

**Hearing on human rights in China in the run-up to the Olympics  
European Parliament, Subcommittee on Human Rights  
Brussels, November 26, 2007**

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I would like to thank you Madam Chair and the Subcommittee for inviting the International Campaign for Tibet to participate to this important hearing.

I will try to answer in this presentation to three following questions:

1. **Why does ICT have a specific Olympic Campaign focusing on Tibet?**
2. **What are the content and the activities of this Campaign?**
3. **What are the political messages that we want to raise on Tibet in the run-up of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games?**

Before starting, let me make one introductory remark. When our organization speaks about Tibet, we do not limit its **geographical size** to the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) created by Chinese Authorities in 1965, which is paradoxically less ‘autonomous’ than other Chinese Provinces. ICT's usage of the term Tibet reflects the political geography defined by most Tibetans to include the Tibet Autonomous Region and Tibetan autonomous prefectures and counties in Chinghai, Yunnan, Gansu and Sichuan provinces as shown on the map here under.



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## **1- Why do we have a specific Olympic Campaign focusing on Tibet?**

ICT launched its **Race for Tibet** campaign in 2006 ([www.racefortibet.org](http://www.racefortibet.org)). Race for Tibet is a campaign that focuses on the opportunities that the Beijing 2008 Games offer as a platform for change. We urge the Chinese authorities to improve their human rights record in Tibet and to initiate direct negotiations with His Holiness the Dalai Lama to reach a solution to the Tibet issue.

Our campaign does not call for a boycott but recognizes that by accepting to host the 2008 Olympics, China has obligations to improve its human rights record in general and its actions in Tibet in particular. With less than one year to go, Race for Tibet will intensify its activities based upon the fact that the situation inside Tibet with regards to the freedom of expression, the freedom of press, the freedom of religion and other important issues related to the survival of Tibet's culture and environment has so far not improved and in many areas, instead, has deteriorated.

What is the situation in Tibet today? Let me present four tendencies that affect the living conditions and the situation of Tibetans in a very significant way:

### **1- Attempts by Chinese Authorities to increase the control over Tibetan Buddhism<sup>2</sup>**

Let me mention a very concrete example. The Chinese government has adopted new measures stating that in TAR and other regions populated by Tibetans all reincarnated lamas (tulkus) must have government approval. The measures, which are deliberately targeted at one of the core belief systems of Tibetan Buddhism, reveal the Party's agenda to undermine and supplant the Tibetan religious hierarchy and weaken the authority of legitimate Tibetan religious leaders including the Dalai Lama<sup>3</sup>.

The following developments on control over religion can be underlined:

- Disturbing precedents on religious practice in the Tibet Autonomous Region
- A stepping up of the patriotic education campaign in religious institutions.
- A commitment by the government of the People's Republic of China to strengthen the powers of the Chinese Communist Party's Democratic Management Committees in religious institutions.
- A renewed determination by Chinese authorities to crack down on the influence of the Dalai Lama in Tibet.
- The severe undermining of traditional systems of monastic education.
- Appropriation by the atheistic Chinese state of authorities necessary for the transmission of teachings and the identification of reincarnate lamas.

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<sup>2</sup> Please consult ICT's 2007 Religion Report <http://savetibet.org/documents/pdfs/2007ReligionReport.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> More information: <http://www.savetibet.org/news/newsitem.php?id=1159>

## 2 An intensification of demographic colonization of Tibet

The influx of Chinese to Tibet linked to the **railway** has been described by Tibetans as a “second invasion of Tibet”. Tibetan people constitute now **a minority in the capital, Lhasa city!**

Various official statements have made it clear that China’s Western Development Strategy actively encourages China’s professionals, experts and workers to go with their families to “develop and pioneer in ethnic autonomous areas”, a phrase which is enshrined in legislation as a part of the Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law (REAL). This is a contrast to the situation in China, where the migration of people to cities and other areas is actively discouraged by means of a strict system of residency registration, which forces people not in their home areas to pay far higher prices for services such as health and education.

Although migration to Tibetan areas is explicitly encouraged in China’s development strategies, senior officials in the TAR have still attempted to deny the scale of migration from the Chinese mainland.

