

STAND UP FOR TIBET: Tibet Lobby 2024

Ask 1: Urge China to cease interference in Tibetan Buddhism

Call on the UK government to urge China to end policies that interfere with Tibetans' right to freedom of religion, including policies restricting Tibetan Buddhism. The UK should also set out a clear policy that the succession of the Dalai Lama is strictly a matter for Tibetans and that there must be no interference, coercion or intimidation against Tibetans by China during this process.

Background – freedom of religion in Tibet

Every aspect of life in occupied Tibet is subject to Chinese government control, and Tibetan Buddhism is no exception. Monasteries fly Chinese flags, display portraits of Chinese leaders and are under tight control and surveillance, with police stations placed in or close to them. Monks and nuns are closely watched and those who challenged Chinese Communist Party rule are subjected to the humiliating process of 'patriotic re-education', in which they are often forced to condemn the Dalai Lama.

This CCP interference into Tibetan Buddhism goes right to the top - China is trying to control the Tibetan reincarnation system and CCP officials openly state that they plan to select the next Dalai Lama. While Tibetans would reject a Dalai Lama handpicked by Beijing, such an act would still sow confusion and affect Buddhists all around the world.

The UK government must press the Chinese authorities to respect Tibetans' right to freedom of religion and challenge the Chinese government's attempts to interfere with the succession of the Dalai Lama.

What has been done so far?

- **December 2023:** A debate on repression of Tibetan Buddhism is held in the UK Parliament. When questioned by MPs about the succession, the Minister of State for Indo-Pacific, Anne-Marie Trevelyan, stated that the succession of the Dalai Lama was a matter for "the relevant religious authorities".
- **December 2020:** The Tibetan Policy and Support Act (TPSA) was signed into law in the United States. TPSA makes it official policy that the succession of Tibetan Buddhist leaders, including the Dalai Lama, must be left solely to Tibetan Buddhists to decide, without interference from the Chinese government, and that officials responsible for interference or coercion should be subject to sanctions, including denial of entry into the United States.
- **January 2003:** The UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion accepted an invitation for a country visit. A reminder was sent on 26 September 2006. 21 years on, this visit remains outstanding.

All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet

The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet (APPGT) exists “to put pressure on the UK Government to encourage negotiations between the Chinese Government and representatives of the Tibetan Government in exile, whilst recognising that Tibet is an occupied country which had independent links with Britain.”

A key way in which the UK government can be urged to encourage independent access to Tibet is through MPs joining the APPGT. By joining the group, MPs can help foster a strong parliamentary voice that speaks out on human rights issues in Tibet and can continue this crucial work in 2019.

Detailed recommendations:

- Urge the UK Government to issue a statement, stating explicitly that the succession of the Dalai Lama is a matter solely for Tibetans, that it will resist any coercion or interference by CCP officials in the succession and that the UK would refuse to recognise any Dalai Lama handpicked by Beijing.
- MPs should join the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Tibet and add their voice to a committed group of MPs who consistently call for independent access of human rights monitors to Tibet.