

British MPs urge China to halt demolition of Buddhist institutes in Tibet

[27 October 2016] On International Religious Freedom Day, the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet has issued a statement expressing its deep concern over China's crackdown at Buddhist institutes in eastern Tibet, urging the Chinese government to halt the expulsions and demolitions at Larung Gar and Yachen Gar, and calling on the UK government to raise its concerns with China and make a public statement.

Statement on religious repression in Tibet by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet

27 October 2016, London: "On International Religious Freedom Day, the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet expresses its deep concern at reports of state-sponsored religious repression in eastern Tibet. The reports include the forced eviction of thousands of monks and nuns from Buddhist institutes, the destruction of dwellings of those evicted and government interference in the management of the institutes.

"We call on the Chinese Government immediately to halt the expulsions and demolitions at Larung Gar Buddhist Institute and the expulsions at Yachen Gar Buddhist Institute.

"We urge the Chinese authorities to permit all those evicted to return, for affected infrastructure to be rebuilt and for Buddhist leaders and residents to be able to run the affairs of their institutes without government intrusion.

"In addition, we call on the UK Government to raise these matters directly with China; to ask for an immediate diplomatic visit with unrestricted access to Tibet, including Larung Gar and Yachen Gar; to remind the Chinese Government of its duty to respect religious freedom as expressed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in its own constitution; and, to make a public statement expressing serious concern over the situation at Larung Gar and Yachen Gar and the repression of religious activities in Tibet."

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

Note:

The All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet (APPGT), founded in 1986, consists of MPs and Lords who have an interest in, and concern for, the Tibetan cause and the Tibetan people. The APPGT has cross-party support.

The current officers of the APPGT are: Tim Loughton MP (Chair); and (Vice-Chairs) Lord Alton; Nic Dakin MP; Kate Hoey MP; Chris Law MP; Mark Pritchard MP; David Mackintosh MP; Lord Steel and Catherine West MP.

The stated purpose of the APPGT is: "To put pressure on Her Majesty's Government to encourage negotiations between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government in exile, whilst recognising that Tibet is an occupied country which had independent links with Britain."

Contact:

Paul Golding, Tibet Society*: 020 7923 0021, paul@tibetsociety.com

*Tibet Society is the Secretariat for the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet

Background:

On 20 July 2016, the Chinese authorities began a programme of forced expulsions and demolition of dwellings at the Larung Gar Buddhist Institute (pictured right) in Serthar county, Kham (now part of China's Sichuan province) aimed at reducing the resident population of monks and nuns by half to 5,000. The programme is due to be completed by September 2017. Three nuns have committed suicide since the demolition work began in protest against what one of the nuns referred to as "the endless Chinese harassment of innocent Buddhists".

Further information about Larung Gar:

10 Aug 2016: China expelling half the population of influential Tibetan Buddhist institute

6 Sept 2016: Three nuns commit suicide at Larung Gar in protest against demolition

11 Oct 2016: Larung Gar nuns told to voluntarily leave or face religious ban

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