

Report - Commemoration of the 58th Anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising Day (2017)

[13 March 2017] On 10 March 1959, Tibetans rose up against China's occupying forces. Thousands were killed and the aftermath led to the Dalai Lama and hundreds of thousands of Tibetans fleeing into exile in India. This year, Tibetans and Tibet supporters commemorated the 58th anniversary by remembering those who have died during China's occupation and calling for freedom and human rights in Tibet.

Tuesday, 7 March: Wreath-Laying Ceremony

Tibet Society and the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet (APPGT) hosted a Wreath-Laying ceremony at the Memorial to All Innocent Victims of Oppression, War and Violence at Westminster Abbey, to remember the victims of those Tibetans who died under China's occupation of Tibet.

On behalf of the Dean and Chapter of the Westminster Abbey, The Reverend Anthony Ball, Canon Steward, welcomed everyone to the Innocent Victims' Memorial by saying, "...here we remember so many who have suffered as a result of oppression and violence. In particular today, as we commemorate the 58th anniversary of the beginning of the Tibetan National Uprising, we remember those Tibetans who have died recently in Tibet, and those who suffer there today."

Mr Tim Loughton MP, Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet, and a group of MPs laid a wreath. The ceremony was also attended by representatives from the Office of Tibet, Tibetan Community in Britain, Free Tibet, Students for a Free and Tibet Society.

Mr Loughton addressed the gathering [see video] by saying:

"We have a strong and cross-party support group within parliament who do as much as we can to remember those in Tibet, who have lost their lives in their struggle for liberty and recognition of their own culture over the last 58 years.

And we think tirelessly of those who continue to live under oppression, unable to practice freely their own religions and their own culture in their own country.

And we pay tribute to those brave members of Tibet, both within and outside the geographical confinement of Tibet who never tire of promoting the cause of freedom for the Tibetans living under the Chinese.

We pay tribute to the Dalai Lama and to the Tibetan Parliament in exile, who do so much in such difficult circumstances to keep the flame of freedom and liberty burning for Tibet, just as for those Tibetans in Tibet and those living elsewhere around the world for the cause of freedom and liberty for the people to be able to practice their faith and their own cultures which is denied to the people of Tibet.

We look forward to happier days when the Chinese will come to realise that by snuffing out liberty for Tibetans it does not help the cause of Chinese people as a whole.

So, we are here today to make a common cause together with our friends and supporters of Tibet, both in UK and around the world, to make sure that the Tibetan people and the fight for their freedom is never forgotten.”

Tuesday, 7 March: Lobby of Parliament

A small contingent of Tibet lobbyists met with MPs including Chris Law of the Scottish National Party (SNP) in the parliament. Chris, who is also a member of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet, reassured his support for the Tibetan people’s freedom struggle to the Tibet contingent.

Later in the Central Lobby, a young student named - Miss Dana Kamour, member of Students for a Free Tibet and Kunsang Dolma, Campaign Manager of Tibetan Community in Britain, met with Emily Thornberry, the Shadow Foreign Secretary. They raised the Tibet issue with Emily Thornberry and requested her to take action for Tibet, which she agreed to follow up with the Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson.

This year’s lobby day was organised by Tibet Society, Tibetan Community in Britain, Free Tibet and Students for a Free Tibet.

Friday, 10 March: Tibet Freedom March & Rally

On 10 March, the four key Tibet groups in the UK - Tibet Society, Tibetan Community in Britain, Free Tibet and Students for a Free Tibet organised a protest march and rally in commemoration of the 58th Anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising Day of 10 March 1959.

Protesters gathered outside the Downing Street from 2pm. Representatives from the Tibet groups went to submit a letter to Prime Minister Theresa May at the Downing Street. The Tibet groups call on the Prime Minister to commit a meeting with the Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, and elected leader of the Tibetan people, Sikyong Lobsang Sangay of the Tibetan Government-in-exile, when they next visit the United Kingdom.

The letter from the Tibet groups also urged the British Prime Minister to urgently raise the ongoing forced removals of Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns from the Larung Gar Institute and the demolitions of their learning centre by the Chinese authorities.

The annual march, which was attended by nearly 300 people, made noisy protests from Downing Street to the Chinese Embassy. The Chinese officials were seen through the embassy windows, noticing the Tibet protest.

Friday, 10 March: Cultural Event

An evening event comprised of talks, film and music was organised at the Mahatma Gandhi Hall, Indian YMCA, London, aimed at enlightenment and engagement on Tibetan culture, history and campaign actions. This was attended by about 200 people from 5.30 to 8.30pm. His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Representative Mr Chonpel Tsering gave an official address and read out excerpts from the Kashag's (Central Tibetan Administration) 2017 Tenth March Anniversary Statement.

Other speakers highlighted the danger of Chinese government's propaganda war and their attempts of changing the narratives on Tibet through their rigorous economic influences and outreach initiatives across western universities/academics for e.g. through the establishment of Confucius Institutes.

A short video, showing the destructions of the Larung Gar Institute, was screened to raise awareness of China's ongoing crackdown on religious freedom of the Tibetan people.