

**TIBET AND CHINA:
SEARCHING FOR A NEW WAY FORWARD**

HEARING
BEFORE THE
TOM LANTOS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED AND FOURTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

JULY 14, 2015

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TIBET AND CHINA: SEARCHING FOR A NEW WAY FORWARD

TUESDAY, JULY 14, 2015

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
TOM LANTOS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION,
Washington, D.C.

The Commission met, pursuant to call, at 1:32 p.m., in Room HVC 210, Capitol Visitor Center, Hon. James P. McGovern [co chairman of the Commission] presiding.

Present: Representative McGovern, Representative Pitts, Representative Hultgren, Representative Lofgren, Representative Lowenthal, Representative Lowey, Representative Pelosi

Staff Present: Jennifer King, Democratic Fellow; Eric Salgado, Democratic Fellow; Kimberly Stanton, Lead Democratic Fellow; Carson Middleton, Republican Staff Director; Lena Smith, Republican Fellow

Mr. McGOVERN. Okay. I think we are going to begin.

Good afternoon, and thank you for attending today's hearing, "Tibet and China: Searching for a New Way Forward."

I would like to welcome our distinguished witnesses, who are leading efforts on behalf of the United States Government and civil society to protect and to promote respect for human rights of Tibetans. I would also like to thank the staff of the Commission for organizing this important hearing today.

Yesterday, I began the day with the news of the tragic and unnecessary death of the revered Tibetan monk Tenzin Delek Rinpoche in a Chinese prison. Tenzin Delek was in the 13th year of a 20 year sentence for allegedly causing explosions and inciting separatism, charges against which he steadfastly maintained his innocence.

He was serving his sentence under the very harshest of conditions, and, according to reports, his family was allowed only one visit in 13 years. And although he was said to suffer from a heart condition, bouts of unconsciousness, and uncontrollable shaking of parts of his body, it is not clear whether he received any medical treatment in prison at all.

As recently as April, I urged the State Department, to prioritize his release on medical parole in our engagement with China, and just 2 weeks ago I was assured that the message had been delivered. Yet here we are with another Tibetan leader dead.

All of us are present today because we care about the fundamental rights of Tibetans, including their right to worship as they choose and to enjoy and protect their culture. But the situation in Tibet is dire, and we may be running out of time to guarantee those rights.

His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, has been in exile for 56 years. As we celebrate his 80 birthday, the Chinese Government has recently asserted its right to approve his successor. The very continuation of the ancient line of Tibetan spiritual leadership and reincarnation is in question.

Since 2009, more than 130 Tibetans inside China have taken the unimaginable step of setting themselves on fire. At least 112 are believed to have died. Some chose self-immolation to protest Chinese Government policies, others to call for the return of the Dalai Lama.

In response, Chinese authorities have intensified official reprisals. In April, the Chinese Government issued a new white paper on Tibet with its own version of history and an unprecedented demand that the Dalai Lama publicly state that Tibet has been an integral part of China since antiquity as a precondition for improving relations with China.

Congress has taken action on behalf of Tibet in the past. We approved the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002, which is supposed to guide U.S. Government policy. It encourages dialogue between the Chinese Government and representatives of the Dalai Lama and created the post of Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues within the Department of State.

Just last week, the House approved H. Res. 337, calling for substantive dialogue without preconditions in order to address Tibetan grievances and secure a negotiated agreement for the Tibetan people.

But I get the sense that China doesn't take us seriously. On the dialogue front, China and Tibet held nine rounds of talks between 2002 and 2010 but reached no agreements. No talks have been held since 2010. Were there any consequences to the Chinese for its intransigence and breakdown of these talks?

Then there is the issue of access to Tibetan territory. The Chinese Government does not grant the U.S. the same access to the People's Republic that we grant China, and it imposes even greater restrictions on access to Tibet. As our first witness, Under Secretary Sarah Sewall, reported in her comments in Geneva last month, over the last 4 years, 35 of 39 requests made by the U.S. Embassy or U.S. consulates to visit the Tibet

Autonomous Region were denied. Again, what are the consequences to the Chinese for their behavior? Are there any consequences whatsoever?

Now, at the risk of sounding un-Dalai-Lama-like, I am angry and I am frustrated. I am outraged by the Chinese Government's treatment of the Tibetan people. And, to be blunt, it is unconscionable. We need to be doing something different. We need to have the guts to take some action.

Everyone in the world says how much he or she admires the Dalai Lama. Every head of state, every international organization all declare how much they care about Tibet and worry about abuses against the Tibetan people. But nothing changes.

We must all come together now to change the status quo, to change the game the Chinese Government has been playing for so many decades. The situation is urgent, and it cannot wait any longer. And shame on us if we stand by with empty words and continue to watch the people of Tibet suffer and their culture, religion, and way of life be exterminated day by day, year by year, until nothing is left.

To the People's Republic of China, I have one more message: Perhaps you think that with the eventual inevitable death of His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama, that the issue of Tibetan human rights will die too, but that would be a wrong calculation. We in the United States Congress will not forget. We will not forget about Tibet, nor will we forget about the millions of others around the world who take inspiration from the Tibetan way of life.

You would be well advised to reach an agreement with the Dalai Lama while you still can. The future without him is unclear. Today, all around the world, we are seeing the consequences of the repression of religious and ethnic minorities. There is still time to recognize that inclusion and respect for human rights offer the best path to security.

And, at this point, I would like to yield to the distinguished minority leader, Nancy Pelosi, who has been in the forefront on this issue for many years. And I yield to her for any opening remarks she may have.

[The statement of Mr. McGovern follows:]

Prepared Statement of Rep. James P. McGovern:

Good afternoon, and thank you for attending today's hearing, Tibet & China: Searching for a New Way Forward. I would like to welcome our distinguished witnesses who are leading efforts on behalf of the U.S. government and civil society to promote respect for the human rights of Tibetans. I would also like to thank the staff of the Commission for organizing this important hearing.

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At the risk of sounding “un-Dalai-Lama-like” – I am angry and frustrated. I am outraged by the Chinese government's treatment of the Tibetan people. To be blunt – it is unconscionable.

We need to be doing something different. We need to have the guts to take some action. Everyone in the world says how much he or she admires the Dalai Lama. Every head of state, every international organization – all declare how much they care about Tibet and worry about abuses against the Tibetan people. But nothing changes. We must all come together now to change the status quo, to change the game the Chinese government has been playing for so many decades. The situation is urgent – it can wait no longer. And shame on us if we stand by, with empty words, and continue to watch the people of Tibet suffer, and their culture, religion and way of life be exterminated, day by day, year by year, until nothing is left.

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millions of others around the world who take their inspiration from the Tibetan way of life. You would be well-advised to reach an agreement with the Dalai Lama while you still can. The future without him is unclear. Today, all around the world, we are seeing the consequences of the repression of religious and ethnic minorities. There is still time to recognize that inclusion and respect for human rights offer the best path to security.

Before I turn to my other House colleagues, I ask that we now observe a moment of silence to remember and honor the life of Tenzin Delek.

Ms. PELOSI. Mr. Chairman, I would like to have Mr. Pitts go first.

Mr. McGOVERN. Well, then, at this point, I will turn to my co-chair, the Honorable Joe Pitts from Pennsylvania.

Mr. PITTS. Thank you, Chairman McGovern, distinguished panelists and guests. I am pleased that the Commission is holding this hearing, one on such an important subject and at a juncture as critical as today.

Fifty six years have passed since the Tibetan rebellion in 1959, when Tibetans attempted to declare independence from China. The uprising led to the deaths of more than 80,000 Tibetans, and thousands more have fled to India, Nepal, and other countries.

Despite the formal establishment of the Tibet Autonomous Region in 1965, which constitutes just under half of what Tibetan exiles claim to be historical Tibet, the Chinese Government continues to instate policies that are hostile to the Tibetan religion, culture, language, and identity.

Tibetans have experienced a strict repression of civil rights, including restrictions on the freedom of speech, religion, association, assembly, and movement, including domestic and foreign travel.

The Chinese Government customarily vilifies the Dalai Lama and reportedly accuses the, quote, "Dalai clique," end quote, and other outside forces for instigating unrest and political instability.

The Chinese Government has gone so far as to attempt to dictate spiritual matters of the Tibetan people, particularly the reincarnation process for Tibetan spiritual leaders. Soon after the Dalai Lama identified Gedhun Choekyi Nyima as Tibetan Buddhism's 11th Panchen Lama in 1995, Chinese authorities placed him in what they deemed, quote, "protective custody," end quote, and his whereabouts have remained unknown for the last two decades.

This pervasive meddling in religious affairs is a gross violation of religious freedom. Any decision on the next Dalai Lama or any other matter of Tibetan religious affairs should be determined by Tibetan Buddhist leaders and the Tibetan people.

Moreover, the State Department has reported serious human rights abuses of Tibetans in 2014, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrest, severe mistreatment, torture, and deaths of Tibetan detainees and prisoners of conscience.

We are deeply saddened to hear of the death of one such political prisoner, Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, over the weekend. Tenzin Delek was serving a 20 year sentence following charges of terror and incitement of separation in 2002. Tenzin Delek was denied medical parole despite repeated calls by his family, human rights organizations, and the international community.

As of 2014, the Congressional Executive Commission on China has identified 639 Tibetan political prisoners and detainees, though the actual number of detainees may be much higher.

China is a growing leader in the international community, and, as such, it is integral that the Chinese Government cease its flagrant disregard of the human rights and fundamental freedoms of its people. The United States and the international community must continue to engage the Chinese Government; His Holiness, the Dalai Lama; and representatives of the Tibetan people to reach a negotiated settlement that ensures Tibetan autonomy.

I thank the witnesses for their participation here today. I look forward to working with the administration, NGOs, and my colleagues in Congress to determine a new way forward for Tibet.

And I yield back to my distinguished co-chair, Mr. McGovern.

[The statement of Mr. Pitts follows:]

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Co-Chairman McGovern, distinguished panelists and guests, I am pleased that the Commission is holding this hearing - one on such an important subject and at a juncture as critical as today.

Fifty-six years have passed since the Tibetan Rebellion of 1959, when Tibetans attempted to declare independence from China. The uprising led to the deaths of more than 80,000 Tibetans, and thousands more have fled to India, Nepal and other countries.

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Tibetans have experienced a strict repression of civil rights, including restrictions on the freedoms of speech, religion, association, assembly and movement, including domestic and foreign travel. The Chinese government customarily vilifies the Dalai Lama and reportedly accuses the “Dalai clique” and ‘other outside forces’ for instigating unrest and political instability.

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I thank the witnesses for their participation here today, and look forward to working with the administration, NGO’s and my colleagues in Congress to determine a new way forward for Tibet.

I yield back to my distinguished Co-Chair, Mr. McGovern.

Mr. McGOVERN. I thank my colleague for his comments.

And before I turn to the minority leader, I would like to ask everybody in this audience to observe a moment of silence to remember and honor the life of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche.

Thank you.

And now I am happy to turn this over to our distinguished minority leader, who has been a leader on this issue for many, many years, the Honorable Nancy Pelosi.

Ms. PELOSI. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for yielding. I thank you and your distinguished co-chair, Mr. Pitts, for bringing us together here today and for your ongoing persistence and strong leadership on the subject. A new way forward, let's be hopeful about that.

But, sadly, when this meeting was prepared, little did we know that we would be having a moment of silence for Tenzin Delek Rinpoche. It is my hope that the visibility that this hearing can give to his situation will encourage the Chinese Government to release his body to his family, at least to have that sense of decency.

I will be brief because we are here to hear our witnesses. And I welcome Dr. Sarah Sewall, Sophie Richardson, Kaydor--well, all of our distinguished visitors who are here, and, of course, Richard Gere, who has been for decades a champion on this issue, coming to see us in the Congress, in the country, throughout the world.

I will just say this. In associating myself with the remarks of our distinguished co-chairs and joining with my colleague, a champion for religious freedom throughout the world, Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren, I will say what I have said over and over again: We lose all moral authority to discuss human rights anyplace in the world if we shrink from challenging China on its treatment of the people of China and of Tibet.

The situation in Tibet challenges the conscience of the world. How will we respond? So many of you have responded over time.

I will close by just saying: Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission. Nearly 28 years ago--it will be in September--I was a brand new Member of Congress, only arriving in June, and I was invited to the Human Rights Commission hearing on Tibet. His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, honored us with his presence. It was beyond imagining how exciting it was to have him come 28 years ago to talk about his five point program, which included autonomy, which the Chinese keep trying to ignore.

Tom Lantos chaired that meeting. How appropriate now, all these years later, that this commission is named for him. And in his memory and in the spirit of each and every person in Tibet, may we be committed for as long as it takes.

And I think that is what the Chinese Government has to know. For as long as it takes, we will not forget. We will be there to make the fight for the people of Tibet.

And, again, many of us came together, thousands, in New York at the Javits Center to honor His Holiness on his 80th birthday. And it was a beautiful occasion for all of us to once again be inspired by him but also be challenged, again, in conscience and to act upon that challenge for the people of Tibet.

With that, I again thank our witnesses, welcome them here, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and yield back the time.

Mr. McGOVERN. Thank you very much.

And I yield to my colleague from California, Congresswoman Zoe Lofgren.

Ms. LOFGREN. Thank you very much. I will be brief because I look forward to hearing our witnesses.

I would simply join with my colleagues in expressing the tremendous sorrow that we feel at the news regarding the death of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche and the outrage that his body will not be released by the Chinese to his family.

It is this tragedy, one of many over the years, as a reminder that our efforts must be redoubled. It has long been U.S. policy to promote dialogue without preconditions to reverse the trend in Tibet, but, as my colleagues have said, we have seen this relentless march by the Chinese to destroy the Tibetans.

You know, the Reporters Without Borders recently identified China as--I want to get this right--176th of 180 in terms of poor policies, behind only Sudan, Vietnam, one spot ahead of Syria.

The U.S. Commission on Religious Freedom has identified China as a country of particular concern because of their oppression of the Tibetan people. They recommended in their most recent report that Chinese authorities refrain from conflating peaceful religious activities with terrorism or threats to state security. And is that too much to ask of the Chinese Government? I think not.

So, as one of our co-chairmen has said, we have often spoken out, but we have not succeeded. And there is tremendous frustration on the part of the Congress that our efforts have not been successful.

You know, the word "genocide" is used for mass murder -- murdering the Jews in World War II, murdering the Armenians by the Turks. But it is possible to destroy a people through something other than slaughter. Because "genocide" is to destroy a people. And that is what the Chinese are attempting to do to the Tibetans.

It is up to us free people around the world not only to speak out but to take effective steps to stop this travesty. And I look forward to hearing the witnesses on a path forward so that we can renew that effort.

And I would yield back.

Mr. McGOVERN. Thank you very much.

And, with that, I would like to introduce our first witness, from the Department of State, Dr. Sarah Sewall, Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights and Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues.

The Special Coordinator holds the objective of promoting dialogue between China and the Dalai Lama, with the goal of producing a negotiated settlement between the two. And I am eager to hear about her efforts and progress in accomplishing the task.

And, Ms. Sewall, welcome, and we are happy to have you here. You may begin.

STATEMENT OF SARAH SEWALL, UNDER SECRETARY FOR CIVILIAN SECURITY, DEMOCRACY, AND HUMAN RIGHTS, SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR TIBETAN ISSUES, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Ms. SEWALL. Thank you, Chairman McGovern, Chairman Pitts, all members of the Commission. Thank you for inviting me to testify on U.S. policy on Tibet and for your leadership on this issue and, indeed, for holding this hearing.

I join you and Secretary Kerry in wishing His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, a very happy 80th birthday.

And I share your anger and your sadness on the death of prisoner of conscience Tibetan Monk Tenzin Delek Rinpoche. The Department issued a statement just last night urging Chinese authorities, out of respect for the family, to return his body to his family or to his monastery so that customary rituals can be properly performed.

Today's hearing is just the latest reflection of our country's longtime commitment to Tibet. In 1942, President Roosevelt sent emissaries to a then 7 year old Dalai Lama with a letter that read, "There are in the United States of America many persons, among them myself, who are long and greatly interested in your land and people." And, in September 1987, the forerunner to this commission, the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, invited His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, as was just referenced by the minority leader, for his first ever appearance before a parliamentary body.

In 1997, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright created the Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues position, one that I now have the privilege to hold. Congress codified this role by passing the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002, and it remains a fundamental guide for U.S. policy on this issue. U.S. policy on Tibet aligns closely with the guidance established in the Tibetan Policy Act, and it reflects a bipartisan interest across administrations and within Congress.

So, today, I would like to share with you my thoughts on four priority areas that are critical to the path forward. And they are, in order: one, the importance of resuming dialogue between the People's Republic of China and the Dalai Lama and his representatives; two, the challenge of promoting human rights and religious freedom in Tibet; three, the need to improve diplomatic and public access to Tibet; and, four, the importance of preserving Tibet's distinct cultural, religious, and linguistic heritage.

It is worth noting, in answer to your question, Chairman McGovern, that over the last year and a half as Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues I have had the occasion to meet with His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, three times, and I have met with Ogyen Trinley Dorje, the 17th Karmapa, last April. I have also met several times with Sikyong Lobsang Sangay. And, in November 2014, I traveled to Dharamsala, India, to hear stories from Tibetan refugees and to discuss how U.S. Government programming can benefit and continue to strengthen Tibetan communities.

On this first topic about dialogue, I think it is important to reiterate that the Obama administration believes that resuming the dialogue between the Chinese Government and His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, provides the best hope for alleviating tensions in Tibetan areas and, fundamentally, that it will contribute to the overall stability of China. We share the Commission's concern that more than 5 years have lapsed since the last round of discussions.

When President Obama invited the Dalai Lama to the White House in February 2014, he stressed the benefits of renewed dialogue, and he expressed support for His Holiness's Middle Way Approach.

The Dalai Lama has repeatedly clarified that he does not seek independence but, instead, wants genuine autonomy for Tibet within the People's Republic of China. And while the United States has also consistently voiced respect for Chinese sovereignty, we have repeatedly and firmly expressed concern about China's repression of the Tibetan people and culture as well as the horrific self-immolation that reflects the resulting desperation of many Tibetans.

As a solution for stability, as a solution for the long term health of the Republic, we continue to urge the Chinese Government to resume direct dialogue without preconditions with the Dalai Lama or his representatives. And we do that at every level with great consistency.

The second topic I would like to cover is how the United States continues to work to promote Tibetan human rights and religious freedom.

Last month, I spoke before more than a dozen delegations on the margins of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland, to highlight the troubling repression of Tibetan human rights. I shared the U.S. belief that the Tibetan people, like people throughout the world, should be able to enjoy the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The fundamental rights of Tibetans, however, remain under assault, as detailed in the State Department's recently issued Country Report on Human Rights that has been mentioned by several of you.

And the United States, repeatedly and at many levels, from the President on down through the administration, continues to raise these human rights issues with Chinese authorities. Specifically, we call for China to end the harassment, detention, and other mistreatment of individuals who seek to peacefully practice their religion, express their views, or seek legal redress. We consistently ask for the release of prisoners of conscience, and we also request that filmmaker Dhondup Wangchen be allowed to reunite with his family.

We hope and urge the tragic acts of self-immolation of Tibetans, which reflect, as I said, the desperation of their situation, will end. And we urge Chinese authorities to rescind those policies that collectively punish the friends, relatives, and associates of self-immolators.

The State Department's annual "International Religious Freedom Report" highlighted China's growing interference in a core tenet of Tibetan Buddhism, as was referenced by several of the commissioners, the recognition of reincarnate Lamas.

In an infamous case, soon after the Dalai Lama recognized the 11th Panchen Lama in 1995, he was disappeared. The Chinese Government has since banned images of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and refuses to respond to inquiries about his whereabouts.

The Dalai Lama has made it clear that it would be inappropriate for the Chinese Government to meddle in the system of reincarnation and especially the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama and Panchen Lamas. Indeed, the basic right of religious freedom demands that any decision on the next Dalai Lama be reserved to the current Dalai Lama, Tibetan Buddhist leaders, and the Tibetan people.

We are thankfully not alone in our concern regarding China's intrusive role into Tibetan religious affairs. In March 2015, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief argued that China's efforts to control the reincarnation of Tibetan monks was, quote, "destroying the autonomy of religious communities, poisoning the relationship between different subgroups, creating schisms, and pitching off people against each other in order to exercise control."

Unfortunately, the Chinese authorities have also repeatedly taken actions to denigrate His Holiness, the Dalai Lama. It is both unfortunate and counterproductive.

The spiritual connection between the Dalai Lama and Tibetan Buddhists is strong, and the United States sees his views as widely reflected within Tibetan society. This is precisely why the United States believes the Dalai Lama can be a constructive partner for China in addressing current challenges in Tibetan areas.

My third point for the Commission is the administration's concern about the lack of physical access in Tibet, something that, again, was referenced by the commissioners.

As you know, tourists, journalists, and foreign diplomats continue to face significant obstacles when seeking to visit Tibetan areas. Every single foreigner who wishes to visit the Tibet Autonomous Region must first obtain a special entry permit from Chinese authorities. This is not required for travel to any other provincial level entity in China.

And while Chinese diplomats travel freely throughout the United States, our diplomats are not afforded the same treatment in Tibet. Reciprocity is a cornerstone of diplomatic relations, but, over the last 4 years, Chinese officials have denied 35 of 39 requests made by our embassy or consulates to visit the Tibetan Autonomous Region.

U.S. Ambassador Max Baucus, who visited Lhasa in May 2015, has been one of the few U.S. Government officials permitted to visit. And, as he noted, improving access

by U.S. diplomats is a prerequisite for achieving Chinese goals of greater cooperation on clean energy development, safeguarding the environment and wetlands, and expanding American investment and tourism in Tibet.

More immediately important to us, however, is the fact that restricted access to Tibet for U.S. officials undermines our ability to provide vital services to U.S. citizens. It was October 2013 when the Chinese Government delayed consular access for more than 48 hours to the site of a fatal bus accident involving U.S. citizens. This delay, an unnecessary delay, undermined our ability to provide consular services to American victims and their families. And we have urged and we continue to urge China to fulfill its obligations under the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations.

The United States continues to seek China's agreement to establish a U.S. consulate in Lhasa so that we have a sustained presence. When the Chinese Government in 2008 requested that it be allowed to establish consulates general in Atlanta and Boston in the United States, the United States in turn requested permission to establish an office in Lhasa. A presence there, as they said, would help us establish essential services to U.S. citizens in the western part of the People's Republic of China. The Chinese Government has yet to respond to the Department's 2008 request.

Finally, and in partnership with Congress, the administration works to preserve Tibetans' distinct cultural, religious, and linguistic heritage. Tibetans have an inalienable right to be stewards of their heritage, and they have a right to do so without interference and in peace and dignity.

The U.S. Government proudly has many programs that support Tibetan communities in China, in India, and in Nepal to help them preserve their cultural traditions, support sustainable economic development, strengthen environmental conservation, and provide protection, health care, and education. My office works in close coordination with the offices that implement these programs, including the State Department's PRM, ECA, and DRL bureaus, as well as the U.S. Agency for International Development.

For example, ECA's Tibetan Scholarship Program enables Tibetan refugees to pursue graduate level education in the United States so that they can develop leadership skills and better serve their communities when they return.

One U.S. aid grantee, the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, helps local Tibetans archive digitally more than 2.5 million pages of Tibetan texts to preserve their cultural significance for future generations.

I saw the impact of these and other programs firsthand in my trip to Dharamsala, meeting with recently arrived Tibetan refugees who were studying at a school for adult learners that is funded by the Population, Refugees, and Migration Bureau under my purview. That school empowers recent arrivals to become more self-reliant and productive members of the community by providing them with foundational language,

math, and vocational skills. And, as Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, I will continue focusing on this and the other three priority areas that I have just discussed.

I would like to spend a brief minute, if I could, talking about how I have sought in my work over the last year and a half to engage more deeply with like-minded partners. During my meetings in Europe and in Asia, several foreign governments have reaffirmed their interest in Tibet and the Dalai Lama and their support for negotiations, greater access to Tibetan areas, and other issues of common concern.

I have been heartened by, and also encouraging of, enduring international concern about Tibetan's freedoms and future. One example that we can look to is European Council President Donald Tusk, who, during the recent EU China summit on June 29, encouraged China to resume a meaningful dialogue with the Dalai Lama's representatives.

And, over the years, other partners, such as Canada, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Iceland, Japan, New Zealand, Poland, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom are all among those countries, in addition the United States, that have urged China at the Human Rights Council to uphold its international obligations to protect Tibetans' fundamental human rights.

For our part, the Obama administration will continue to raise our concerns about the troubling trends in Tibet, as we did at the strategic and economic dialogue last month and as we will at the upcoming U.S. China human rights dialogue and as we continue to do at the Human Rights Council and in other fora.

I look forward to working with the Commission on these issues and to help the Tibetan people shape a better future. I applaud the Commission for its continued interest in Tibetan human rights. And I welcome your comments and questions.

Thank you very much.

[The statement of Ms. Sewall follows:]

Prepared Statement of Dr. Sarah Sewall:

Chairman McGovern, Chairman Pitts, and Members of the Commission, thank you for inviting me to testify on United States policy on Tibet, and for your leadership on this issue.

I join you and Secretary Kerry in wishing His Holiness the Dalai Lama a happy birthday, which he celebrated last week.

On a sad note, we were troubled to learn of the death in prison of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, who had been in ill health and for whom we had sought release on medical parole. Out of respect for the family, we urge Chinese authorities to return his body to his family or to his monastery so that customary rituals can be properly performed.

Today's hearing is just the latest reflection of our country's longtime commitment to Tibet. In 1942, President Roosevelt sent emissaries to a then seven-year old Dalai Lama with a letter that read,

“There are in the United States of America many persons, among them myself, who [are] long and greatly interested in your land and people.” In September 1987, the forerunner to this Commission – the Congressional Human Rights Caucus under the leadership of Congressmen Tom Lantos and John Porter -- invited His Holiness the Dalai Lama for his first-ever appearance before a parliamentary body. In 1997, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright created the Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues – a position I now have the privilege to hold. Congress codified this role by passing the Tibetan Policy Act in 2002, which remains a fundamental guide for U.S. policy on this issue.