An article published in Sichuan Province in July 2007 reported, “According to someone who has worked in Lhasa for many years, following the opening of the Qinghai-Tibet railway the population of outsiders has gradually become more than half of Lhasa City’s total population.” The article claims that at least 100,000 migrant workers from Sichuan are in Lhasa, which has a registered urban population of 270,000 people – many if not most of whom are also Chinese – and that the Sichuan dialect is now the language most commonly heard in the city. Lhasa is described in the article as the “back garden” of Chengdu, Sichuan’s provincial capital. The July 2007 article continues, “There isn’t any official data which can prove it yet, but it can definitely be confirmed that many of the Sichuanese who came to Lhasa [since the railway opened] have chosen to stay.”<sup>4</sup>

## 3 Increased social and economical marginalization of the Tibetan population

Tibetans suffer from increasing poverty, rural-urban inequality, the worst education indicators in the People’s Republic of China, and little or no health care provision in most areas.

Tibet’s rapid employment and income growth has been mainly in the modern urban sector, and has been driven by a private sector subject to endemic corruption in which Non-Tibetan populations have been dominant. This has contributed to rapidly increasing income disparity between urban and rural areas and also between Chinese and Tibetan populations, as most Tibetans still depend for their livelihoods on relatively low productivity subsistence agriculture and animal husbandry.

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<sup>4</sup> “The Sichuan dialect is the common language” – 100,000 Sichuan people in Lhasa digging for gold [“四川话就是普通话” 10万川人拉萨掘金], Sichuan Online, July 4, 2007, available (in Chinese) at: [www.scol.com.cn](http://www.scol.com.cn).

Government investment has given priority to the development of infrastructure supporting opening up in urban areas. This has resulted in inadequate funds being available for rural economic and social infrastructure, including: rural credit, improved basic health services and, education skills training, which in turn has led to an increase in government encouragement of more skilled Chinese migrants.

Economic reforms have made it more difficult for traditional Tibetan urban enterprises to compete with better funded, more experienced and lower cost Chinese managed enterprises in urban areas. For instance, Chinese businesses now constitute about 70% of all businesses in the Lhasa municipality squeezing out Tibetan enterprises even in traditional Tibetan areas such as clothing. Chinese is also the language of commerce.

Education levels among Tibetans are much lower than those of Chinese. This undermines the ability of Tibetans to compete for employment and other economic advantages in an emerging market economy that attracts Chinese settlers.

Based on 2000 census data, the Tibetan rate of illiteracy (47%) is more than five times higher than for Chinese (8.6%) while Chinese reach senior middle school at more than five times the rate of Tibetans. The rate of illiteracy among Tibetan migrants in Lhasa is almost ten times higher than for Chinese migrants. Most rural Tibetan children today don't advance beyond primary schooling.

The imposition of Chinese urban and industrial models on traditional modes of production amongst Tibet's nomads is leading to increasing poverty and contributing to grassland degradation.

China says that its policy of settling herders aims to improve the economic viability of animal husbandry and reduces the effects of natural disasters on the livelihood of Tibetan herders. But the unspoken agenda clearly involves a greater administrative control over a population with fixed addresses.

For many nomads, the transition to a more urban lifestyle is difficult. They are often being resettled into blocks of housing by the side of roads or in newly created urban areas, and face a problem of creating an entirely new and sustainable livelihood. Many of them are unable to compete for work with more skilled Chinese workers. 5

While China says it has brought progress to Tibetan areas, the reality on the ground is very different. Despite frequent Chinese government proclamations that they have been pouring money into health care, for instance, official Chinese statistics show that the GDP value of the health care sector in the TAR actually decreased in nominal value

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5 In the first three years of a nomad settlement program launched in 2001, authorities in the TAR relocated 48,000 nomadic herders and settled them in fixed communities. A government program to settle nomadic herders, including Tibetans, in Qinghai province placed about 10,000 families in fixed communities by 2005.

between 2001 and 2003 – in only two years, its share fell from 6.8 to 4.5% of the tertiary sector.<sup>6</sup>

As a result of the failure of the health system to reach rural areas, coupled with prohibitive medical costs, large numbers of Tibetans are dying from easily treatable conditions such as diarrhoea, dysentery and pneumonia. In Tibet there is a high incidence of diseases resulting from malnutrition, outbreaks of human plague, and rates of child and infant mortality so high that Tibet can be categorised as one of the less developed regions on earth.<sup>7</sup>

## **2- Worsening of the environmental situation on the Tibetan Plateau**

The ongoing **risks** to the health and sustainability of the Tibetan environment that result from Chinese government policies are due to:

- reckless resource extraction and timber harvesting,
- social re-engineering that interferes with traditional livelihoods and practices that protect Tibetan lands and animals and relocate Tibetan nomads and farmers off their lands and into housing compounds,
- and rapid urbanization and the radical increase of Chinese settlers into Tibet;

The **railway** has enabled the increased exploitation of Tibet's natural and mineral resources by the Chinese state and Chinese companies, as outlined in the PRC's plan to develop the western regions. The extraction of these resources is a primary reason for the construction of the railroad – and it is only now, with the coming of the railroad, that industrial modernization can begin, with large-scale mining for the first time in the TAR, and the often controversial involvement of foreign companies in the process<sup>8</sup>.

