

RAISING AWARENESS FOR TIBET

Honors Class HPR 224G-0002

Presented to Congressman Jim Langevin (April 18 2019)

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Introduction

There is a great suffering happening that most people in the West are unaware of. They may have heard of the Dalai Lama, or seen prayer flags hanging before, but they don't connect these things to China's abuses of the people of Tibet¹. The struggles of the Tibetan people under Chinese occupation are unknown to the general public, despite that the UN along with several other nations, have launched campaigns to aid them². We are here to facilitate a greater understanding of the oppression, and garner greater support for a free Tibet.

Due to a lack of a current census and lack of transparency from China, it is extremely difficult to determine an accurate population of Tibet. However, from multiple academic sources, one can estimate that approximately 1.5 to 2 million Tibetans are living in exile or outside Tibet; and approximately 6.5 to 7 million Tibetans are living in Tibet controlled directly by China.

Tibet is Being Destroyed and Silenced by China

Tibetan autonomy has been assailed since the Chinese invasion of 1950. The Tibetan people have been willing to remain part of China as a semi-autonomous vassal state, but China has been unrelenting in its efforts for complete domination. Religious, cultural, and economic freedoms are on the verge of being wiped out completely.

On top of this, unsustainable practices by the Chinese threaten the historic places of the region, as well as the environment, including the large glacial areas whose runoff supports critically important rivers that run through a large area of Asia. In simple terms: Tibet is disappearing culturally and physically. Religious, cultural, and economic freedoms are on the verge of being wiped out completely and its people are suffering as a result.

Tibet's Leaders Live in Exile

- 1) Tibetans, being mostly Buddhist, are culturally tied to the philosophy of nonviolence and their leader the Dalai Lama now lives in exile in Dharamshala, India.

¹ Freedom World 2018 Table of Country Scores. (2018, January 16). Retrieved from <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world-2018-table-country-scores>

² UN General Assembly Resolutions. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.savetibet.org/policy-center/united-nations/un-general-assembly-resolutions/>

- 2) Dr. Lobsang Sangay the elected President of the Central Tibetan Administration also lived in exile in Dharamshala. He graduated from Harvard Law School with expertise in International Human Rights Law and visited URI on Thursday, February 14, 2019.

Facts and Data

HISTORY

- 1) The account of Tibet from past to present starts with the Chinese invasion of Tibet 1950. Before then, Tibet had declared independence from China in 1913.
- 2) In 1951, following the invasion, the Tibetans signed a seventeen-point agreement, while under the threat of China's arms, reaffirming China's sovereignty over Tibet and providing an autonomous administration led by Dalai Lama.
- 3) In 1959 the 14th Dalai Lama fled Tibet to northern India under cover where he established the Central Tibetan Administration in Lhuntse Dzong where he repudiated the "17-point Agreement" that his peaceful people were forced to sign. With their leader in exile, and their people left with virtually no defense (as any fighting age men who were not killed in protest were deported, and they again have a largely nonviolent population), they have been at the mercy of the Chinese regime.³
- 4) With the 17-point Agreement, the Dalai Lama-ruled Tibetan area was supposed to be a highly autonomous region of China. But instead, Tibetans have endured systematic torture, extra-judicial killings, starvation, and many other human rights violations that have led to the deaths of tens of thousands Tibetan people, with no end in sight.
- 5) Chinese aggression, abuse and torture against the Tibetan people are egregious violations of every article under the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
- 6) Tibet has been ranked extremely low on the World Press Freedom index, ranking 176th out of 180, with North Korea at the bottom.⁴ Other rankings from Freedom House have placed them below North Korea at times in terms of overall freedom, as they were in 2017.
- 7) Since 2008, tourists have been banned from entering the country every year from as early as January 1st until April 1st, as to discourage awareness of the 1959 Tibetan protests that

³ Latson, J. (2015, March 17). Dalai Lama Escapes From Tibet: How and Why It Happened. Retrieved from <http://time.com/3742242/dalai-lama-1959/>

⁴ 2018 World Press Freedom Index | Reporters Without Borders. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://rsf.org/en/ranking>

were violently suppressed by the Chinese government, leaving tens of thousands of Tibetan citizens dead.⁵ Exact casualty figures are still unknown.⁶

- 8) Donald Trump signed legislation (The Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act 2018)⁷ to exert pressure on China to allow US diplomats, officials, and journalists into Tibet.

HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

- 1) [According to Human Rights Watch](#), in February 2018, China's Public Security Bureau in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) issued a notice that urged the Tibetan people to inform on so called "underworld forces" and declared a range of traditional and informal social activities to be illegal among Tibetans.
- 2) China's Public Security Bureau established the range of illegal Tibetan activities include: local initiatives for environmental protection, language preservation, and dispute mediation, some of which the notice claimed secretly encourage support for the exiled Dalai Lama or for Tibetan independence.
- 3) As a **United Nations** member state, China has affirmed acceptance of the **Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, whose provisions are broadly considered reflective of customary international law. These include the rights to freedom of association, peaceful assembly, expression, and to participate in the cultural life of the community. The suppressive tactics of China's Public Security Bureau in 2018 were the latest evidence that China is systematically violating these rights.
- 4) The Tibetan government has posted many examples of human rights violations by China. For example:
 - i. Protestors who display the Tibetan flag or attempt to deliver information out of the country to advocate for themselves can face life in prison, torture, and even death.
 - ii. Arbitrary detentions and severe and violent punishments, as well as torture. "I was hung by my shackles from an iron chair without any clothes and they tried all sorts of tortures while I was there, like beating my back

⁵ China bans foreigners from visiting Tibet Autonomous Region until April. (2019, February 19). Retrieved from <https://www.savetibet.org/china-bans-foreigners-from-visiting-tibet-autonomous-region-until-april/>

⁶ Beijing closes Tibet to foreigners over 60th anniversary of the 1959 uprising. (2019, February 26). Retrieved from <https://freetibet.org/news-media/na/beijing-closes-tibet-foreigners-over-60th-anniversary-1959-uprising>

⁷ Donald Trump signs bill on Tibet into law despite China protest. (2018, December 20). Retrieved from <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/donald-trump-signs-bill-on-tibet-into-law-despite-china-protest/articleshow/67175620.cms>

with tiny metal sticks, kicking me and giving electric shocks to my mouth. The pain the chair caused was too extreme to feel any of the pain caused by the metal sticks and kicking. When they gave me electric shocks, I could feel nothing. I only smelt the burning of my own flesh.” --Golog Jigme Gyatso, Tibetan torture survivor

- 5) Intense surveillance-- including security cameras and police checkpoint, similar to the former oppressive apartheid regime in South Africa, violating even the most basic privacy rights.
- 6) China goes to great lengths to suppress any Tibetan citizen (or any person of Tibetan descent) worldwide. This is evident in this example of a college student of Tibetan descent living in Canada.
 - i. “Lhamo, 22, is a Canadian citizen of Tibetan descent who spent the first half of her life in India and supports Tibetan independence from Chinese occupation.” Lhamo was harassed and threatened after winning her university’s student president election at the University of Toronto for her views on China, with over 10,000 Chinese sympathizers signing a petition against her election.⁸

Tibet’s freedom should be a priority in U.S. and U.N. Policy

- The Tibetan people truly face a bleak situation-- one that could result in their very existence being wiped out. If any other country in the world was under such a brutal attack that threatened their sovereignty, way of life, and people, the story would be on the forefront of the news.
- Tibetans are a peaceful people-- ones who don’t believe in the use of violence, who were attacked unprovoked, and who need the help of the world to protect their home. China is a United States trading partner, as well as an extremely powerful world power. But we cannot let the fear of China keep us from protecting a people that desperately need our help. President Trump took a first step in the right direction with Tibet, but there must be expanded comprehensive U.S. policy.

The Tibet Problem can be Resolved!

- 1) This problem can be resolved if Congress Members and those in power speak up in support of Tibet to help change their dire situation. Without this Tibet’s culture will disappear.

⁸ Over 10,000 sign petition rejecting a Tibetan as university student president in Toronto. (2019, February 18). Retrieved from <https://freetibet.org/news-media/na/over-10000-sign-petition-rejecting-tibetan-university-student-president-canada>

- 2) We have a responsibility, not only as Americans but as humans, to prevent the violence in Tibet. We aim to help these non-violent people through our advocacy, and to organize in order to condemn the actions of the Chinese government which has tried so desperately to silence this pressing issue. It's time to put Tibet first.

Take Action: All who Seek Peace & Democracy Must Rally to Stop China

- Tibet is disappearing culturally. All Americans and people around the world who seek peace, democracy and dignity for humankind must rally to stop China from the total destruction of Tibet's culture and stop cruel and inhumane treatment of Tibetan people.
- Meet and send letters to Congress Members calling for an end to China's unwarranted and unlawful aggression against Tibet.
- Send letters asking the UN Secretary General António Guterres and President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker to have renewed and continuous special sessions that address the egregious violations by China against the peaceful Tibetan people.
- Join our twitter and E-campaign to bring global awareness to this issue. Our campaign and movement will start by creating an online campaign, spreading the word through social media and a website, and we will get in contact with our elected officials to make our voices heard on the Tibetan issue.
- The whole world needs to know about the human rights violations going on in Tibet, and understand the implications of letting this kind of violence and cultural erasure continue.

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