

## Tibet Lobby 2012 Follow-up Action

[12 April 2012] In March, over 225 Tibetans and supporters took part in Tibet Lobby 2012. At least 150 MPs were lobbied and the British government was called upon to take action for Tibet.

The response received from the Foreign Office, to the Tibet Lobby asks, was disappointing. Despite the urgency of the situation in Tibet, there was no commitment to undertake any further actions on Tibet other than what is already being done. Statements were made of having raised certain issues but without any specifics, such as when or what responses were received from the Chinese officials.

On 10 March a letter was delivered to the Prime Minister calling for action from the British government on Tibet. The letter was signed by a coalition of UK-based Tibet groups including Tibet Society. The Foreign Office responded on behalf of the Prime Minister, but once again only reiterated the occasions when the UK has raised the issue and failed to address the issue of the need for further action and specifically the request to initiate multi-lateral action with other governments.

Tibet Society continues to call on the British government to not only publicly call on the Chinese government to respect the human rights of the Tibetan people and end the military crackdown, but to also put mechanisms into place that will bring about real change for Tibetans in Tibet.

Follow-up Action | Background information | Tibet Lobby 2012 report

### Follow-up Action

Please write to your MP, asking them to raise the following four questions with the British Government:

(Note: If you lobbied your MP and/or your MP replied to your letter, please thank them for their time/letter. If your MP did not respond, remind them of your original letter, and ask they also raise the following questions.)

1. Where and when have British officials visited Tibetan regions, and what were the outcomes of these visits? Have officials requested to visit regions of eastern Tibet where there have been protests, such as Ngaba, Serthar and Rebkong, and if so what was China's response?
2. When did the British government urge the Chinese government "to work with local monasteries and communities" in order to resolve the underlying grievances of the Tibetan people? What was China's response, and has the British government condemned China on its recent decision to station government officials inside all monasteries in Tibet?
3. Given that bi-lateral approaches have failed to produce any positive outcomes for the Tibetan people, will the British government take the lead in organising an International Government Forum on the issue of Tibet, to formulate and plan mechanisms whereby governments can multi-laterally persuade and influence China that it is in their best interest to resolve the Tibet issue?
4. In the light of David Cameron's recent statement that strongly opposes repression, will the Prime Minister now publicly

call on the Chinese government to respect the human rights of the Tibetan people, to end the military crackdown and, for openness and transparency, allow independent observers, humanitarian agencies and world media into Tibet?

#### Additional Information

° Has your MP signed EDM 285? If your MP has not yet signed Early Day Motion 285: "Tibetans' Rights" please encourage them to do so. [Click here](#) to see if your MP has signed EDM 285 and to read the full text. [Prior to June 2012 MPs were being asked to sign EDM 2715, however as parliament is in a new session, a new EDM has been tabled.]

Note: some MPs are unwilling to sign EDMs. Ministers and MPs with certain responsibilities cannot sign EDMs, however others believe EDMs are not worthwhile. For unwilling MPs please let them know that the Chinese government does take note of EDMs and the level of support EDMs receive from MPs. Therefore signing EDM 285 will send a message to Beijing of support for Tibetan freedom. Also such parliamentary support tells Tibetans in Tibet that their voices are being heard and provides hope.

° To find your MP's contact details go to [findyourmp.parliament.uk](http://findyourmp.parliament.uk) or use the website [www.writetothem.com](http://www.writetothem.com) to send a message to your MP.

° Please send copies of any replies you receive to Tibet Society - email [paul@tibetsociety.com](mailto:paul@tibetsociety.com) or post to Tibet Society, Unit 9, 139 Fonthill Road, London N4 3HF - as this helps us to monitor the government's actions as well as parliamentary support.

° [Click here](#) to view the original asks for Tibet Lobby 2012.

#### Background to follow-up questions

##### 1. British officials visiting Tibetan regions

In response to concerns raised during Tibet Lobby 2012, Minister of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Jeremy Browne, wrote, "Our officials in China make regular visits to Tibetan areas." However, there were no further details on where and when such visits occurred. It is Tibet Society's understanding that these visits were made to less controversial areas in Tibet and that officials have been denied access to areas where protests have occurred. We need to stress the importance of continued pressure for these areas to be opened for scrutiny. The British government must not acquiesce to China's desire to silence Tibetan protestors.

