

British government expresses "serious concern" over Tibet crisis

[18 December 2012] The British government has expressed "serious concern" about the current situation in Tibet. It has urged the Chinese authorities in Tibet to "exercise restraint" and called upon the Chinese government to allow "unrestricted access" to Tibetan area for diplomats, international media and concerned parties.

The statement, issued on 17 December by Foreign Office Minister Hugo Swire, comes in the wake of a declaration by the EU's High Representative Catherine Ashton. On 14 December, the EU stated its concern over "the restrictions on expressions of Tibetan identity" and calls on China to respect the civil, political, economic and social and cultural rights of the Tibetan people. The EU also "fully supports" the statement made by UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Navi Pillay on 2 November 2012, which condemned China's policies in Tibet.

Tibet Society welcomes the statements from the British government and the EU and hopes these messages will be given consistently and resolutely by all British and EU government ministers and officials in meetings with their Chinese counterparts. Given the parliamentary Christmas break, Tibet Society will consider its response and inform supporters of any follow-up action in the New Year.

Statement by UK Foreign Office Minister Hugo Swire (17 December 2012)

"We strongly support the recent statement from Baroness Ashton about the situation in Tibet. We continue to have serious concerns about the human rights situation there, including the self-immolations in Tibetan regions.

"We urge the Chinese authorities to exercise restraint. At the same time, I join Baroness Ashton in calling on Tibetans not to resort to extreme forms of protest such as self-immolation, and urge their community and religious leaders to use their influence to stop this tragic loss of life. We strongly support the resumption of meaningful dialogue to resolve the underlying grievances of Tibetan communities.

"I also urge the Chinese government to ensure unrestricted access to the Tibetan Autonomous Region and other Tibetan areas of China for diplomats, international media and other concerned parties. We believe a long term solution is best achieved through respect for universal principles of human rights and genuine autonomy for Tibet within the framework of the Chinese constitution."

Declaration by the High Representative, Catherine Ashton, on behalf of the European Union (14 December 2012)

"The EU is profoundly saddened by the increasing number of Tibetans committing self-immolation, many of them young people.

"We are concerned by the restrictions on expressions of Tibetan identity, which appear to be giving rise to a surge of discontent in the region. While respecting China's territorial integrity, the EU calls upon the Chinese authorities to address the deep-rooted causes of the frustration of the Tibetan people and ensure that their civil, political, economic and social and cultural rights are respected, including their right to enjoy their own culture, to practise their own religion and to use their own language.

"The EU fully supports the statement made by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Navi Pillay on 2 November 2012. The EU calls upon the Chinese authorities to respect the rights of Tibetans to peaceful assembly and expression, to act with restraint, and to release all individuals detained for taking part in peaceful demonstrations.

"We also urge Chinese authorities to allow free access to all Tibetan autonomous areas for diplomats as well as for international journalists.

"Recognising their intense sense of despair, the EU calls on Tibetans to refrain from resorting to extreme forms of protest, such as self-immolation, and on their community and religious leaders to use their influence to help stop this tragic loss of life.

"Finally, the EU encourages all concerned parties to resume a meaningful dialogue."

Links:

[Foreign Office statement \(17 December\)](#)

[EU's High Representative declaration \(14 December\)](#)

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