I would now like to give one **very concrete and recent illustration** of the Human Rights situation in Tibet today: the arrest and sentencing of 4 Tibetans in Eastern Tibet who can be considered as the four last Tibetan Political Prisoners.

On August 1 2007, Runggye Adak, a Tibetan nomad who took to the stage during the Lithang Horse Festival (Eastern Tibet) and called for the Dalai Lama's return to Tibet, has been jailed for eight years on charges of 'inciting to split the country', according to a statement released by Xinhua on 20<sup>th</sup> November. Runggye Adak's nephew, Adak Lupoe, a senior monk from Lithang monastery, received a longer sentence of ten years, and Tibetan art teacher and musician Kunkhyen was jailed for nine years, both for attempting to provide pictures and information to 'overseas organizations' which were judged to

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<sup>6</sup> Andrew Fischer, State Growth and Social Exclusion in Tibet: Challenges of Recent Economic Growth, 2005

<sup>7</sup> Delivery and Deficiency: Health and Health Care in Tibet, TIN, 2002

<sup>8</sup> A report on the impacts of the railway (social, economical, environmental...) will soon be published by ICT and will be put on our website ([www.savetibet.org](http://www.savetibet.org)).

'endanger national security'. A fourth Tibetan, Jarib Lothog, was sentenced to three years in prison linked to the same case<sup>9</sup>.

It is significant that the two Tibetans allegedly reporting on the event were sentenced to longer terms than the perpetrator, and may be intended to convey an **intimidatory signal to Tibetans about passing on news about unrest or dissent to the outside world, particularly in the run-up to the summer Olympics in Beijing.**



**Runggye Adak (Ch. Rongji Azha)**

Sentenced to **EIGHT years** imprisonment and **FOUR** years deprivation of political rights for “inciting to split the country”

- Tibetan nomad, 53 years old, father of 11 children.
- Went on stage on 1 August at the Lithang Horse Festival and called for the Dalai Lama to return to Tibet, called for the freedom of the Panchen Lama, Gendun Choekyi Nyima, and Tenzin Deleg Rinpoche, a senior and respected lama from the area who is serving a life sentence for alleged involvement in bombing offences.
- Was immediately arrested and held in Lithang, where protests broke out. Over a period of days, military personnel arrived in the area and ended the protest using tear gas and stun grenades.
- During his trial, Adak stated: "I wanted His Holiness to return, and wanted to raise Tibetan concerns and grievances, as there is no outlet for us to do so. That made me sad and made me act."



**Lupoe Adak (Ch. Lubo Azha)**

Sentenced to **TEN years imprisonment** and **FIVE** years deprivation of political rights for “spying for overseas organizations or being engaged in splittist activities”

- Runggye Adak's nephew and a senior monk at Lithang monastery. Involved in the administration of the monastery, which is now a target for increasingly repressive political campaigns.
- Detained on 21 August 2007 after calling for the release of Runggye Adak.
- In his early forties and respected in the local area for his Buddhist scholarship and for his concern about the Tibetan education of young people.

<sup>9</sup> According to the political prisoner data base of the U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China, the average sentence of Tibetan political prisoners is approximately 10 years and 11 months.



**Kunkhyen** (Ch. Jacmyang Goinqen)

Sentenced to **NINE years imprisonment** and **FOUR** years deprivation of political rights for “spying for overseas organizations or being engaged in splittist activities”

- Art and music teacher at Lithang Middle School.
- Detained at end of August after a systematic investigation of local people suspected of being loyal to the Dalai Lama or of supporting the views expressed by Runggye Adak.
- In early thirties, a popular local musician and artist known for painting murals in some of the local monasteries.



**Jarib Lothog** (Ch. Lutog)

Sentenced to **THREE years imprisonment** and **TWO** years deprivation of political rights for “spying for overseas organizations or being engaged in splittist activities”

- Tibetan nomad in early thirties from Lithang.
- Detained in a hotel room in Chengdu shortly after the 1 August unrest.
- Given lighter sentence than Lupoe and Kunkhyen “because he voluntarily surrendered his criminal activities to the judiciary”, according to the court verdict.

