tibetan children, and an event at the Council Chamber.



Musician donates takings to Tibet Watch

In August, the electronic music composer Nicolas Jaar played two of his albums, 'Space Is Only Noise' and 'Sirens', in full at a special immersive listening session in central London. At his request, 50 percent of the profits from the event went to Tibet Watch.

From top: Tim Cullen; Eleanor and Mathias celebrate completing the Thames Bridges Trek; Raising the flag and Tibetan musicians at Waltham Forest

For the latest information on activities by Tibet groups and contact details for the groups themselves, visit our local groups page at www.freetibet.org/localgroups. If you're interested in setting up a group or fundraising for Free Tibet, please get in touch with us at mail@freetibet.org.

Free Tibet are delighted to welcome our new Mi Tse (life long) supporters:
Jahque Price-Rees, Carole Mahoney and Neil Bowman.



Ethical Christmas Gifts

Browse our catalogue or visit www.freetibet.org/shop