

Statement of Support for the Tibetan People on the 59th Anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising Day

On the occasion of the 59th Anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising Day, we the undersigned Members of Parliament from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania pay tribute to the courage and resilience of the Tibetan people in continuing their freedom struggle and express our full support for them in their ongoing efforts to protect their political, social, cultural and environmental rights.

We, further, condemn the Chinese authorities' repressive policies in Tibet and are appalled by the continued reports of the ongoing human rights violation in Tibet. Amnesty International reported that in 2017, "Tibetans continued to face discrimination and restrictions on their rights to freedom of religion and belief, of opinion and expression, of peaceful assembly and of association." Freedom House rated Tibet as one of the worst places in the world, after Syria, for political rights and civil liberties in 2017, with a score of just 1 out of 100 in their Freedom Rating index.

We have noted with deep sadness that since February 27, 2009, 152 Tibetans in Tibet have self-immolated in protest against the Chinese government's policies, the most recent tragic case being that of Tsekho Tugchak, a Tibetan man in his 40s who set himself on fire just three days ago on 7th March.

We have also noted with grave concern that in an effort to manage the narrative about their repressive rule in Tibet and to limit alternative voices, the Chinese authorities continue to maintain strict controls over access to Tibet, making it one the most closed places on earth. The few rare visits by foreign diplomats, human rights monitors and journalists that are permitted by the Chinese authorities are heavily restricted and carefully stage-managed. According to the Foreign Correspondents' Club of China, in 2017 80% of China based correspondents travelling to Tibetan inhabited areas reported significant attempts by Chinese officials and security agents to hamper their reporting.

We, therefore, call on our respective governments and the European Union to:

i) urge China to grant independent observers, including the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, immediate and unhindered access to Tibet to assess the human rights situation on the ground.

ii) urge China to release all Tibetan political prisoners, raising the specific cases of the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima; Tashi Wangchuk, a Tibetan language activist tried on charges of “separatism” and who could receive a prison sentence of up to 15 years; Lobsang Jamyang, a Kirti monk and a prolific writer sentenced to seven and a half years for "leaking state secrets"; Lobsang Kunchok, a Kirti Monastery monk who was given a suspended death sentence for self-immolation of Tibetans in Amdo Ngaba; Dolma Kyab, the husband of Kunchok Wangmo who self-immolated protesting against Chinese rule; Karma Samdrup, the Tibetan environmentalist sentenced to 15 years; Yeshe Choedon, a retired doctor who was given a 15-year imprisonment for sharing information about 2008 mass protests; and Bonkho Kyi, who was sentenced to 7 years for celebrating His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s 80th birthday.

In light of the Tibetans’ rejection of the current situation in their homeland, we firmly hold the view that a viable long-term resolution can only be achieved through an outcome that is mutually beneficial for both the Chinese and the Tibetans. His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration have repeatedly expressed their commitment to their policy of the Middle Way Approach, one that seeks meaningful autonomy for the Tibetan people within China.

We, therefore, call upon the Chinese authorities to begin a meaningful dialogue with the envoys of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to resolve to the longstanding issue of Tibet.

10th March 2018

Signatories

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