## **2- What are the content and the activities of this Campaign?**

ICT’s Race for Tibet campaign is supported by different Tibet Support Groups in different continents. [www.racefortibet.org](http://www.racefortibet.org). The campaign is implemented at 3 different levels.:

### **- International**

At a global level, the campaign collects signatures for petitions targeting officials in the IOC, western governments and the Chinese authorities. Race for Tibet, by using the metaphor of giving voice to all Tibetans, aims to collect as many signatures as Tibetans that live in Tibet. The campaign functions as an umbrella under which campaigns are organized focusing on the release of political prisoners, for economic, social and cultural rights, civil and political rights, the right of religious freedom, press freedom and for the release of the Panchen Lama.

Race for Tibet works closely with other TSGs around the world on specific targets such as events during the torch relay events in London, Paris, San Francisco and Mumbai. Race for Tibet also supports the campaign of the International Tibet Support Network that lobbies for the inclusion of a Tibetan team of athletes during the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games ([www.supportteamtibet.org](http://www.supportteamtibet.org)). ICT is forming, like other Tibet support groups, a team of high profile people that support the goals of the campaign.

### **- Local / national:**

Under the banner of the Race for Tibet Campaign, local groups in different countries rally behind common themes focusing on the issues mentioned above. Campaigns at the grass root level foster political and public support for these issues. The general public works towards these goals as part of Race for Tibet through popular sports events such as marathons, baseball games, cycle events, football games, ice skating races and activities in fitness clubs. Race for Tibet organizes music festivals, rallies, cultural events, panel discussions, film festivals and thematic days. Towards the start of the games high profile events are planned that involves people from the sports, political and art scene who put themselves behind the goals of the campaign. The public is also targeted through online campaigns and petitions.

### **- Tibetan empowerment:**

Race for Tibet provides a platform for Tibetan athletes. Through our campaign we combine the strengthening of sports in the Tibetan community and the way sport are a means to further the Tibetan cause. A special emphasis lies on the training of Tibetan athletes such as runners that participate in marathons and the training and touring of the Tibetan National Football Team that has Dharamsala in India as its home base. With the help of professional organizations ICT organizes trainings and test matches for the Tibetan football team. I would like to mention that today the coach of the Tibetan Football Team, Mr Kelsang Dhondup is also present.

We also train young Tibetan football players who will be trainers in their own communities. Race for Tibet promotes the involvement of Tibetans also in other sports by organizing or participating in sports events enable Tibetans to draw attention to the issues in Tibet, while at the same time seeking to strengthen the role of sports in the Tibetan community.

### **3 - What are the political messages and recommendations that ICT want to raise on Tibet in the run-up of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games?**

In view of the Beijing 2008 Summer Olympic Games, ICT calls on the EU Institutions and the Governments and Parliaments of the 27 EU Member States:

1. to ensure that China's actions and deeds actively contribute to the realization of the **UN Olympics Truce**, as passed by the UN General Assembly on 31 October 2007 (GA/10650);
2. to actively support for the **dialogue between representatives of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Chinese government**, including through the EU-China Human

Rights Dialogue, in order to lead to tangible progress towards a negotiated settlement on the issue of Tibet within the framework of the PRC<sup>10</sup>;

3. to encourage China to accept the visit of **study groups** to Tibet to look at the actual reality on the ground in the spirit of “seeking truth from the facts” in order overcome conflicting perspectives on the current situation inside Tibet between both parties in the framework of the dialogue process;
4. to support a **direct meeting** in China between the Chinese Authorities and His Holiness the Dalai Lama before the 2008 Olympic Games;
5. to encourage **Officials within the EU** and Member States, in particular heads of States and Governments, Ministers of Foreign Affairs, President of the European Commission, and EU SG/HR of CFSP to **meet face-to-face with His Holiness the Dalai Lama** before, during and/or after the Olympic Games to show their support to the Tibetan issue;



*The Dalai Lama receiving The Gold Medal of the US Congress (17 October)*



*The Dalai Lama met the German Chancellor (23 September)*



*With the Canadian PM Stephen Harper (29 October)*

6. to supports calls by the **UN Special Rapporteur on Torture for China** to unconditionally release all Tibetans sentenced for the peaceful exercise of freedom of speech, assembly, association and religion, on the basis of vaguely defined political crimes;
7. to encourage China to **speed up the ratification of the ICCPR**, including the abolishment of administrative sentencing for Re-education through Labour and similar forms of forced re-education;
8. to call on China to promote the **freedom of press** and independent reporting for international and domestic journalists. This should include all travel to and reporting from Tibetan areas;

Thank you for your attention.

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<sup>10</sup> *The support to the dialogue process is one key objective of our organization. Since 2002, six rounds of talks have taken place (last one in July 2007). The objective of the dialogue is to implement a genuine autonomy for all Tibetans in a single administrative entity within China.*