

On the occasion of the 35th birthday of the 11th Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima of Tibet, we call on the Chinese authorities for his immediate release along with his family, teacher and other Tibetan political prisoners.

Gedhun Choekyi Nyima was born on 25 April 1989 in Tibet. His Holiness the Dalai Lama recognized the then six-year-old Gedhun Choekyi Nyima as the 11th Panchen Lama. On 17 May 1995, the Chinese authorities abducted him along with his family and Chadrel Rinpoche, making the six-year-old the world's youngest political prisoner in the world. None of them have been seen nor heard from since.

We strongly condemn the 29-year-long enforced disappearance of the 11th Panchen Lama, which serves as a reminder of China's continued oppression of Tibetans and their blatant disregard for human rights.

Consequently, we call on the Chinese authorities to respect Tibetan peoples' right to freedom of religion and right to select the reincarnation of their religious leaders, including His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, in accordance to the Buddhist tradition, without interference from the Chinese government.

Els Van Hoof,



Chair of the External Relations
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