U.S. policy on Tibet aligns closely with the guidance established in the Tibetan Policy Act and reflects bipartisan interest across Administrations and within Congress. Today, I would like to focus my remarks on our efforts to date in four priority areas: (1) the importance of resuming dialogue between the People’s Republic of China and the Dalai Lama or his representatives; (2) the challenge of promoting human rights and religious freedom in Tibet; (3) the need to improve diplomatic and public access to Tibet; and (4) the value of preserving Tibet’s distinct cultural, religious and linguistic heritage.

As Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, I have met His Holiness the Dalai Lama three times, and Ogyen Trinley Dorje, the 17th Karmapa, last April. I have met several times with Sikyong Lobsang Sangay, and other senior Department officials have met with leaders of the Central Tibetan Administration, on humanitarian issues. In November 2014, I traveled to Dharamsala, India, and was able to hear the stories of Tibetan refugees and discuss how U.S. government programming benefits Tibetan communities.

On the first topic, the Obama Administration believes that resuming dialogue between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama would provide the best hope for alleviating tensions in Tibetan areas and would contribute to the overall stability of China. We are increasingly concerned about the more than five years that have lapsed since the last round of such discussions. When President Obama invited the Dalai Lama to the White House in February 2014, he stressed the benefits of renewed dialogue and expressed support for the Dalai Lama’s “Middle Way” approach. Pursuant to the “Middle Way,” the Dalai Lama has repeatedly clarified that he does not seek independence for Tibet, but instead wants China to ensure the preservation of Tibet’s cultural heritage through genuine autonomy within the People’s Republic of China.

While the United States has also consistently voiced respect for Chinese sovereignty, we have repeatedly expressed concern about China’s repression of the Tibetan people and culture as well as the horrific self-immolations that reflect the desperation of many Tibetans. To enhance long-term stability within Tibetan areas, we continue to urge the Chinese government to resume direct dialogue, without preconditions, with the Dalai Lama or his representatives.

Second, the United States continues to work to promote Tibetan human rights and religious freedom. Last month, I spoke before more than a dozen delegations on the margins of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland, to highlight the troubling repression of Tibetan human rights. I spoke to our belief that the Tibetan people, like people throughout the world, should be able to enjoy the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. The fundamental rights of Tibetans, however, remain under assault. The State Department’s recently-issued country reports on human rights concluded that China “engaged in the severe repression of Tibet’s unique religious, cultural, and linguistic heritage by, among other means, strictly curtailing the civil rights of China’s Tibetan population, including the freedoms of speech, religion, association, assembly, and movement.”

Specifically, we call for China to end the harassment, detention, and other mistreatment of individuals who seek to peacefully practice their religion, express their views, or seek legal redress. As we hope that the tragic acts of self-immolation end, we also urge Chinese authorities to rescind policies that punish friends, relatives, and associates of self-immolators. We ask for the release of prisoners of conscience, and also request that filmmaker Dhondup Wangchen, who completed his six year prison sentence, be allowed to reunite with his family.

The State Department’s annual International Religious Freedom Report highlighted China’s growing interference in a core tenet of Tibetan Buddhism: the recognition of reincarnate lamas. In an infamous case, soon after the Dalai Lama recognized the 11th Panchen Lama in 1995, Gedun Choekyi, he

was disappeared. The Chinese government has since banned images of him and refuses to respond to inquiries about his whereabouts.

The Dalai Lama has said that it would be inappropriate for the Chinese government to "meddle in the system of reincarnation and especially the reincarnations of the Dalai Lamas and Panchen Lamas." Indeed, the basic and universally recognized right of religious freedom demands that any decision on the next Dalai Lama be reserved to the current Dalai Lama, Tibetan Buddhist leaders, and the Tibetan people.

We are not alone in our concern for China's intrusive role in Tibetan religious affairs. In March 2015, the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief Heiner Bielefeldt criticized China's efforts to control the reincarnation of Tibetan monks, arguing that the Chinese government was "destroying the autonomy of religious communities, poisoning the relationship between different sub-groups, creating schisms, [and] pitching off people against each other in order to exercise control."

Chinese authorities have also taken actions to denigrate the Dalai Lama. This is unfortunate and counterproductive. The spiritual connection between the Dalai Lama and Tibetan Buddhists is beyond measure, and we see his views as widely reflected within Tibetan society. Indeed, this is why the United States believes the Dalai Lama can be a constructive partner for China in addressing current challenges in Tibetan areas.

We have also urged China to respond positively to 12 outstanding requests by the UN Special Rapporteurs for official visits to China, and to honor China's commitment (in the context of its Universal Periodic Review at the Human Rights Council) to allow the High Commissioner Zeid to visit Tibet when he visits China.

Third, the Administration shares the Commission's concern about the lack of physical access to Tibet. The Tibetan plateau's stunning beauty and unique culture are world treasures that all should be able to enjoy. Yet tourists, journalists and foreign diplomats continue to face significant obstacles in visiting Tibetan areas.

Every foreigner who wishes to visit the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) must first obtain a special entry permit from the Chinese authorities. This is not required for travel to any other provincial-level entity in China.

Similarly, as the Foreign Correspondents Club of China notes, all Tibetan areas in China are effectively off-limits to foreign reporters. An opaque and slow-moving visa and credentialing process for foreign journalists, combined with the continued censorship of U.S. media websites, and restrictions on local journalists, significantly restrict freedoms of speech, press and access to information. We have and will continue to urge the Chinese government to address these concerns.

Further, while Chinese diplomats travel freely throughout the United States, our diplomats are not afforded the same access to Tibet. Reciprocity is a cornerstone of diplomatic relations, but over the last four years, Chinese officials have denied 35 of 39 requests made by our Embassy or consulates to visit the TAR. U.S. Ambassador Max Baucus, who visited Lhasa in May 2015, was one of the few U.S. government officials permitted to visit. As Ambassador Baucus noted, improved access by U.S. diplomats is a prerequisite for greater cooperation on clean energy development, safeguarding the environment and wetlands, and expanded American investment and tourism in Tibet.

Restricted access to Tibet for U.S. officials frustrates our ability to provide vital services to U.S. citizens. In October 2013, the Chinese government delayed consular access for more than 48 hours to the site of a bus accident involving U.S. citizens, which undermined our ability to provide consular services to the victims and their families. Three U.S. citizens died and multiple others sustained serious injuries. China has fallen short of its obligations under the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. We have urged China to fulfill its obligations.

The United States continues to seek China's agreement to establish a U.S. consulate in Lhasa.

When the Chinese government in 2008 requested that it be allowed to establish consulates general in Atlanta, Georgia, and Boston, Massachusetts, we requested permission to establish an office in Lhasa, Tibet, as well as in other locations in China. A presence in Lhasa would help us provide essential services to U.S. citizens in the western part of the People's Republic of China. The Chinese government has yet to respond to the Department's request.

Lastly, and in partnership with Congress, the Administration works to preserve Tibetans' distinct cultural, religious, and linguistic heritage. Tibetans have an inalienable right to be stewards of their unique cultural, religious and linguistic heritage. They have a right to do so without interference and in peace and dignity.

The U.S. government has many programs that assist Tibetan communities in China, India, and Nepal to preserve their cultural traditions, support sustainable economic development, strengthen environmental conservation, and provide protection, healthcare, and education. My office works in close coordination with the offices that implement these programs, including the Department's Bureaus of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM); Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA); and Democracy, Human Rights and Labor (DRL), and by USAID.

For example, the State Department's Tibetan Scholarship Program, overseen by ECA, enables Tibetan refugees to pursue graduate level education in the U.S. so they can develop leadership skills and serve their communities when they return. In another example, one of USAID's grantees, the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, helps local Tibetans to archive digitally more than 2.5 million pages of Tibetan texts to preserve their cultural significance for future generations.

I saw the impact of these and other programs first-hand in my trip to Dharamsala. I met with recently arrived Tibetan refugees who were studying at a school for adult-learners funded by PRM. The school empowers these recent arrivals to become more self-reliant and productive members of the community by providing them with foundational language, math, and vocational skills.

As Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, I will continue focusing on these four priority areas. A key element of my work is engaging with like-minded foreign partners that share our interest in helping Tibetans preserve their culture and dignity. During my travels in Europe and Asia, several foreign governments have reaffirmed their interest in Tibet and the Dalai Lama, and their support for Chinese negotiations, greater access to Tibetan areas, and other issues of common concern. I have been heartened by the enduring international concern about Tibetans' freedoms and future.

As an example, on June 29, European Council President Donald Tusk stated that during the EU-China Summit that day he encouraged China to resume a meaningful dialogue with the Dalai Lama's representatives. Over the years, Canada, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Iceland, Japan, New Zealand, Poland, Switzerland and the United Kingdom are among the countries in addition to the United States that have urged China at the Human Rights Council to uphold its international obligations to protect Tibetans' fundamental human rights.

For our part, the Obama Administration will continue to raise our concerns about these troubling trends in Tibet, as we did at the Strategic and Economic Dialogue last month, as we will at the upcoming U.S.-China Human Rights Dialogue, and as we continue to do at the UN Human Rights Council and in other fora.

I look forward to working with the Commission on these issues and to help the Tibetan people shape a better future. I applaud the Commission for its continued interest in Tibetan human rights and I welcome your questions. Thank you.

Mr. McGOVERN. Well, thank you very much. And I appreciate your statement and all of the great work that you do and the work of your staff. And I think we all agree with everything you just said in your statement.

But here is my concern, and that is that I am not convinced that, kind of, what the administration's policy is at present time is enough to convince the Chinese Government to change its ways.

I mean, I mentioned in my opening remarks, you know, that talks between China and Tibet kind of ceased in 2010. It is 2015, and I don't think there have been any consequences to the Chinese Government for walking away from those talks.

You mentioned the issue of reciprocity. I mean, I have a bill on reciprocity. I think it is an important point that, you know, U.S. citizens and diplomats and journalists are, by and large, prohibited from traveling to Tibet, yet we don't impose any kind of limitations on Chinese officials, even those who are responsible for, kind of, implementing the policies on Tibet when they come to the United States.

And so I am just trying to figure out what is it that we need to do to, kind of, change the dynamic here. Because I don't think what we have done up to this point--and I agree with everything we have done--has been enough.

And, I mean, on the issue of reciprocity, you don't even need Congress to pass a bill. The administration can restrict the travel of certain Chinese officials if the administration so wants.

So I am just trying to--I kind of think that, you know, we need to be thinking more imaginatively here and more boldly about how do we convince the Chinese Government that, when it comes to issues of human rights, especially with regard to Tibet, that we are not a cheap date, that, in fact, we mean what we say, and that we are frustrated that things seem to be stalled.

Any ideas you have would be welcome.

Ms. SEWALL. Thanks for that comment.

I think it is fair to say that we share your frustration and we have expressed our frustration. And I think that my primary focus in the last year and a half since assuming this role has been reinforcing the backbone of the international community as it makes these points to China. I think it is very important, as relationships become more complicated and as a multitude of issue arise on any set of bilateral agendas, that we maintain our unity as an international community in upholding universal standards of human rights.

And so I think the point that I made in my testimony about seeking to reinforce the voices of those that have expressed concern about policy that we share and

encouraging them to join us in maintaining the unity of that voice and the vocalness of that voice and finding new fora in which to express that voice is an area that we can do more in.

And that is really what lay behind the initiative that we had to work on an event at the margins of the Human Rights Council, to use a different format and a different forum and one that was multilateral to raise these issues in an additional way that would draw on a broader set of countries and voices.

So I think that the multilateral aspects of our policy are something that we can continue to strengthen.

Mr. McGOVERN. You mentioned the statement by President of the European Council Donald Tusk, which was welcome. Has the administration thought about convening a group of friends, other countries that would regularly meet to make this issue of Tibet a priority?

And the reason why I say that is because I appreciate all the, kind of, back channel conversations that are going on, but, you know, I keep on seeing the Chinese Government become more and more repressive and less and less willing to kind of go back and engage the Dalai Lama, you know, on a lot of the issues that I think a lot of us had hoped would be resolved by now.

Is that--I mean, I am trying to think of ways to elevate this issue in a way that would make it more difficult for China to kind of ignore us.

Ms. SEWALL. Well, we are thinking along exactly the same lines, and I am happy to report that the administration does have a number of different fora that it engages in regularly with like-minded states, both within foreign countries and as a matter of multilateral meetings.

I think we have been giving some thought to creating a higher profile for those meetings and to sketching out a clear and common shared agenda for moving forward. So that is exactly the kind of activity that we hope to strengthen in the future, to give a stronger multinational voice to these universal concerns.

I think it is useful to point out that the issue of human rights in China has become deeply troubling for reasons that certainly go beyond the question of Tibet. And so we have those concerns that we express in a variety of fora.

On the question of dialogue, we couldn't be more clear. I think one of the large opportunities that we have is to really focus attention on the question of the post Dalai Lama future and how bleak it looks in the absence of renewed dialogue now while the Dalai Lama is still very much alive, engaged, and open to dialogue.

