

## China's rule over Tibet "highly repressive": Human Rights Watch

[13 January 2017] Respected international NGO Human Rights Watch has published its annual World Report on human rights. The report includes a stinging rebuke of Chinese President Xi Jinping's leadership, stating "the outlook for fundamental human rights... remains dire." The report highlights China's increased limitations on freedoms of expression, religion and assembly throughout 2016, and states Beijing's rule over Tibet remained "highly repressive".

Human Rights Watch's World Report 2017, published on 12 January, includes an analysis of the human rights situation throughout 2016 in China and Tibet. The report concludes, "There are few signs the Chinese Communist Party intends to change its authoritarian posture." It adds, "Under the leadership of President Xi Jinping... the outlook for fundamental human rights, including freedoms of expression, assembly, association and religion, remains dire."

The report notes, "In the ethnic minority regions of Xinjiang and Tibet, Beijing continued its highly repressive rule, curtailing political activity and many peaceful expressions of ethnic and religious identity."

The chapter on Tibet (copied in full below) refers to Chinese government campaigns on "anti-splittism" and "stability maintenance" that continued to stifle human rights, the development plans which Tibetans have no say in, and restrictions on religion including the demolition and evictions at Larung Gar.

The report also refers to three Tibetan political prisoners highlighted by Tibet Society: Tashi Wangchuk, Shokjang and Lomik.

Tibet (from World Report 2017 by Human Rights Watch)

Tibetans continue to face routine denial of basic freedoms of speech, assembly, and movement. In 2016 authorities prioritized rights-abusing "anti-splittism" and "stability maintenance" campaigns despite the absence of tangible threats, and forbade almost all residents of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) from foreign travel.

In August, Wu Yingjie, an ethnic Chinese Communist Party cadre, was appointed to succeed Chen Quanguo as TAR party secretary and is expected to continue Chen's policies of heavy-handed governance and social control. The 13th Five Year Plan began in 2016, and the TAR set ambitious goals for massive infrastructure construction and urban development; Tibetan areas of Qinghai and Sichuan provinces are also slated for greater resource extraction. Many reported public protests were against rural land grabs, including one in Gansu which security forces suppressed in May.

Continuing restrictions on religious freedom include a program of demolitions and evictions at Larung Gar monastic complex in Serta county, Sichuan, which will see the world's largest Tibetan Buddhist community shrink from its 2016 population of at least 10,000 to no more than 5,000 by September 2017. The Tibetan writers Shokjang and Lomik were given three and seven-and-a-half year sentences, respectively, and Lu Konchok Gyatso and Tashi Wangchuk remained in custody at time of writing, one for planning to publish a book and the other for speaking to the New York Times about the loss of Tibetan language teaching.

At time of writing, two more Tibetans had self-immolated in 2016, both in Sichuan. At least four Tibetans were believed to have died in custody, including Kandze nun Yeshe Lhakdrön, who has not been seen since her arrest in 2008.

The report also highlights further limits on civil society and freedom of expression in China and Tibet, with the passing of the laws on Cybersecurity (curtailing online freedoms) and Foreign NGO Management (restricting the work of foreign groups in China and limiting association with domestic organisations). The report also notes new restrictions placed on domestic media to ensure reporting was in step with Chinese Communist Party directives.

Further reading:

[World Report 2017 \(Human Rights Watch\)](#)

[China & Tibet: Events of 2016 \(Human Rights Watch\)](#)

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