##### 2. Urging China to work with local monasteries and communities

In his response, Jeremy Browne stated that the British government has "urged the Chinese government to work with local monasteries and communities to resolve the grievances which have led to [the] self-immolations." However there was no information regarding China's response.

On 16 March, Human Rights Watch reported that the Chinese government has ended self-control of monasteries, whereby senior monks run the monasteries in compliance with government regulations. Instead, government officials will be stationed inside each monastery to oversee the institution's affairs. Rather than resolving the grievances that have led to protests and self-immolations, such a move is likely to exacerbate the situation by further undermining religious freedom.

### 3. A multi-lateral approach

A multi-lateral approach is required to convince China that it must end its repressive policies in Tibet and address the injustices endured by Tibetans. The Chinese government, given its economic status, is able to ignore or dismiss requests from individual governments made through bi-lateral processes. Chinese leaders have even threatened trade sanctions if a foreign government is considered to be "meddling" in Tibet issues, such as hosting a visit by the Dalai Lama. By working together, countries will have greater influence and the Chinese leadership will find criticism more difficult to ignore as its economy is dependent on exports to the rest of the world.

In March 2011, Foreign Secretary William Hague announced that human rights would be at the core of the government's foreign policy. He added, "We believe that human rights are universal and apply to all people, of every religion, ethnicity or culture, in all places and at all times. We do not accept the argument that democracy is not right for all peoples, even though there is more than one model of democracy. The yearning for freedom and for a life free from oppression has the power to move millions to fight back for themselves and for future generations, and is one that we will always support."

Since then the British government has shown support for various freedom struggles, most notably in the Middle East. It is now time for Britain to show similar support for the people of Tibet. Public statements should be made (see point 4) and, more importantly, practical mechanisms must be put into place to seek real change for Tibetans in Tibet.

### 4. Public statements from the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary

On 12 April, whilst in on tour in Asia, David Cameron said, "The Arab Spring has shown that denying people their rights in the name of stability and security actually makes countries less stable in the end. Over time the pressure builds up until the people take to the streets and rightly demand their freedoms. So where cries for reform are being resisted and where people are being repressed, just as they are today in Syria, we must oppose the authoritarian leader."

How long are the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary prepared to remain silent on the issue of Tibet? Statements from junior ministers and backbench parliamentary debates, though welcome, only convey to Beijing the perception that British leaders do not believe the issue of Tibet is important. For calls of justice and freedom for the Tibetan people to be taken seriously by China they must be made by the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary.

Since 10 March, the anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising of 1959, the situation in Tibet has continued to deteriorate. Seven Tibetans have self-immolated in protest against China's regime (bringing the total to 33, of whom at least 24 have died). Thousands of Tibetans have taken to the streets to protest and numerous Tibetans have been arbitrarily arrested. Meanwhile, China continues to ban foreign media and observers in an effort to stop Tibetan voices from reaching the outside world. Despite China's military crackdown in areas of unrest, Tibetans continue to risk imprisonment and some are sacrificing their lives to try and bring an end to the ongoing oppression.

Further reading:

12 April: David Cameron's speech at Al Azhar University, Indonesia

23 March: Protests sweep eastern Tibet (Tibet Society)

16 March: Tibetan Monasteries Placed Under Direct Rule (Human Rights Watch)

15 March: Report on Tibet Lobby 2012 (Tibet Society)

Background information on self-immolations in Tibet (Tibet Society)

Take part in Tibet Lobby 2012, with original asks and materials (Tibet Society)

Tibet Society, the world's first Tibet support group, was founded in 1959. Funded by its members, it has been working for over 50 years to seek justice for Tibet through parliamentary lobbying, campaigns and actions. Help keep Tibet alive by joining Tibet Society today. (Annual membership £24; Overseas £36; Life £500).

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