And I think the message that we have conveyed to our Chinese friends is very

much along the lines of what you said, Mr. Chairman, that the opportunities now for China in engaging with His Holiness to craft out solutions with his support is fundamentally preferable, from all variety of perspectives, than seeking to out wait his life.

Mr. McGOVERN. Right.

Ms. SEWALL. And so that is really, I think, the critical point that we have been emphasizing, and the ways in which we see that as being vital to the stability in not just the Autonomous Region but also stability for the People's Republic as a whole, that it is a very important opportunity that the Chinese leadership would be foolish to pass up.

Mr. McGOVERN. Right.

Now, look it, we have had multiple hearings in this committee on a whole bunch of human rights issues in China. And I agree, it is more than just about Tibet. But I just have, kind of, one final question. This may not seem--you may disagree with me on this, but just the way it appears to me sometimes as I am, kind of, watching from where we sit here. And it just seems sometimes that the administration is more willing to, kind of, call out Russia on human rights violations than China. And, you know, for example, the U.S. has imposed sanctions on Russian officials in response to accusations of human rights violations.

And it is true that the Magnitsky legislation gives the State Department specific tools to use against Russia; but the State Department, in its comments against, kind of, the global Magnitsky bill, is that these tools already exist anyway. And I guess the question is, why aren't we using more of these tools available to us?

And, finally, you know, the Chinese President is coming to Washington in September. And, you know, given, kind of, all that is going on on human rights in China in general but especially on this issue of Tibet, it makes me kind of question the--I don't know, the--it seems to me, kind of, almost unseemly that he is going to be brought here and we will have a state dinner, and everything is going to be just, you know--all kinds of toasts and congratulations. And I am worried that issues like this, you know, become less urgent in their minds to solve when we, kind of--when he is going to be welcomed here, you know, in such, kind of, a big way.

Look it, I get it. China is a big country. It is a big trading partner. We have lots of economic interests. But I just kind of feel, if we don't, kind of, draw a line in the sand on this, that it makes me worry that we are never going to get anything--we are never going to get any progress here.

And I think we just need to do something different here and something bolder. And I don't know quite, you know, what is the right combination. But I just don't think the Chinese Government thinks that we are serious on this, and I think they think they are going to wait us out. And I want to figure out ways to make it clear to them that that is

not the case.

And so, you know, any thought to try to impress upon them before his visit that we need some progress on this issue if he wants to get a nice welcome here I think would be helpful.

Ms. SEWALL. Well, thanks for the comment.

I understand where you are--I understand the logic behind your comment. I will share from my own experience that the strategic and economic dialogue, for example, that we just held here and that was previously held in Beijing, in which I participated, there were a lot of toasts in that dialogue, but there were also some very tough conversations about everything from counterterrorism laws and the reason why we take a harsh view of the legislation that they use to prosecute political opposition in the name of counterterrorism, as well as the treatment of minorities and issues of Tibet and the need for a renewed dialogue.

And so I would simply note that these occasions, as auspicious as they may appear in ceremonial forum, are also one of the most important fora that we have for having those frank discussions.

Mr. McGOVERN. No, I get it. It is just that it gives him legitimacy and a pass in the international community on some of these issues. And I am just trying to figure out some creative way to let him know that he would be more welcome if we could have a little bit of progress on this issue.

But let me turn it over to my colleague, Congressman Pitts.

Mr. PITTS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Madam Secretary, do you feel that you have the authority or the authorities that you need to coordinate effectively U.S. Government programs and projects related to Tibet?

Ms. SEWALL. Thank you for the question.

Mr. Chairman, I do. And I want to take this opportunity to thank the Congress very deeply for being as generous as you have been consistently over time in providing programming support for Tibetans in Tibet, in India, and in Nepal.

I think, in my ongoing and close consultations with representatives from the Tibetan community and recently arrived refugees, there is nothing but deep gratitude and support for the American programs that do so much to strengthen that community. And I know that His Holiness, every time we speak, early in the conversation is full of gratitude.

And I do feel that, as Coordinator, I am able to help ensure that our programs are working to address the most important needs. And my dialogue with Tibetan leaders is a very helpful way to ensure that that aid is, in fact, meeting their needs, because we are consistently talking to community leaders about where gaps may lie and where new needs may arise.

So I do feel that I have the authority to coordinate programming. I do feel that our programming makes an enormous difference and is deeply appreciated. And I do feel that we have, thankfully, the resources and the flexibility to adjust to emerging needs within the community as they are expressed by Tibetan community leaders.

Mr. PITTS. Now, the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002 requires the U.S. Ambassador to China to, one, seek to meet with the 11th Panchen Lama and, quote, "otherwise ascertain information concerning his whereabouts and wellbeing," end of quote, and, secondly, request that China release the 11th Panchen Lama and allow him to pursue his religious studies without interference and according to tradition.

Have recent U.S. Ambassadors, including the current Ambassador, Max Baucus, raised the 11th Panchen Lama in meetings with Chinese officials?

Ms. SEWALL. I will have to check on that and get back to you.

One thing I can say, Mr. Chairman, is that at the Human Rights Council event that I referenced earlier in the spring--it wasn't technically Human Rights Council. That was on the margins of the Human Rights Council. But the Chinese participants in the audience gave voice to reassurances that the Panchen Lama was, in fact, healthy and living a, quote, "happy life."

And so that is the most recent communication that I am aware of from Chinese authorities on that topic.

Mr. PITTS. In congressional testimony in 2011, Daniel Baer, then the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, said the Department was working to translate into Tibetan its International Religious Freedom Report and its Country Report on Human Rights Practices in China.

Neither report has yet been translated into Tibetan. Does the State Department still intend to produce Tibetan translations of those core reports?

Ms. SEWALL. That is an excellent question that I am unprepared to answer. Let me just consult the bench for one moment.

So, no, it has not recently been translated. We have been making an effort to translate my recent statements on the situation in Tibet. Of course, that is different. But we can look into the question of whether or not it is feasible and what the resource implications are of translating the report itself. I would be happy to get back to you on

that.

Mr. PITTS. What obstacles has the Department encountered with the project of producing these translations of core reports?

Ms. SEWALL. I was not here in 2011, so I don't know what the status of a decision might have been at that time. But, as I said, I can look and see whether or not this was something that was in fact set in motion and did or did not encounter obstacles, and I would be happy to get back with you with the details.

Mr. PITTS. All right. Please do.

The Tibetan Policy Act of 2002 requires that, in meetings with Chinese officials, the President and the Secretary of State encourage the Chinese Government to enter into a dialogue with the Dalai Lama and his representatives leading to a negotiated agreement on Tibet, request the immediate and unconditional release of political and religious prisoners in Tibet, seek access for international humanitarian organizations to prisoners in Tibet, and seek immediate medical parole for Tibetan prisoners known to be in ill health. Did U.S. officials, is my question, raise Tibetan issues in recent U.S. China meetings, including President Obama's meeting with Xi Jinping in China in November of 2014 and the Strategic Economic Dialogue in June of 2015? If so, what points did they raise?

Ms. SEWALL. I can only speak to the meetings that I have been privy to, in which all of these relevant points have been made. And I will have to get back to you on the specifics that you ask about, because I was not always in all of the discussions.

Mr. PITTS. Thank you.

I yield back.

Mr. McGOVERN. Ms. Lofgren?

Ms. LOFGREN. Thank you.

And thank you for being a witness here today.

I hope that you will not take my comments as criticism of you, Under Secretary Sewall, because, from all accounts, you are fulfilling the mission that we have asked you to take on. But it seems apparent that our dialogue is not actually yielding a result. And it is not for lack of trying on your part or lack of hope on our part, but, as the years go by, the oppression of the Tibetan people continues, even accelerates.

And so I have been thinking, as has Mr. McGovern, of trying to come up with some more effective approaches. And so I have a couple of questions.

First, as you probably know, I am the ranking member on the Immigration

Subcommittee in the Judiciary Committee, and, recently, Congressman Jim Sensenbrenner and I reintroduced the Tibetan Refugee Assistance Act, which would set aside refugee positions for people who have had to leave Tibet.

Are you aware whether the State Department is in a position to support that legislation?

Ms. SEWALL. I don't believe they have reached any position on the bill one way or the other yet.

Ms. LOFGREN. I would like to send a message to the Chinese, and that is one of the things that might help do it.

You know, the Chinese Government is not living up to their obligations diplomatically that requires reciprocity. And I note that they have an embassy and five consulates in the United States; we have an embassy and four consulates in China. So one of the thoughts I have had is, what if we start removing their consulates until they allow us to open a consulate in Tibet? What is your reaction to that, to elevate this discussion?

Ms. SEWALL. I would be way out of my arena if I were to comment on consulate affairs.

Ms. LOFGREN. All right. Fair enough.

Ms. SEWALL. Thank you, though.

Ms. LOFGREN. Fair enough.

I have, you know, another--and maybe I can't ask you, but, in terms of the issuance of visas, they have a two tier system in China that allows visas for Chinese but not for Tibetans. And I am wondering whether we ought not to visit a kind of a two tier system for Chinese visas so that if you are a government official or the son or daughter of a government official you might not necessarily get a visa to come to go to school or to visit. If you are an ordinary Chinese person trying to come visit your family, it wouldn't be fair to punish that person.

But have you thought or have you studied the impact of that kind of proposal on the Chinese? Would that get their attention?

Ms. SEWALL. Again, this is something that is beyond the Special Coordinator's purview, in the sense that the policies are formulated within other pieces of the building. But I would be happy to take that question back.

Ms. LOFGREN. Well, we have a lot of things going on with China. I mean, they are illegally and provocatively taking small atolls and building land, asserting jurisdiction over parts of the sea that they don't have jurisdiction over, threatening Vietnam,

threatening the Philippines, threatening Japan. You know, they are big polluters, even worse than us in terms climate change. There are lot of issues going on.

But it seems to me that if we can't stand up for basic human rights, stand up to prevent the destruction of an entire people through some more aggressive diplomatic actions, then I think we really have to question our commitment to freedom and to upholding the rule of law in the world.

So those are some thoughts, and I have a few others, but maybe we can talk about that later.

And I thank the chairman for yielding.

Mr. McGOVERN. Mr. Lowenthal?

Mr. LOWENTHAL. No. I am going to pass and wait for the second panel.

Mr. McGOVERN. All right.

Well, I thank you for being here.

Just one last--since we are coming up with suggestions here. You know, we were talking about this issue of reciprocity. You know, one of the things that I think we should pursue--and if the minority leader were still here, maybe I could convince her to take the lead on this--but maybe a bipartisan group of Members of Congress, you know, actually making a request to go visit Tibet. And I think we would have to work with your office and the State Department to make that request directly to the Chinese Government, but I think that would be a--maybe that is something we could present before the Chinese President comes here.

But I do think that this issue of access is incredibly important, especially given the reports that are coming out of Tibet, with the Chinese repression growing more and more fierce each and every day. But I would throw that out there, as well, not that I expect you to answer that now.

I just want to echo what my colleague Zoe Lofgren said, too. I mean, we appreciate the work you are doing, and we think that you are fulfilling the mission that we all expect you to. But you can sense this frustration up here of, in spite of all the things that we have done in the past, things aren't changing, and, in fact, things are getting worse. And so I think there are many of us here who feel it is time for more meaningful pushback. And so we look forward to working with you and your office to figure out what that pushback will translate into.

So thank you very much for being here.

Ms. SEWALL. Thank you. Well, I welcome the opportunity to kick around any ideas,

including those that we may think are a little bit out of the box. I look forward to working with you on the ideas that you have expressed and getting back to you with the questions that you asked.

And I would just note that, as members of the Commission and other Members of Congress are in their international work interacting with other parliamentarians or foreign leaders, it is very helpful to express the kinds of concerns that you expressed here. Because I do believe that the need for a multilateral voice is clear and that there is much more that we can do collectively than any single nation can do alone.

And I really do wish, in the remaining year and a half of my time, to do more to create, as you were talking about, the ongoing fora and the strategies, supported by many voices, to reiterate this longstanding aspect of U.S. policy in support of the Tibetan people. And I would welcome any help that Members of Congress can provide.

Mr. McGOVERN. We look forward to working with you any way we can on that. And, again, when you meet with Chinese officials--and I am sure that some of them are listening here today--you know, I think it is important for you to relay to them how frustrated and how angry Members of Congress are over the situation with regard to human rights in Tibet.

So, anyway, thank you very much.

Ms. SEWALL. Thank you.

Mr. McGOVERN. Appreciate it.

I am now very pleased to welcome our second panel: Ms. Sophie Richardson, China director of Human Rights Watch; Mr. Richard Gere, chairman of the board for the International Campaign for Tibet; Mr. Kaydor Aukatsang, representative of His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, to the Americas.

I want to thank all of you for your presence today. I look forward to hearing all of your testimonies and recommendations for U.S. policy.

I would like to formally submit the written testimonies of all the witnesses into the hearing record.

And when everybody is seated, we will begin with Sophie Richardson.

