



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA

Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
Ottawa, ON K1A 0G2

Re: 25th anniversary of the disappearance of 11th Panchen Lama - Gedhun Choekyi Nyima

Dear Prime Minister,

We write to you in advance of the 25th anniversary of the disappearance of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the 11th Panchen Lama of Tibet, on May 17, 1995. At the time of his disappearance, Gendun Choekyi Nyima was just six years old. Neither he nor his family have been seen or heard from since. Often referred to as the moon to the Dalai Lama's sun, the Panchen Lama is the second most important religious leader within Tibetan Buddhism.

The enforced disappearance of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his family members is not just an egregious crime against him and his family, it is also a serious offence to the Tibetan people. It is an interference in sacred traditions of Tibetan Buddhism and sets a dangerous precedent for possible interference in the process of identifying the reincarnations of future Dalai Lamas.

Along with the arbitrary arrest and detention of Tibetan religious leaders, China has recently intensified its application of discriminatory policies with the intention of 'adapting religion to socialism with Chinese characteristics.' Since 2016, Chinese authorities have demolished more than 4700 homes of monks and nuns and have evicted more than 4800 from two major religious institutes – Larung Gar and Yarchen Gar. State authorities have also appointed Communist Party officials to key supervisory positions at such institutes to tighten state control over them.



Since 1995, several governments, including Canadian governments, have requested permission to visit the Panchen Lama in order to verify his safety and well-being. Similarly, efforts by human rights organizations including the UN Committee Against Torture, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, as well as Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, have been unsuccessful. Chinese authorities have consistently denied permission and access.

Therefore we, the undersigned parliamentarians, ask that the Right Honourable Prime Minister:


1. Issue a statement calling on China to release Tibet's 11th Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his entire family, and to stop the violation of the religious freedoms of all peoples under its jurisdiction, including Tibetan Buddhists, Uighur Muslims, Falun Gong practitioners and Christians;
2. Urge China to allow an independent fact-finding mission to assess the human rights violations perpetrated against Tibetans in Tibet and other regions in China.

Sincerely,



Garnett Genuis, M.P.

Shadow Minister for Multiculturalism & for Canada-China Relations



Ziad Aboultaif, M.P.

Shadow Minister for Digital Government



Colin Carrie, M.P.

Shadow Minister for Canada-U.S. Relations and the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario



Kerry Diotte, M.P.



Hon. Kerry-Lynne Findlay, P.C., M.P.

Shadow Minister for Environment & Climate Change



Jasraj Singh Hallan, M.P.

Deputy Shadow Minister for Multiculturalism



Marty Morantz, M.P.

Shadow Minister for National Revenue



Scott Reid, M.P.



Nelly Shin, M.P.
Deputy Shadow Minister for Canadian Heritage



Karen Vecchio, M.P.
Shadow Minister for Women and Gender Equality



Arnold Viersen, M.P.
Deputy Shadow Minister for Crown-Indigenous
Relations



Cathay Wagantall, M.P.
Deputy Shadow Minister for Veterans Affairs

Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Re: 25th anniversary of the disappearance of 11th Panchen Lama - Gedhun Choekyi Nyima

Right Honourable Prime Minister Justin Trudeau:

We write to you on the 25th anniversary of the disappearance of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the 11th Panchen Lama of Tibet, on May 17, 1995. At the time of his disappearance, Gendun Choekyi Nyima was just six years old. Neither he nor his family have been seen or heard from since. Often referred to as the moon to the Dalai Lama's sun, the Panchen Lama is the second most important religious leader within Tibetan Buddhism.

The enforced disappearance of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his family members is a continuous crime not just against him, his family and the Tibetan people, but also against every individual who believes in the sanctity of human rights. It is an interference in the sacred Buddhist traditions of recognizing the reincarnation of lamas and sets a dangerous precedent for possible interference in the process of identifying the reincarnations of future Dalai Lamas.

Along with the arbitrary arrest and detention of Tibetan religious leaders, China has imposed discriminatory policies such as 'adapting religion to socialism with Chinese characteristics' and 'sinicizing Tibetan Buddhism' that are used to increase compulsory political re-education campaigns and to control the religious education of monks and nuns. Since 2016, Chinese authorities have demolished more than 4700 homes of monks and nuns and have evicted more than 4800 monks, nuns and students from two major religious institutes – Larung Gar and Yarchen Gar. State authorities have also appointed members from the Communist Party of China and the People's Republic of China to key management and supervisory positions at the institutes to tighten state control over them.

Since 1995, several governments, including Canadian governments, have called for the Panchen Lama's release and requested permission to visit the Panchen Lama in order to verify his safety and well-being. These requests have been denied by the Chinese authorities. Similarly, efforts by a number of human rights organizations including the UN Committee Against Torture, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, as well as Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief, have been unsuccessful. The Chinese authorities have consistently denied permission and access, stating that the Panchen Gedhun Choekyi Nyima does not wish to be disturbed.

Prime Minister we know that you personally have raised concerns regarding human rights practices directly with the Chinese authorities on numerous occasions, including during your visit to China in December 2017 and your meeting with Premier Li Keqiang where you had open and frank discussions on human rights, freedom of expression, and freedom of religion as part of the third Canada-China Annual Leaders' Dialogue on November 14, 2018. We are grateful for these efforts and ask you to continue this critical advocacy, at a time when the human rights of so many groups in China are imperiled (Hong Kong dissenters, Tibetans, Uighurs, Christians, Black Africans, etc.).

Therefore we, the undersigned parliamentarians, urge the the Right Honourable Prime Minister to:

- * Call on China to release Tibet's 11th Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his entire family;
- * Call on China to cease interfering in the religious practices of the peoples under its regime including Tibetan Buddhists, Uighur Muslims and Christians;
- * Call on China to allow an independent fact-finding mission to assess the human rights violations perpetrated against Tibetans in Tibet and other regions in China; and
- * release a statement/press note raising serious concerns and calling for the immediate release of the 11th Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima in this 25th year of his enforced disappearance.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth May, M.P.
Parliamentary Leader of the Green Party of Canada

Jenica Atwin, M.P.
Member, Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic

Paul, Manly, M.P.
Member, Special Committee on the COVID-19 Pandemic

Randall Garrison, M.P.
Member, Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights

Mobina Jaffer, Senator
Deputy Chair, Standing Committee on National Security and Defence

Arif Virani, M.P.
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada

James Maloney, M.P.
Chair, Subcommittee on Agenda and Procedure of the Standing Committee on Natural Resources

Sven Spengemann, M.P.
Member, Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

Larry Bagnell, M.P.
Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages