

## 2007-2008 Tibet in Parliament

Details and links of when and how Tibet was raised in the UK parliament during the parliamentary session 2007-2008 (commenced 6 November 2007, ended 26 November 2008).

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### Useful links

20 November 2008: House of Commons Hansard Oral Answers: Topical Questions

Richard Younger-Ross (Teignbridge) (LD): Will the Secretary of State look at the situation facing the Tibetan community in Nepal? Following anti-Chinese demonstrations, a number of Tibetans face extradition to China, and have been denied entry to India. Considering Britain's relationships with Nepal, our history and relations with India and the fact that Britain occupied Tibet for the best part of 40 years at the beginning of the last century, what can the Secretary of State do for the Tibetan community there?

Bill Rammell: I am aware of the concerns that the hon. Gentleman has expressed. We are, through our embassy, discussing those matters, and the recent change to our policy on Tibet means that we are now in a position to focus forcefully on the issue of human rights and the need in the Chinese constitution for greater regional autonomy. We are now in a position to push those issues very strongly.

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18 November 2008: House of Commons Hansard Written Answers: Foreign and Commonwealth Office: China Tibet

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment he has made of the positive outcomes for the Tibetans which have emerged from the UK-China Human Rights Dialogue since 2003.

Bill Rammell: The UK has raised human rights issues in Tibet with the Chinese authorities at each round of dialogue. The last round of the dialogue, in January 2008, was accompanied by a field trip to Tibet, where the delegation visited Drapchi prison, a police station and a criminal trial, and raised concerns directly with local officials. We have also raised

Tibet repeatedly in political discussions, including when my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister spoke by telephone to Premier Wen on 7 November. We have lobbied on a number of individual cases of concern as part of these various discussions, which we judge may have contributed to early releases and sentence reductions. We continue to support small-scale development projects in Tibet through our embassy in Beijing.

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18 November 2008: House of Commons Hansard Written Answers: Foreign and Commonwealth Offices: Panchen Lama

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what recent steps he has taken to establish the whereabouts and health of the Panchen Lama; and if he will press for his release.

Bill Rammell: We have raised the case of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima at the last seven meetings of the UK/China Human Rights Dialogue, most recently in January 2008. We have asked for information on his health and whereabouts; supported the recommendation by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child that China should allow an independent expert to visit him; and have pressed for him to enjoy freedom of movement and the freedom to choose his own career. The Government were informed during the dialogue field trip to Tibet in January 2008 that the Panchen Lama was safe and well in his home town. We will continue to raise this case with the Chinese government.

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18 November 2008: House of Commons Hansard Written Answers: Foreign and Commonwealth Office: China Tibet.

Mr. Keith Simpson: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs whether benchmarks have been agreed to assess progress in the Sino-Tibetan dialogue; and if he will make a statement.

Bill Rammell: In his written ministerial statement of 29 October 2008, Official Report, my right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary made clear our interest in various aspects of the Tibetan issue. These include the need for respect for Tibetan culture, language and religion. We believe that the talks on Tibet offer the opportunity to make progress in all of these areas, as well as on wider issues of human rights, including the right to freedom of peaceful expression. We are disappointed that to date the dialogue has failed to make progress on any of this, and we urge both parties to redouble efforts and engage on the substance of the issues.

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17 November 2008: House of Commons Hansard Written Answers: Foreign and Commonwealth Office: China Politics and Government

Mr. Hague: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what estimate he has made of the number of Tibetans held in detention in China following the protests of March and April 2008; and what representations he has made to the Chinese authorities on obtaining due process for these detainees.

David Miliband: There has been no official confirmation of the number of Tibetans held in detention following the protests in March and April 2008. Unofficial estimates vary considerably—International Campaign for Tibet, for example, gives a figure of 4,000 people detained, of whom 2,000 had been released by 14 April. We continue to urge the Chinese authorities to ensure due process for all Tibetan detainees, including that they be allowed access to lawyers of their choice. We have also stressed the need to differentiate between those who peacefully express their views and those who commit violent crimes. I have spoken to Chinese Foreign Minister Yang on several occasions since the protests emphasising the need to respect human rights. My officials have raised the detentions directly with the Chinese authorities both in Beijing and London. At the end of March, EU Foreign Ministers called for all Tibetan detainees to be treated in conformity with international standards. The rights of the Tibetan detainees were also raised at the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue which took place in Slovenia on 15 May.

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11 November 2008: House of Commons Hansard Oral Answers: Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Topical Questions

Richard Younger-Ross (Teignbridge) (LD): Will the Secretary of State look at the situation facing the Tibetan community in Nepal? Following anti-Chinese demonstrations, a number of Tibetans face extradition to China, and have been denied entry to India. Considering Britain's relationships with Nepal, our history and relations with India and the fact that Britain occupied Tibet for the best part of 40 years at the beginning of the last century, what can the Secretary of State do for the Tibetan community there?