STATEMENTS OF SOPHIE RICHARDSON, CHINA DIRECTOR, HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH; RICHARD GERE, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD, INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET; AND KAYDOR AUKATSANG, REPRESENTATIVE OF HIS HOLINESS, THE DALAI LAMA, TO THE AMERICAS

STATEMENT OF SOPHIE RICHARDSON

Ms. RICHARDSON. Thank you very much, Chairman McGovern, Chairman Pitts, Ms. Lofgren. It is great to see you--and Mr. Lowenthal.

This is--it was a timely discussion to begin with. I think it is made that much more evocative by the horrific decision by Chinese authorities to let Tenzin Delek Rinpoche die in prison. He is obviously not the first. Tragically, he is probably not going to be the last.

I have been tasked with giving a quick overview of the human rights situation now and to highlight some particularly worrying trends. We think all of this shows manifestly that the situation is deteriorating, as is the case in the mainland as a whole.

Broadly speaking, the trends I would point to in Tibet that have been going on for quite some time and have already been mentioned this afternoon are restrictions on movement into, out of, and within the TAR with respect to access to passports, which we and the International Campaign for Tibet have just written on, but even Tibetans trying to get back into China who have passports have been denied access; restrictions on religious freedom, as has been mentioned, everything from the debate about who gets to choose new Lamas to what clergy can preach to what text they can use; restrictions on the freedom of expression, including peaceful protest, arbitrary detention, torture, and the near total lack of the right to a fair trial.

I think some of the more noteworthy trends since 2011 that I want to highlight this afternoon include an extraordinary entrenchment of a surveillance regime since 2011 that we see as a long term response to the 2008 protests.

And in that category I would include what is known as the grid system, which radically expanded surveillance apparatus across the plateau through new police posts, technology, and certain kinds of agents being placed at local levels. This has been significantly scaled up in the last couple of years. We have written about it extensively.

[2:33 p.m.]

Ms. RICHARDSON. In 2011, 20,000 cadres were sent out to villages and to monasteries, ostensibly to provide education and information about access to government services. We obviously think they are doing something a little bit different. They were meant to have been recalled in 2014. That doesn't seem to have happened.

There is still a heavy security presence across the plateau, not just police and

paramilitary police but also border police, which we think is largely responsible for stemming the number of people who are making it out to Nepal.

And recent limitations on the ability of five or more people to gather at the same time. If you want to go out and start an organization that comports with what the party wants in terms of grassroots organizations at the local level, that is fine.

The second trend I want to point to is the increasing criminalization of just about any form of dissent. And, again, this is consistent across the country. But whether you are talking about association with self-immolation protests, to writing songs and poems that don't conform with the party line, to local community action such as promoting environmental protection or language teaching, all of this behavior is increasingly being seen as threatening to local authorities and treated as such.

We have just finished reviewing available information about detentions and sentences from 2013 to 2015, so fairly recent information. It is never the full data set that you want. But we have counted more than 350 cases just in these past 2 years, with charges ranging from inciting separatism and terrorism to, quote, "consoling the families of self-immolators," to the old favorite, which has resonances with Vietnam too, of "picking quarrels and stirring up troubles." And these are charges that carry harsh sentences, including the death penalty. And we think this has gotten significantly worse in the last couple of years.

The third trend I want to highlight--and it doesn't really get talked about a lot but arguably may have as deleterious consequences as any of these other policies--is this effort to really radically change the socioeconomic lifestyle of Tibetans, particularly nomadic people.

Between 2006 and 2012, over a third of all Tibetans, 2 million people--it is an astonishing number--have been rehoused or relocated, often through programs that were deeply violative of people's human rights. They had no opportunity to consult or to resist or say no. They weren't adequately compensated.

And the net result is that many have been moved into communities where not only are they and their behavior infinitely more legible to the state, but they are also effectively dependent on the state, because they can no longer support themselves in the manner that they had been raised to do.

You know, about 2 weeks ago, the Chinese Government actually announced that by the end of 2015 it will have finished resettling and rehousing all nomadic and semi nomadic people in the mainland. So this is not just about Tibetans. And I think the consequences, particularly for those communities who have lived that way for centuries, is tragic and devastating.

I was asked very briefly to comment on the treatment of Tibetans versus other ethnic minorities. And, in the absence--I haven't done research on, you know, the dozens

of other minority groups--it is a little hard to give you a definitive answer.

But we certainly know that, for example, similar programs like resettlement and rehousing have affected other ethnic minorities groups--Kazakhs, ethnic Mongols, for example; that the increasing use of charges like terrorism and separatism have been used disproportionately against Uighurs, for example, with devastating consequences; and that access to passports obviously appears to have a disproportionate impact on people who live in some parts of the country but not in others.

But all of this to say that there are other kinds of minorities in China who remain incredibly vulnerable, whether you are talking about people with disabilities, people in certain religious faiths. So I wouldn't necessarily want to deprioritize those.

I would like to take a minute to talk about some of the questions that you have asked about what can be done to try to mitigate some of these abuses.

Obviously, you know, the vast burden falls on the Chinese Government to fulfill its domestic and international obligations to uphold human rights. There is a constitutional obligation in China to do so. But I think there is also a great deal more that the U.S. can do.

I want to be very clear that, at the working level and amongst some diplomats, we have seen people do their utmost. I have seen some American diplomats do brave and life and limb and career threatening things to promote human rights.

There was a very cranky article in Bloomberg a couple of months ago that argued that the administration didn't have any China experts. And I don't think that is the problem. There are plenty of people in the administration who are really smart about China. I think there is no China policy. And, partly because there is no China policy, there is also no real clarity about human rights.

I mean, let me be really clear about this. I am all for coordinating other countries. I am all for like-minded activism. That is incredibly important. But I think there is also enormous room for the U.S. to get its own house in order and speak more clearly and impose a price and articulate what that price will be to the Chinese Government when it does things like refuse to return the body of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche to his family or to his community for a dignified rite, which is so important to that community. You know, I see no reason why, for example--you know, if that body can't be returned, I think maybe Ambassador Baucus shouldn't be returned.

You know, I don't see why, for example, the U.S. continues to feel it necessary to reiterate that it believes that Tibet is a part of China. If we were talking about other countries, for example, the U.S. probably wouldn't have trouble saying, "In fact, we support the right to self-determination. We support people's right to political participation." I think there are incredible inconsistencies that need to be fixed, and there are opportunities to be exploited.

A couple of very specific requests right now. The U.S. is meant within a couple of weeks to have both a human rights dialogue and a counterterrorism dialogue. It is our view that, absent the Chinese Government complying with some very specifically articulated benchmarks, neither of those events should go ahead now.

I think to have a counterterrorism dialogue with a government that prosecuted Tenzin Delek Rinpoche on charges of terrorism is appalling. You know, unless this is the sole topic of conversation, it is hard to see what the utility of that exercise would be.

I think there is room for multilateralism and doing things like joint demarches about Tenzin Delek Rinpoche and what should happen. But I also think the administration isn't even being consistent with efforts like its own Stand with Civil Society initiative. You know, we haven't seen nearly enough of a reaction to the detention of 100 lawyers over the last week or so. Enormous problems with refugees, with forced returns.

And I think there is much to be explored in the realm of ensuring that the Chinese Government officials who are participating in various dialogues and exercises here are not the ones who are responsible for gross human rights violations.

I will stop there. Thanks.

Mr. McGOVERN. Mr. Gere?

STATEMENT OF RICHARD GERE

Mr. GERE. Thank you, co-chairmen and members here.

And, Sophie, thank you so much for the straight talk.

It is a great honor for me to be for all of us to be here and to be part of this. And the co-chairmen have worked very hard to do this. You take it very seriously. It is not easy to find people who take this kind of thing seriously.

Tom Lantos was a friend of mine, too. And, as you know, and I don't know if the audience knows, Tom Lantos was a Holocaust survivor. And Tom told me a story once. He remembered as a boy--told to leave his home, and he remembered going to the train station with whatever they could carry. And he was holding his mother's hand as they were making their way down the train tracks to get on the train. And what he remembers most is the faces of the people on that platform, watching as these Jewish families were being led away to a train and their almost sure death. And he remembers the shame on their faces more than anything, the shame that they were allowing this to happen.

I don't want that shame. I don't want any American to have the shame of watching this happen to good people--any people on the planet and specifically our brothers and sisters in Tibet. Extraordinary people, extraordinary culture, extraordinary history, with much to teach us of how we can move into the future as human beings in societies that can work together and grow and live and prosper and be creative.

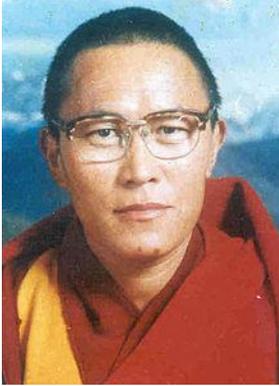
Which brings me, also, to Tenzin Delek Rinpoche. I have a couple pictures here, one which I think everyone in the audience has of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche.

Is it possible to put this in the record? I don't know if photographs can be, but--

Mr. McGOVERN. We will make sure.

Mr. GERE. Thank you.

[The information follows:]



Tulku Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, a highly respected and revered Tibetan lama, who died in prison on July 12, 2015, while in custody of the Chinese government in the 13th year of serving a life sentence.

Mr. GERE. There is another one that I don't think anyone has seen. And this one just kills me. This is Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, who is known as one of the extraordinary people in his community, who helped old people, he helped with education, he helped with health, he helped with orphanages. And there is this beautiful picture of one of his orphanages and schools.

I don't know if you can see it from there. Maybe we could pass it around just for you to see. I wonder if those in the audience have seen this picture before.

It is really quite beautiful, all the people that he has helped and institutions that he has created to help people. This is the one who was condemned as a bomber and thrown into jail.

Could this be passed up, I think, to our commission?

Thank you.

And if this could also be in the record, I would appreciate it.

[The information follows:]



A group photo of Tulku Tenzin Delek Rinpoche with children from one of the orphanages and old people's homes that he helped support and build, taken sometime before his arrest.

Mr. GERE. He died in custody of the Chinese Government, I think which is, again, a stark reminder of who we are dealing with here. This was one of the good men in the community.

He had tens of thousands of students, Tibetan and Chinese. And I think that, basically, was the problem. This was someone who was bridging the culture, someone who was creating something extraordinary, finding commonality between Tibetans and Chinese. And I think that, again, was probably how he crossed the line with the Chinese Government, that he was creating, unknown to him, a power base that could possibly change things in China and in Tibet.

Most of us realize that much of the animus from the Chinese Government against the Tibetans is based on legitimacy. There is no Chinese legitimacy in Tibet. No one loves the Communist Party. There is no love and affection for the Communist Party. There is a love and affection for their teachers, for their religion, for their heritage, and the Chinese Communist Party will never have that, and they know they won't. They are jealous of that, and they are fearful of that. That is how they will lose power.

We have an extraordinary person here--actually, another extraordinary person. Nita Lowey just showed up.

Thank you for coming.

Mrs. LOWEY. Thank you.

Mr. GERE. We have an ex student, a close student of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche who is with us here, Geshe Tenpa.

And, Geshe Tenpa, would you stand up, please? Thank you so much.

I believe it was in 2000 that you escaped Tibet? I believe it was 2000.

But when Tenzin Delek Rinpoche was apprehended and put into prison, he has been trying for the last 13 years to get him out, knowing that there were medical issues and other issues. And probably no one is more sad at this moment than him that he failed in those efforts.

But I want to thank you so much for being here. And our heart goes out to you, all of our hearts. Thank you so much. Thuk je che. Thuk je che.

On July 6, the Dalai Lama did achieve his 80th birthday, and it was one of those really extraordinary events. Just before that, I was with His Holiness in Australia, and, as Leader Pelosi spoke, we were with him in New York. And he has been feted all over the world. I don't think there is a person on the planet who is as loved as much and openly and genuinely as this man, who is so vilified by the Communist Party.

Most poignantly, Tibetans across the Tibetan plateau defied bans on celebrations of the Dalai Lama's birthday. And they celebrated his 80th birthday anyway in what is, I think, probably the most significant collective assertion of Tibetan solidarity, cultural identity, and just pure reverence for His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, since the protests swept across Tibet in March of 2008.

The Chinese Government and Communist Party leaders persist in their repressive policies which deny Tibetans fundamental rights that the Chinese Government is obliged to protect under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the many international human rights treaties it has ratified, as well as the PRC's own constitution and other national laws.

When Tibetans attempt to exercise freedoms of religion, speech, and assembly, the consequences can and will be grave: Long prison sentences, followed by convictions on really vague criminal charges, like trouble making; disappearances; torture, which can be so severe and badly injuring that Tibetans are often released from detention early so that they will die outside of official custody. Unfortunately, Tenzin Delek Rinpoche died of medical reasons and possibly torture--we don't know for sure--while he was in custody.

Since 2009, more than 140 Tibetans have self-immolated, most protesting Chinese policies in Tibet and calling for the return of the Dalai Lama. New regulations

have the effect of criminalizing virtually any expression of religious or cultural identity as separatist or of the Dalai clique. Relatives or even eyewitnesses of the self-immolator may also be subject to criminal charges or other penalties--a form of collective punishment that contravenes both Chinese law and international human rights standards.

The opaque language in the PRC national security law, as passed by the National People's Congress Standing Committee just now on July 1, will only make things worse. Two other draft laws, the counterterrorism law and the foreign NGO management law, will mean even less space for Tibetans to assert their cultural, linguistic, and religious identity, that NGO law making it extremely difficult for even the most bona fide of NGOs to work inside China and certainly Tibet. I have seen many of my friends in the last 5 years thrown out of Tibet, working on health, education issues.

In contravention of the foundational principle of reciprocity in diplomatic relations, the Chinese Government strictly limits, as we talked about, access to Tibet for foreign diplomats, journalists, and citizens.

So this access to Tibet issue is, I think, something that we really have to embrace. Access and reciprocity, I think, for the moment, is really the way to go. I think it is something we can all agree on, it is internationally understood, and it is clearly covered by law and the way we behave in the world.

Chinese officials responsible for designing and implementing such restrictions should be denied visas to visit the U.S.

This week, the International Campaign for Tibet, my organization, and Human Rights Watch issued two reports on the Chinese Government's widespread denial of passports to Tibetans, a result of discriminatory and repressive Chinese policies which, among other things, hinder Tibetan Buddhists' right to practice and study their religion and, indeed, threaten the very survival of Tibetan Buddhist teachings, which, as we all know, is an oral based religion. It is from teacher to student.

This has coincided with a sharp drop in the number of Tibetans who have appeared at major teachings given by the Dalai Lama in India. In this past not this last, but July of 2014, for the first time ever, there were actually fewer Tibetans from inside Tibet present at His Holiness's Kalachakra teaching in Ladakh, India, than Chinese Buddhists from China, Taiwan, and elsewhere in the Chinese world.

I was there, so I was a witness to this. The borders were locked up. From the year before, it was publicized that there would be a Kalachakra initiation in Ladakh, which is fairly close to the Chinese border. It was impossible for Tibetans to get across. They have locked up the border all the way across. It is now a trickle of less than 100 Tibetans are getting out. And it used to be 500, 1,000, sometimes several thousand. So the border policies are having an extraordinary and poor effect on Tibetans.

The Chinese Government insists that only it has decision-making authority over

the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama, as we spoke about before, or even if he will reincarnate. It is an absurd assertion that not only contravenes the longstanding practice of Tibetan Buddhist religious traditions and the Dalai Lama's own instructions and reflections about his own reincarnation but also common sense. It is up to the Dalai Lama to decide if, where, and how he incarnates, and the Chinese Communist Party state has absolutely no right or authority.

I am sure we all saw these very angry and loud statements from the officials in the Communist Party saying, no, it was up to them, the Communist Party, where the Dalai Lama would be incarnated and if, in fact, he would. It is absurd, insane.

Congress has consistently shown support for Tibet, and it is pretty extraordinary. Of all the places in the world, the U.S. is the one kingpin that remains standing. And we all wish it would be stronger, but the reality is that the U.S. is the one and has major programs supporting Tibetans.

I have seen firsthand the positive impacts such aid has had for overburdened Tibetan settlements in India, in Nepal, and elsewhere around the world. And I know how meaningful these assistances are in supporting and preserving Tibetan culture and linguistic traditions.

Representatives Jim Sensenbrenner and Zoe Lofgren I know are reintroducing this Tibet policy refugee act this year, which would provide 3,000 immigrant visas to qualified displaced Tibetans.

I was actually one of the naysayers when the original act came. It was for a thousand Tibetans. And I said, well, it will never work; they will go right to New York or Boston or whatever, and they will stay in their own communities. But, in fact, it was a huge success. And it has enriched us as Americans and the communities they went into, some very small communities, all over the Midwest, in the West, in the North, the Northeast, elsewhere. They have made this a much richer and more interesting country. They created another level of Tibetans, who have become internationalized, educated, get the new world, get the 21st century.

So it has really been important. And I know this program is also going to be very successful, so thank you very much for doing that. It is something that we need to support and make sure that it happens.

Attention, concern, action--these are important things that the U.S. Congress and the administration, as well as the broader international community, must provide, hope and encouragement to Tibetans in Tibet and beyond.

ICT applauds the Defending Freedoms Project, launched by the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission--thank you--along with the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom and Amnesty International USA, which aims to heighten attention for political prisoners and human rights around the world by encouraging

Members of Congress to adopt a prisoner of conscience.

We are very glad that the Defending Freedoms Project's list of prisoners includes, among others, a young man who was mentioned before, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the 11th Panchen Lama.

This, as far as I know, is the only photograph we have of this young man, who was 6 years old when he was abducted. I think that is true.

It is the only one we have, isn't it?

Would it be possible to enter this into the record, as well?

Mr. McGOVERN. We will make sure it is in the record and certainly on our Web page.

Mr. GERE. Thank you. Thank you very much.

[The information follows:]



Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the 11th Panchen Lama, who was kidnapped by the Chinese government as a six-year old child, and who has been missing — in Chinese custody — since 1995.

Mr. GERE. Where was I?

Kunchok Tsephel, founder of the Tibetan literary Web site, who in 2009 was

sentenced to 15 years in prison in a closed trial for disclosing state secrets. Nothing more was said than that, which is another catch all phrase.

I am not sure what picture we have here. That is Lobsang Tsering.

Kunchok Tsephel. This is his picture, this fine young man. Stealing state secrets. If this could be also--thank you.

[The information follows:]



Kunchok Tsephel, founder of a Tibetan literary website, who in 2009 was sentenced to 15 years in prison in a closed trial on “disclosing state secrets” charges for what many believe was related to content on his website relating to the 2008 protests.

Mr. GERE. This is important, because I think this is something we can do. And I think before Xi Jinping comes here these prisoners could be released, and I think it is something we could ask for and achieve.

Lobsang Tsering was a monk who was sentenced to death with a 2 year reprieve in 2013 on intentional homicide charges for allegedly inciting several Tibetans to self-immolate.

And this is Lobsang Tsering right here. If we could also include him. Thank you very much.

[The information follows:]



Lobsang Kunchok, a monk from Kirti monastery, who was sentenced to death with a two-year reprieve in 2013 on “intentional homicide” charges for allegedly inciting several Tibetans to self-immolate.

Mr. GERE. We hope also Members will adopt these prisoners of conscience soon and highlight the case of Khenpo Kartse. Okay?

I had intended to focus on the urgency of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche's case today, but, in fact, he is gone, which is another reason why we have to take this very seriously and act now, until we lose one of these other prisoners.

I think this is something--the emotions of this moment is really powerful not only for the Tibetan community, but I think it has kind of shaken everyone who knows something about this and what is going on. I think the abject cruelty of holding this man's body away from his family and religious community is extraordinary.

As far as I know, the Chinese have made absolutely no statements about this. Even, in fact, there was no statement about his death. There has been nothing that has come from the Chinese side on this issue.

Congress has been a leading voice in recognizing His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, as a pivotal figure not only for Tibetans but, clearly, now for the world. He belongs to the world.

I remember this extraordinary moment, probably 10 years ago, maybe a little longer, 12 years ago, 15 years ago, when all of a sudden the Dalai Lama didn't look

Tibetan anymore. He looked like all of our fathers and grandfathers and uncles and the good people in whatever culture we come from. He transcended physicality and race and culture, but a universal being. And he becomes larger and larger and larger all the time.

Nita just saw him a few days ago. I mean, he is just--he just expands. Extraordinary. As an 80 year old, he is larger than when he was 25.

The International Campaign, ICT, applauds the passage of the House and the Senate resolutions honoring the Dalai Lama and addressing the situation in Tibet. This was for his 80th birthday. Their passage sends a very strong message of support to the Tibetans inside Tibet--and they did get these resolutions; they were translated in Tibetan, and they are all around Tibet--but also in the whole diaspora of the area, Nepal, India of course, Europe, Canada, and other places where we see Tibetan refugees and immigrants.

It is also a very strong message that we care. And it is something that, Jim, you speak about a lot, I know everyone on this committee. This thing of care is what we do best as Americans, to feel others' pain, to care. We have the resources to help at least a little, sometimes a lot. And if we were ever to lose this, this wouldn't be America anymore, it wouldn't be the United States of America, it wouldn't be something we were proud of, it wouldn't be something that we feel "I am an American" and stand up for around the world.

When His Holiness received the Congressional Gold Medal in the Rotunda--and I will get teary even thinking about it--we were looking up at these extraordinary paintings on the ceiling of truth and justice and our heritage. And here is the Dalai Lama from Tibet, the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet, speaking words of freedom, truth, justice, inclusion. And I never felt more proud being an American than in that very moment. I don't want to ever lose that. I know none of us in this room ever want to lose that feeling.

On another front, the source of Asia's five major rivers start in the Tibetan plateau. And it has the biggest reserve--I just found this out. The biggest reserve of freshwater outside of the Arctic and Antarctic is there. The Tibetan plateau is of incredible strategic influence and significance for China, India of course, and that entire region, as well as the whole world.

The Tibetan plateau is warming nearly three times as fast as the rest the globe. Climate change is causing Tibet's glaciers to melt, its permafrost to thaw, with enormous implications for the security and wellbeing of hundreds of millions, perhaps billions, of people downstream--India, Southeast Asia, and China.

China is now pursuing a number of dams and inter river water transfer projects in Tibet, which threaten to cause further damage to the plateau's extremely fragile ecosystem and possibly devastation downstream to those communities. As the population of South and Southeast Asia continue to grow, water scarcity will become more acute and could lead to truly violent conflicts between China and its neighbors over water resources.

It is the world's loss that, as a leader exiled from his country, the Dalai Lama cannot be at the table in Paris for COP21, but the international forum provides a vitally important opportunity for the U.S. Government to take the lead in connecting the global battle against climate change with the significance of the Tibetan plateau and its water, and also impressing the Chinese Government to involve the Tibetan people in the decision-making and strategies about their own land and their own resources.

As many Chinese people seek a new understanding of Tibet, which is true now the middle classes, the educated classes of China have a very romantic but a strong yearning to learn more about Tibet, and they are turning to Tibetan Buddhism. And, as I said before, Tenzin Delek Rinpoche had many, many, many Chinese students. There is a sense of shared struggle now for freedom among Tibetans and Chinese.

We urge China to adopt the compassionate leadership embodied by His Holiness's vision, which clearly would lead to a more stable, a genuine security for China. The Dalai Lama is one of the individuals who can ensure--probably the one individual ensure implementation of a peaceful resolution to the crisis in Tibet.

And, as we have been saying all along, the Dalai Lama is not the problem; the Dalai Lama actually is the solution and is willing to compromise on everything. The Chinese Government must immediately stop vilifying him and, instead, view him as an essential partner in dialogue, which he wants to be, for resolving Tibetan grievances and establishing genuine autonomy within the People's Republic of China under his Middle Way Approach.

Security and stability is in the balance, not just in Tibet and China but also in the region, given Tibet's key geopolitical position, which has always been there. Even before modern times, Tibet was always the buffer area between what was czarist Russia and the Soviet Union, the lands of Islam to the west, China to the east, and India to the south. And it was this huge high plateau buffer between these different cultures.

We urge Congress and the administration to take advantage of every opportunity, such as Xi Jinping's visit in Washington this September, to continue to press China to change its failed policies in Tibet and hold a meaningful dialogue with the Dalai Lama and his representatives.

I think this has to be codified. It has to be understood that this is primary. And I don't believe in a shotgun approach of 400 things we are asking for, but these are important things. Reciprocity is something that can be achieved. The dialogue is clear. The world is built on dialogue. All the conflicts we have on this planet are about dialogue. This is not something outrageous we are asking for. And I think we can make the demand, as the United States is the only country in which support for Tibet is embedded in policy and law.

Now, Jim, you read a lot of this. And, Co Chairman Pitts, you also read a lot of

this. This is law now in the U.S. And State Department and the administration and Congress have to comply with that law. And there are very specific things that are being asked for there. So there is a great foundation behind these asks. And I think the American people have to understand that this isn't a whim, but it is the law of the land.

We would also like the administration to take the lead among like-minded countries in stressing to the Chinese Government that its policies in Tibet are not untouchable internal affairs or otherwise off limits as a self-proclaimed core interest. Chinese policy in Tibet must be viewed and challenged as a litmus test, an emergent paradigm for how China will manage a new global order that it hopes to establish.

The U.S. has a unique leadership role to play here, and I do hope that we play it. I think it is really our major responsibility in the world. We cannot shirk this. And I think our moral leadership is extremely important not only to us but to the entire planet. Thank you all very much for allowing me to speak to you.

[The statement of Mr. Gere follows:]

Prepared Statement of Richard Gere:

Co-chairman McGovern and Co-chairman Pitts, and other Members of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, thank you for holding this important hearing today, and for inviting me to speak on the human rights situation in Tibet.

I am here as the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the International Campaign for Tibet (or ICT for short), which, since 1988, has been working to promote human rights and democratic freedoms for the people of Tibet. I feel that it's particularly appropriate for the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission to be holding this hearing today in light of Tom Lantos' steadfast commitment to Tibet, and his deep relationship with His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

It is with profound sadness that I give these remarks today. Tenzin Delek Rinpoche was one of the most highly respected and revered Tibetan lamas. He was a teacher to tens of thousands of Tibetan and Chinese students. Arrested in 2002, Rinpoche spent the last 13 years of his life serving a life sentence for crimes he did not commit. After being tried in a closed session on charges of "terrorism and inciting separatism" and without due process of law, the worst possible outcome has arrived. Rinpoche has died in prison, while in the custody of the Chinese government. This is a profound tragedy for Tibetans and Buddhists throughout the world. The death of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche is a tragic reminder of the injustices endured by Tibetans for exercising their right to religious freedom, and of the grim state of human rights in Tibet.

On July 6, His Holiness the Dalai Lama turned 80 – a birthday of particular import in Tibetan culture—as well as our own. As someone who has been involved in the Tibet cause for more than 30 years, I was deeply moved to see the outpouring of support, warm wishes, and reverence for the Dalai Lama expressed by people all over the world on this important occasion.

Most poignantly, Tibetans across the Tibetan plateau – adults and children – have defied bans on celebrations of the Dalai Lama's birthday and have both publicly and privately celebrated his 80th birthday, in what is arguably the most significant collective assertion of Tibetan solidarity, cultural identity and reverence for His Holiness since protests swept across Tibet in March 2008. The courage and devotion required for such acts was on full display in many of the photos that have circulated online; one image that particularly resonated with me is of a well-known young Tibetan author, recently released from prison, who posted a photo of himself on social media wearing a t-shirt conveying a happy birthday message for his

Holiness.

Change will come to Tibet; it's not a matter of if, but when. It may take time, but we need to act. As the Dalai Lama has said, change can only take place through action. We each have a role to play, and we must act now and consistently.

I was asked to speak today on behalf of the International Campaign for Tibet on the human rights situation in Tibet. Given time constraints, let me begin by stating simply: The tragic human rights situation in Tibet continues to deteriorate. The death of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche while being arbitrarily detained in a Chinese prison for the last 13 years is but the latest, egregious example. Chinese government and Communist Party leaders persist in their repressive policies in Tibet, which deny Tibetans fundamental rights that the Chinese government is obligated to protect under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the many international human rights treaties it has ratified as well as the P.R.C's own constitution. China's constitution and other national laws purport to guarantee rights to freedom of religion, expression, movement, and cultural and linguistic identity. But in Tibet, (as ICT's recent research and reports document), such rights not only are not protected, but when Tibetans attempt to exercise these freedoms, the consequences can be grave: long prison sentences following conviction on vague criminal charges, disappearances, and torture, which can be so severe that badly injured Tibetans are often released from detention "early" so that they will die outside of official custody. Tenzin Delek Rinpoche died in custody, however, and now Chinese officials are refusing to release his body to his family and community.

Since 2009, more than 140 Tibetans have self-immolated, most protesting Chinese policies in Tibet and calling for a return of the Dalai Lama. ICT has reported on local regulations and policy guidelines that have the effect of criminalizing virtually any expression of religious or cultural identity as "separatist" or of "the Dalai Clique." In addition, family members, associates, and community members of self-immolators may also be subject to criminal charges or other penalties—a form of collective punishment that contravenes both Chinese law and international human rights standards. The opaque language in the PRC National Security Law, passed by the National People's Congress Standing Committee on July 1, will only make things worse for Tibetans who seek to exercise their fundamental rights of religious freedom, expression and freedom of assembly and association. Two other draft laws, the counter-terrorism law and the foreign NGO management law, which are in the final stages of the legislative process, will mean even more repression and human rights abuses, and even less space for Tibetans to assert their cultural, religious, and linguistic identity.

Access to Tibet is severely restricted, which makes researching and reporting on human rights, religious freedom and religious teachings, as well as other issues in Tibet, extremely challenging. Access restrictions dramatically limit information flows in both directions. As ICT, the U.S. State Department and others have reported—in contravention of the foundational principle of reciprocity in diplomatic relations—the Chinese government strictly limits access to Tibet for foreign diplomats, journalists, and citizens. A special permit is needed to travel to Tibet, and requests to visit are routinely denied. The most recent State Department Human Rights Report on China, including Tibet, notes that in 2014, 12 requests for diplomatic access to the Tibet Autonomous Region were made by the U.S. government, but none was granted. The Chinese government also restricts foreign journalists' access to Tibet, and in the rare event a request to visit is granted, the journalists' movements and interactions on the ground are tightly controlled and monitored. The virtual lockdown of Tibet prompted Co-chair McGovern to introduce for himself and Co-chair Pitts, and several other representatives, the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act of 2015 (H.R.1112), which provides, broadly speaking, that Chinese officials responsible for designing and implementing the Tibet-specific travel restrictions be denied visas to visit the U.S. as long as such travel restrictions are in place. I support this effort by Co-chairs McGovern and Pitts and urge the House to pass this bill as soon as possible.

It's not just that Americans and other foreigners can't get into Tibet; more critically, Tibetans can't get out, nor can they move freely within Tibet. Such restrictions on movement and travel, both domestically and internationally, violate Chinese law and international human rights standards. Yesterday, the International Campaign for Tibet and Human Rights Watch issued two reports on the Chinese government's widespread denial of passports to Tibetans — a result of discriminatory and repressive Chinese policies—which among other things, hinder Tibetan Buddhists' right to practice and study their

religion, and, indeed, threaten the very survival of Tibetan Buddhist teachings, which are based on oral transmission. The intensification of the policy denying passports to Tibetans has coincided with a sharp drop in the number of Tibetans who have appeared at major teachings given by the Dalai Lama in India. In July 2014, for the first time ever, there were fewer Tibetans from inside Tibet present at His Holiness' Kalachakra teaching in Ladakh, India, than Chinese Buddhists (from China, Taiwan, and elsewhere). In 2012, a group of young Tibetans from inside Tibet wrote ICT a letter conveying how happy they were to learn that His Holiness was giving teachings and helping people all over the world. They continued: "But today a foreign monk has a better chance of receiving the teachings of our land than we do. Until our generation, Buddhism has thrived here, giving a strong sense of moral value, of compassion. We are the first generation to have no direct access to His Holiness' teachings, or opportunity for a complete religious education."

An alarming example of the Chinese government's violation of the right to religious freedom in Tibet is the government's insistence that only it has decision-making authority over the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama, or even if he will reincarnate. This assertion not only contravenes the longstanding practice of Tibetan Buddhist religious traditions and the Dalai Lama's own instructions and reflections about his reincarnation, but also common sense. It is up to His Holiness to decide if, where and how he incarnates, and the Chinese Party-state has absolutely no right or authority to interfere. The official Chinese position is farcical.

Tibet matters: its culture, religion, history, language, environment; they all matter and we must do what we can, now, to protect and preserve them. The U.S. Congress has played a critical role in highlighting the issues facing Tibetans in China, and in crafting U.S. policy toward Tibet. The Tibetan Policy Act of 2002, whose purpose is to "support the aspirations of the Tibetan people to safeguard their distinct identity," established the position of the Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues in the State Department, and institutionalized mechanisms for ensuring that Tibet and concern for the Tibetan people's struggle would be embedded in U.S. government policies and programs.

Congress has consistently shown support for Tibet and programs supporting Tibetans, and I've seen firsthand the positive impact such aid has had for overburdened Tibetan refugee settlements, and know how meaningful other assistance is that supports preservation of Tibetan cultural and linguistic traditions. Having spent long periods in the field in India and Nepal with Tibetan exiles, I was heartened to learn that Representatives Jim Sensenbrenner and Zoe Lofgren recently reintroduced the Tibetan Refugee Assistance Act of 2015 (H.R.2679), which would provide 3,000 immigrant visas to qualified displaced Tibetans over a three-year period. The bill would support the well-being of the Tibetan exile community as they strive to find a peaceful solution for Tibet, help the overburdened settlements in India and Nepal, and would give displaced Tibetans the opportunity to flourish as Tibetan-Americans, empowering new generations of Tibetan leaders.

Congressional funding for the Tibetan language services of Radio Free Asia (RFA) and Voice of America (VOA) have been instrumental in ensuring that independent news is available on the Tibetan plateau on a daily basis, and it serves to amplify what is happening here, in Washington, to those whom it most directly affects: Tibetans in Tibet. For example, Tibetan services of RFA and VOA reported on the recent introduction of two resolutions, one in the House and one in the Senate, honoring his Holiness on the occasion of his 80th birthday. And the Tibetan services are here today covering this hearing. Attention, concern, and action from the U.S. Congress and the Administration, as well as the broader international community, provide hope and encouragement to Tibetans in Tibet, and beyond.

ICT applauds the Defending Freedoms Project launched by the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, along with the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom and Amnesty International USA, which aims to heighten attention for political prisoners and human rights around the world by encouraging Members of Congress to adopt a prisoner of conscience. We are heartened that the Defending Freedoms Project list of prisoners includes, among others, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the 11th Panchen Lama, who was kidnapped by the Chinese government as a six-year old child, and who has been missing — in Chinese custody — since 1995, Kunchok Tsephel, founder of a Tibetan literary website, who in 2009 was sentenced to 15 years in prison in a closed trial on "disclosing state secrets" charges for what

many believe was related to content on his website relating to the 2008 protests. Another political prisoner on the Defending Freedoms Project list I would like to draw your attention to is Lobsang Tsering, a monk from Kirti monastery, who was sentenced to death with a two-year reprieve in 2013 on “intentional homicide” charges for allegedly inciting several Tibetans to self-immolate. We hope Members will adopt these prisoners of conscience soon, and also highlight the case of Khenpo Kartse (Khenpo Karma Tsewang), who is also mentioned in H.Res.337. I had intended to focus on the urgency of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche’s case today, but instead, his tragic death reminds us that we must act now on behalf of all political prisoners in Tibet.

Congress has been a leading voice in recognizing His Holiness the Dalai Lama as a pivotal figure, not only for Tibetans, but for the world. In awarding the Dalai Lama the Congressional Gold Medal in 2007, then-Speaker Pelosi stated that Congress was honoring the Tibetan people and the Dalai Lama “for his many enduring and outstanding contributions to peace, nonviolence, human rights and religious understanding.” These sentiments were echoed last month in a bipartisan resolution introduced by Senator Dianne Feinstein in the Senate (S.Res.200), and by Congressmen McGovern, Pitts, Engel and Salmon in a press statement accompanying the introduction of the bipartisan House Resolution (H.Res.337), which honors the Dalai Lama and calls for substantive dialogue between China and the representatives of the Dalai Lama to address Tibetan grievances and secure genuine autonomy for Tibet as guaranteed in the Chinese constitution.

The International Campaign for Tibet applauds the passage of the House and Senate resolutions honoring the Dalai Lama and addressing the situation in Tibet. Their passage sends a strong message of support to Tibetans inside Tibet, and in the diaspora —Nepal, India, the U.S. and elsewhere — that the U.S. Congress and American people, including Tibetan-Americans, care about Tibet and its future — its religion, culture, language, and the realization of democratic freedoms and human rights for its people.

Early last month, I had the opportunity to speak with a dozen or so bright young Tibetan-Americans who took part in ICT’s annual Tibetan Youth Leadership Program, and I was struck by their passion for Tibet and His Holiness, and their identification as both Tibetan and American. They care deeply about Tibet and the tragedy facing Tibetans inside Tibet, and want to see Congress and the Administration act on the values that they also hold dear: promotion and protection of human rights and democratic freedoms. I feel profound sadness that many young Tibetan-Americans, and their parents and grandparents, are denied visas to China, foreclosing return to their homeland for the older generation, and preventing the younger generation from ever setting foot in Tibet.

Co-chairmen McGovern and Pitts, I would like to raise another issue that you touched on in H.Res.337 — a concern that has been central to His Holiness for decades: environmental degradation in Tibet. This is a particularly timely in light of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21) in Paris this December, and Pope Francis’ recent encyclical on climate change.

As the source of Asia’s major rivers, and with the biggest reserve of fresh water outside the Arctic and Antarctic, the Tibetan plateau is of great strategic significance for China, India and the region, as well as the whole world. The Tibetan plateau is warming nearly three times as fast as the rest of the globe. Climate change is causing Tibet’s glaciers to melt and its permafrost to thaw, with enormous implications for the security and well-being of millions of people downstream.

China is now pursuing a number of dams and inter-river water transfer projects in Tibet which threaten to cause further damage to the plateau’s ecosystem, and possible devastation in downstream communities. As the populations of South and Southeast Asia continue to grow, water scarcity will become more acute, which could lead to devastating conflicts between China and its neighbors over water resources.

The Dalai Lama’s promotion of global interdependence and protection of the environment was one of the reasons that he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989. It is the world’s loss that, as a leader exiled from his country, the Dalai Lama cannot be at the table in Paris. But COP21 provides a vitally important opportunity for the U.S. government to take the lead in connecting the global battle against

climate change with the significance of the Tibetan plateau and its water, and also in pressing the Chinese government to involve the Tibetan people in its strategies and decision-making to address climate change.

