

AN APPEAL TO ALL CHINESE SPIRITUAL BROTHERS AND SISTERS

Today I would like to make a personal appeal to all Chinese spiritual brothers and sisters, both inside as well as outside the People's Republic of China, and especially to the followers of the Buddha. I do this as a Buddhist monk and a student of our most revered teacher, the Buddha. I have already made an appeal to the general Chinese community.

Here I am appealing to you, my spiritual brothers and sisters, on an urgent humanitarian matter.

The Chinese and the Tibetan people share common spiritual heritage in Mahayana Buddhism. We worship the Buddha of Compassion – Guan Yin in the Chinese tradition and Chenrezig in Tibetan tradition – and cherish compassion for all suffering beings as one of the highest spiritual ideals. Furthermore, since Buddhism flourished in China before it came to Tibet from India, I have always viewed the Chinese Buddhists with the reverence due to senior spiritual brothers and sisters.

As most of you are aware, beginning with the 10th of March this year, a series of demonstrations have taken place in Lhasa and across many Tibetan areas. These are caused by deep Tibetan resentment against the policies of the Chinese government. I have been deeply saddened by the loss of life, both Chinese and Tibetans, and immediately appealed to both the Chinese authorities and the Tibetans for restraint. I specially appealed to the Tibetans not to resort to violence.

Unfortunately, the Chinese authorities have resorted to brutal methods to deal with the development despite appeals for restraint by many world leaders, NGOs and noted world citizens, particularly many Chinese scholars. In the process, there has been loss of life, injuries to many, and the detention of large number of Tibetans. The crackdown still continues, especially targeting monastic institutions, which have traditionally been the repository of ancient Buddhist knowledge and tradition. Many of these have been sealed off. We have reports that many of those detained are beaten and treated harshly. These repressive measures seem to be part of an officially sanctioned systematic policy.

With no international observers, journalists or even tourists allowed to Tibet, I am deeply worried about the fate of the Tibetans. Many of those injured in the crackdown, especially in the remote areas, are too terrified to seek medical treatment for fear of arrest. According to some reliable sources, people are fleeing to the mountains where they have no access to food and shelter. Those who remained behind are living in a constant state of fear of being the next to be arrested.

I am deeply pained by this ongoing suffering. I am very worried where all these tragic developments might lead to ultimately. I do not believe that repressive measures can achieve any long-term solution. The best way forward is to resolve the issues between the Tibetans and the Chinese leadership through dialogue, as I have been advocating for a long time. I have repeatedly assured the leadership of the People's Republic of China that I am not seeking independence. What I am seeking is a meaningful autonomy for the Tibetan people that would ensure the long-term survival of our Buddhist culture, our language and our distinct identity as a people. The rich Tibetan Buddhist culture is part of the larger cultural heritage of the People's Republic of China and has the potential to benefit our Chinese brothers and sisters.

In the light of the present crisis, I appeal to all of you to help call for an immediate end to the ongoing brutal crackdown, for the release of all who have been detained, and to call for providing immediate medical care to the injured.

The Dalai Lama

Hamilton, NY
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