Bill Rammell: I am aware of the concerns that the hon. Gentleman has expressed. We are, through our embassy, discussing those matters, and the recent change to our policy on Tibet means that we are now in a position to focus forcefully on the issue of human rights and the need in the Chinese constitution for greater regional autonomy. We are now in a position to push those issues very strongly.

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11 November 2008: House of Commons Hansard Written Answers: Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Tibet.

Tim Loughton: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what discussions he has had with his Chinese counterpart on the latest rounds of talks between the Chinese Government and Tibetan representatives; and whether the UK has offered to play any role in the talks.

Bill Rammell: The Government are not a party to the dialogue between the Chinese Government and the Dalai Lama's representatives, but we have made clear our close interest in their progress, including to the visiting Assistant Foreign Minister last week. We are concerned at reports suggesting lack of progress at the latest round. We urge both parties to work together to achieve a negotiated solution, within the framework of the Chinese constitution.

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EDM 2331: Tibet and Assurances from the Chinese Government

22.10.2008, tabled by Harry Cohen (46 Signatories)

That this House expresses deep concern that despite assurances given by the Chinese government to the international community on the situation in Tibet, the Tibet Autonomous Region and other areas of Tibet remain under tight security following the widespread demonstrations in March and April; notes there has been no independent access to assess the humanitarian situation following the demonstrations; further notes that thousands remain in detention, their whereabouts unknown; further notes that trials are being conducted without due process of legal representation as recognised under international legal conventions; further notes that in the wake of an 6.6 magnitude earthquake near Lhasa inside Tibet that has affected over 60,000 people, the Chinese authorities have not invited international agencies to furnish emergency practical aid; and calls on the Government to urge strongly the Chinese authorities to grant immediate access into the Tibetan Autonomous Region and other areas of Tibet to the International Red Cross, the UN and other independent humanitarian aid organisations.

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22 October 2008: House of Commons Hansard Written Answers: Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Tibet Politics and Government

Norman Baker: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what his policy is on Tibet's right to national self-determination; and what recent steps he has taken in pursuing that policy.

Bill Rammell: Successive Governments have regarded Tibet as autonomous while recognising the special position of the Chinese authorities there. We have consistently informed the Chinese government of our view that greater autonomy should be granted to the Tibetans. But like all other EU members, we do not support Tibetan independence. We have emphasised that the current political difficulties in Tibet can best be resolved through dialogue between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama has stated publicly that he opposes violence and does not seek independence, but greater autonomy for Tibet. We consider that this provides a basis for a negotiated settlement to the issue of Tibet. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister had talks with both Premier Wen and President Hu while in China for the Olympic games. He reiterated our desire that the next round of the dialogue between the Chinese government and representatives of the Dalai Lama should take place in a constructive manner and produce positive outcomes.

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21 October 2008: House of Commons Hansard Written Answers: Foreign and Commonwealth Office: China Human Rights

Mr. Moore: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs what assessment has been made of the human rights situation in China following the conclusion of the Olympic Games; and if he will make a statement.

Bill Rammell: We remain concerned about the human rights situation in China and continue to devote considerable attention to encouraging respect for international standards. In certain areas, China's hosting of the Olympics has led to improvements. For example, we welcomed the media regulations put in place for foreign journalists prior to the games and are encouraged by indications that China will maintain a more flexible reporting regime for foreign media. We also welcome the higher profile given to the rights of disabled persons following the Paralympics and China's ratification of the International Covenant on the Rights of Disabled People earlier this year. None the less, we were disappointed that greater improvements in human rights did not take place in the run-up to the Olympic Games, and are concerned that in certain areas reports of human rights violations have increased. We remain particularly concerned about the situation in Tibet, which my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has raised recently with Premier Wen and President Hu, and continue to urge transparency and substantive dialogue as the way to address the underlying human rights issues. We were also disappointed that the areas designated for authorised protests set up during the Olympic Games were not utilised. We continue to believe that the extension of personal freedoms would be in China's own interest, and we will continue to encourage China to meet its commitments to international human rights standards, including through ratification of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. Human rights will continue to be an area of major focus in our engagement with China in the years ahead.

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15 September 2008: House of Commons Hansard Written Commons: Foreign and Commonwealth Office: Tibet Politics and Government

Harry Cohen: To ask the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs if he will make representations to the Chinese government encouraging that government to participate fully in the eighth round of talks between its representatives and those of the Dalai Lama.

Meg Munn: We have consistently emphasised to the Chinese Government, both in Beijing and London, that the political difficulties in Tibet can best be resolved through dialogue between the Chinese Government and the representatives of the Dalai Lama. My right hon. Friend the Foreign Secretary did this when he met the Chinese Foreign Minister on 12 June. We are pleased that the two sides have restarted the process of dialogue, meeting in Shenzhen in May and again

in Beijing from 1-2 July. We look forward to the eighth round of talks taking place as soon as possible and hope this will lead to substantive progress on the issues involved.

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