[15 June 2016] The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet has called on the UK government to ensure China's human rights record in Tibet is raised at the ongoing session of the UN Human Rights Council. The concerned MPs have sent letters to Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond and the UK's Permanent Representative at the UN in Geneva Julian Braithwaite, asking the UK to "stand with Tibetans in Tibet" by expressing concern over China's treatment of Tibetans and raising specific political prisoner cases.

The letters, signed on behalf of the APPG for Tibet by its chair Tim Loughton MP, urge the UK government to keep "human rights violations by China firmly on the Council's agenda" and to take "this opportunity to raise concerns about Tibet." In March 2016, during the 31st Session of the UN Human Rights Council, the UK joined 11 other countries in issuing a joint statement condemning China's human rights abuses.

The UK government is urged to use specific Council Agenda items to raise issues relating to Tibet, including the current crackdown which is suppressing peaceful dissent in Tibet and is resulting in numerous Tibetans being detained and imprisoned. As well as calling for all Tibetan political prisoners to be released, four cases in particular are requested to be raised, namely, monk and community leader Khenpo Kartse, human rights defender Tashi Wangchuk, primary school teacher Lhamo Kyab and retired doctor Yeshe Choedron.

The APPG for Tibet also urges the UK to call on China to allow visits to Tibet by UN Special Representatives, to address the issue of torture and to provide an update on the death in prison of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche.

The letters conclude by saying it is the Council's and the UK's duty "to ensure that China is held to account for the human rights situation in Tibet" and "to stand in solidarity with defenders and activists on the ground."

The text of the letters can be read in full below.

The letters are an initiative of the International Tibet Network, which is calling on all member states of the UN Human Rights Council to take action on China's human rights record in Tibet during the current Session, which is being held in Geneva and continues until 1st July.

The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet consists of UK MPs and Peers with an interest in Tibet and concern over China's occupation. The Group was founded in 1986 and has cross-party support.

Tibet Society is a member organisation of the International Tibet Network and is also the Secretariat for the All Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet.

Text of letters

Sent to Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP (Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs) and Mr Julian Braithwaite (UK Permanent Representative to the UN, Geneva)
14 June 2016

[Dear Sirs]

I am writing, on behalf of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet, to thank you for refusing to remain silent on the issue of human rights violations by the People’s Republic of China, and for taking a joint action to express your concerns during the 31st session of the UN Human Rights Council. Your unprecedented joint statement sent a vital message to China that such violations will not go ignored, and lent critical support to embattled human rights defenders.

Looking ahead to the Council’s 32nd Session, we urge that the United Kingdom keeps human rights violations by China firmly on the Council’s agenda. Furthermore we urge that the United Kingdom takes this opportunity to raise concerns about Tibet.

The 2nd cycle of China’s Universal Periodic Review is now reaching its midterm period. China accepted detailed recommendations on issues about and affecting the rights of Tibetans in Tibet, as well as human rights defenders and freedom of expression, association and assembly.

In November 2015, the Committee against Torture’s review of China resulted in strong concluding remarks about the treatment of Tibetans. The Committee specifically requested follow-up on issues related to attacks on human rights defenders and the abuse of the ‘State Secrets Law’, which is used often against Tibetans. The Committee also noted specific cases of deaths in detention, including that of Tibetan community leader Tenzin Delek Rinpoche [1], and expressed concerned about the lack of information given by China on a number of other individual cases, including 24 Tibetans currently in detention.

We urge that the United Kingdom takes an active role at the Human Rights Council to press China to address these issues. Specifically we ask that you stand with Tibetans in Tibet at the UN Human Rights Council in one, or all, of the following ways:

Council Agenda Items:

- Item 3: Express concern about the current crackdown across China, with particular reference to Tibet, and encourage other UN states to join you. In May 2016, Human Rights Watch issued a comprehensive report about how China’s ongoing campaign to suppress peaceful dissent in Tibet has led to a high rate of detentions, prosecutions, and convictions since 2008, and a changing pattern of unrest and politicized detentions, prosecutions, and convictions can be seen to link to China’s “stability maintenance” campaign – a policy that has resulted in unprecedented surveillance and control in Tibetan villages and towns. [2]

- Item 4: Use Item 4 Statements to specifically mention Tibet in the context of China’s severe crackdown and increased repression, highlighting the serious barriers to the existence of human rights in Tibet and across China, and call for the unconditional release of all political prisoners including:
  - Tibetan monk and community leader Khenpo Kartse (Karma Tsewang); [3]
  - Tibetan human rights defender Tashi Wangchuk; [4]
  - Tibetan primary school teacher Lhamo Kyab; [5]
Urge China to agree to requests for country visits by the High Commissioner for Human Rights and by Special Procedures, including Special Rapporteurs on Human Rights Defenders; on Freedom of Assembly and Association; on Freedom of Expression; on Freedom of Religion; and on Prevention of Torture.

Use other agenda items, including Item 5 and 6, to press China to provide detailed and transparent responses to questions about key human rights issues including:

- Outstanding country visit requests by Special Procedures, as above.
- Mid-term reporting on the progress made by China on its 2nd cycle Universal Periodic Review recommendations.
- The Committee Against Torture’s concluding remarks, including pressing China to give updates on the death of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche in custody and the lack of information on a number of specified cases, particularly of 24 Tibetans in detention.

It is the obligation of the UN Human Rights Council and States to ensure that China is held to account for the human rights situation in Tibet and it is a matter of principle and integrity that the international community continue to stand in solidarity with defenders and activists on the ground.

Yours sincerely,

Tim Loughton MP
Chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet

Notes:
1. documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G16/017/44/PDF/G1601744.pdf?OpenElement
3. docs.google.com/document/d/1t-N1oYI8ocBpiHUyTz7zTK70qUjglLfzxogmMyuBsc
4. docs.google.com/document/d/18lat5FcbpqpWc661RuzWMO9IfHqjKhnioIP-LgGU
5. docs.google.com/document/d/1T9L3QRjQ_nqUSeLp4UNIP5kTyjy7z6cQMsj2Qha1U
6. docs.google.com/document/d/1uhgMAyiCMIOyjU59pGLoBj4OwyiaVM1aRK-3UZsJTbM

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; Family £36; Life £500.
More details about membership