As Leader Pelosi and I recently wrote in an op-ed published in the Wall Street Journal, the Dalai Lama “is a religious leader and a man whose message of peace and the universal values of love, compassion and respect has never mattered more.” As many Chinese people seek a new understanding of Tibet, and turn to Tibetan Buddhism, there is a sense of a shared struggle for freedom among Tibetans and Chinese—a desire to be free from the constraints of an authoritarian state. We urge China to adopt the compassionate leadership embodied by His Holiness’ vision, which would lead to a more stable and genuinely secure China.

The profound connection between His Holiness and the people of Tibet, as evidenced most recently by the 80th birthday celebrations in Tibet despite the serious risks involved, is unshakeable. With his steadfast commitment to nonviolence, and the depth of Tibetans’ reverence for him, the Dalai Lama is the one individual who can ensure implementation of a peaceful resolution to the crisis in Tibet. The Chinese government must immediately stop vilifying the Dalai Lama, and instead view him correctly, as an essential partner in dialogue for resolving Tibetan grievances and establishing genuine autonomy within the People’s Republic of China under his Middle Way approach. Security and stability is in the balance — not just in Tibet and China — but also in the region, given Tibet’s key geopolitical position, and the environmental issues that are also affecting neighboring countries. I urge Congress and the Administration to take advantage of every opportunity, such as Xi Jinping’s visit to Washington this September, and the COP21 in Paris in December, and in other multilateral fora, to continue to press China to change its failed policies in Tibet, and to hold a meaningful dialogue with the Dalai Lama or his representatives.

As the United States is the only country in which support for Tibet is embedded in policy, we ask Congress to press the Administration to take the lead among like-minded countries in stressing to the Chinese government that its policies in Tibet are not untouchable “internal affairs” or otherwise off-limits as a self-proclaimed “core interest.” Chinese policy in Tibet must be viewed, and challenged, as a litmus test—an emergent paradigm for how China will manage a new global order that it hopes to establish. The U.S. has a unique leadership role to play, not only because of the existence of the Tibetan Policy Act and its mandates, but also in light of “the unwavering friendship between the people of the United States and the people of Tibet,” as H.Res.337 so aptly puts it.

Co-chairmen McGovern and Pitts, and other Members of the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, thank you again for holding this hearing, and for inviting me to speak. I look forward to your questions.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- There are concrete actions that Congress can take now to effect change in Tibet and improve the human rights situations for Tibetans. We urge Members of Congress to call on the Chinese government to return the body of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche to his family and monastic community, and to act with restraint towards Tibetans seeking to express their grief. We further urge Members to make public statements expressing their concern about the death of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, and call for an independent investigation of the cause of his death.
- ICT urges Members of the House to immediately adopt the remaining Tibetan political prisoners on the Defending Freedoms Project list, which include the 11th Panchen Lama, Kunchok Tsephel, and Lobsang Tsering, and make best efforts to call attention to their cases, and press the Chinese government for their immediate and unconditional release.
- To highlight and address the restrictions on access to Tibet, ICT encourages Members of Congress to request to visit Tibet, and for the House to pass the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act (H.R.1112). ICT also supports continued efforts by the U.S. government to establish a consulate in Lhasa.
- We further urge the House to pass the Tibetan Refugee Assistance Act of 2015 (H.R.2679).
- ICT also encourages Congress to press the U.S. government to raise Tibetan human rights issues at every opportunity when meeting with Chinese government counterparts, such as at high-level bilateral dialogues, multilateral meetings, and state visits, including the upcoming visit by Xi Jinping to the U.S. in September, and the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP21) in

Paris in December. We recommend that when members of Congress go to the P.R.C., or meet Chinese officials elsewhere, they seek to actively engage with Chinese Communist Party representatives on issues of Tibet's future, and to raise specific cases of political prisoners. We further echo the recommendation made in H.Res.337 calling on the U.S. Government to emphasize in meetings with Chinese counterparts that government interference in the Tibetan reincarnation process is a violation of the right to religious freedom.

- Given the significance of the Tibetan plateau as an epicenter of global climate change, we encourage Congress to press the U.S. government to take the lead in connecting the global battle against climate change with the significance of the Tibetan plateau and its water, and for the Chinese government to involve the Tibetan people in its strategies to address climate change.
- To advance the protection of human rights in Tibet and hold Chinese human rights abusers accountable, ICT recommends that Congress pass the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act (S.284/H.R.624).

Mr. McGOVERN. Oh, thank you very much.

Kaydor? Welcome.

STATEMENT OF KAYDOR AUKATSANG

Mr. AUKATSANG. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, all the members of the committee.

Thank you, Leader Pelosi.

Thank you, Sophie and Richard.

Mr. Chairman, in the interest of maximizing the remaining time we have for questions, if you will allow me to just read out a portion of my statement.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for inviting me to testify before your committee. The late Tom Lantos was a steadfast friend of the Tibetan people and a passionate visionary who prioritized the issue of Tibet and transformed it into an important concern for the United States Congress.

I want to thank you, Co-Chairs McGovern and Pitts, in particular, for carrying on the work of the late Tom Lantos and for your strong commitment to the Tibetan issue. Your decision to hold this hearing clearly demonstrates your care and concern for Tibet and the Tibetan people.

Mr. Chairman, I was by His Holiness, the Dalai Lama's side during his recent visit to Dallas, Orange County, and New York from July 1 to 12. The visit was organized to celebrate His Holiness's 80th birthday. I am pleased to inform you that His Holiness at 80 is still strong, active, and tirelessly promoting his message of oneness of humanity, compassion, preservation of Tibet's Buddhist culture and environment, and a world free of violence. Tibetans are, indeed, blessed to have His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama, as their beloved leader.

On behalf of His Holiness and the Tibetan people, I would like to express my deep gratitude for the outpouring of support and positive messages that we received from Members of Congress on His Holiness's 80th birthday on July 6.

Mr. Chairman, I would also like to express my deep sadness over the recent death of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, the well-known Tibetan human rights activist, who was serving a 20 year sentence for charges that Rinpoche has always denied. I want to especially thank you, Chairman McGovern, for your active support in calling for the release of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche on medical parole. We hope Chinese authorities will come forward with the circumstances surrounding his death and promptly return his body to his family.

Tenzin Delek Rinpoche's case exhibits the strong Tibetan spirit that no amount of Chinese oppression can crush.

For many, Tibet evokes images of monks in crimson robes, towering mountains powdered with snow, and the smiling face of His Holiness, the Dalai Lama. However, the reality of the situation in Tibet is not as beautiful. For over 50 years, Tibet has been under the harsh rule of China.

On July 10, Sonam Topgya, a 26 year old Tibetan monk, set himself on fire in Kyegudo, Tibet. With this latest self-immolation, 141 Tibetans have self-immolated in protest against the Chinese Government and its hardline policies since 2009. And, Mr. Chairman, let me emphasize here that, of the 141, all but 1 occurred since 2011.

Instead of investigating the conditions compelling Tibetans to take extreme measures such as self-immolation and redressing the flawed policies, the Chinese Government continues its policies of political repression, cultural assimilation, social discrimination, economic marginalization, and environmental destruction in Tibet. The policies of the Chinese Government have created an environment of profound mistrust and have deeply alienated Tibetans.

Today, I would like to focus my remarks on the Tibetan leadership's Middle Way Approach to securing genuine autonomy for Tibetans and the upcoming electoral process for electing the Sikyong, the Tibetan political leader, and the election of other Tibetan leaders.

The Middle Way Approach for genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people is a policy conceived by His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, in 1974 to engage the Chinese Government in dialogue and find a peaceful way to protect the unique Tibetan culture and identity.

It is a policy that was adopted democratically through a series of discussions held over many decades by the Central Tibetan Administration and the Tibetan people. It is a win win proposition, which straddles the middle path between the status quo and independence, one that categorically rejects the present repressive and colonial policies of the Chinese Government towards the Tibetan people while not seeking separation from the People's Republic of China.

In 2008, during the eighth round of talks between Chinese and Tibetan delegates, the Memorandum of Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People was presented to address major Chinese concerns. Among other topics, it focused on how genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people would operate within the framework of the People's Republic of China.

Under the Middle Way Approach, Tibetans are seeking a form of self-governance which would allow them to meet their basic needs but not challenge the unity and

stability of the People's Republic of China. They are seeking a form of autonomy where Tibetan people share customs and value systems, language, way of life, and geography.

Uniting them under a single administrative unit would be a more efficient and effective form of governance than the existing structure, where Tibetans are divided into the so called Tibet Autonomous Region and neighboring provinces with a Chinese majority, namely Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu, and Yunnan.

The Tibetan leadership believes the Middle Way Approach is the most viable solution to the current urgent situation inside Tibet. It is also the approach which has enjoyed the strongest international support. Many national governments, parliaments, Nobel laureates, prominent Chinese, Tibetan leaders in Tibet, and world leaders have supported the Middle Way Approach.

After President Obama's meeting with His Holiness on July 16, 2011, and February 21, 2014, the White House applauded the Dalai Lama's commitment to nonviolence and dialogue with China and pursuit of the Middle Way Approach and encouraged direct dialogues to resolve the longstanding differences, saying that a dialogue that produces results would be positive for China and Tibetans.

The Tibetan leadership is seeking the support of the Chinese community and the wider international community to encourage the Chinese Government to resume dialogue in a spirit of reconciliation, keeping in mind the many benefits to both sides that would stem from genuine autonomy.

The Middle Way Approach is a mutually beneficial proposition. It is not only the most viable solution to resolving the Tibet issue but also a model for resolving other conflicts in the world. By melding dialogue, nonviolence, and compromise, it creates lasting peace and satisfaction for all parties.

However, there has been no dialogue with the Chinese since January 2010. Despite this, the Tibetan leadership remains steadfast in its commitment to the Middle Way Approach and to finding a lasting solution through dialogue.

Sikyong Dr. Lobsang Sangay has publicly stated the envoys of His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, are ready to engage in dialogue with their Chinese counterpart anytime and anywhere.

Besides the Middle Way Approach, another lasting gift and legacy of His Holiness, the great 14th Dalai Lama, is his contribution to deepening the promotion of democracy. Here, Tibetans have benefited greatly from a generous host in India, the greatest democracy of the world. India has not only been a generous host for Tibetans, but many of her democratic practices and reforms have been taken from India. For this, we are most grateful to the Government and people of India.

Upon arriving in exile in 1959, His Holiness established the Central Tibetan

Administration and entrusted it with the responsibility of rehabilitating Tibetan refugees through education and cultural preservation, while sustaining the Tibetan freedom movement. The democratic reform that His Holiness had long wanted to initiate in Tibet but which was thwarted by the Chinese became possible in exile.

As a way to transition into a democratic future for Tibet, His Holiness advised the Tibetan people to elect their own representatives by introducing a new way of governance, one that prioritizes the needs of Tibet and of the Tibetan people above all else. His Holiness had faith in the Tibetan people to establish a democratic system of government.

Although this experimental stage of democracy was difficult in the beginning, a stable structure has been gradually established. Today, the Central Tibetan Administration has three independent branches of the executive, legislature, and the judiciary, along with the three autonomous departments, comprised of the Election Commission, Office of the Auditor General, and the Public Service Commission. The Kashag, the cabinet, oversees the Departments of Religion and Culture, Home, Health, Information, International Relations, Finance, Education, and Security.

Prior to 2011, the Kalon Tripa, later renamed Sikyong, position was subordinate to the Office of His Holiness, the Dalai Lama. However, His Holiness made a historic announcement on March 10, 2011, where he announced that he would formally relinquish his political leadership in the exiled Tibetan administration to the elected leader of the Central Tibetan Administration, led by the Kalon Tripa. This decision was intended to strengthen the democratic structure of the Tibetan movement. "My desire to devolve authority had nothing to do with a wish to shirk responsibility. It is to benefit Tibetans in the long run," His Holiness said.

On September 20, 2012, the 15th Tibetan Parliament in Exile unanimously voted to amend the Tibetan charter and change the title of Kalon Tripa to Sikyong, which translates to "political leader," as distinct from "spiritual leader."

The 2016 Tibetan general election will elect the fourth directly elected Sikyong and the 16th Tibetan Parliament in Exile. The 16th Tibetan Parliament in Exile will be composed of 45 members, 10 each from 3 traditional Tibetan provinces. The primary election is slated for October 18, 2015, and the general election on March 20, 2016.

Mr. Chairman and honorable members of the committee, let me again reiterate the full commitment of His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, and the Tibetan leadership to a peaceful, negotiated settlement to the Tibet question within the framework of the People's Republic of China and to further deepening the democratic reforms initiated by His Holiness.

In closing, I want to thank you, Mr. Chairman and the U.S. Congress, for your continued support. It is important that the United States, the leading nation of the free world, speaks up for the plight of the Tibetan and other oppressed people around the

world.

Thank you.

[The statement of Mr. Aukatsang follows:]

Prepared Statement of Kaydor Aukatsang:

Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for inviting me to testify before your committee. The late Tom Lantos was a steadfast friend of the Tibetan people and a passionate visionary who prioritized the issue of Tibet and transformed it into an important concern for the United States Congress. I want to thank you, Co-Chairs McGovern and Pitts, in particular, for carrying on the work of the late Tom Lantos and for your strong commitment to the Tibetan issue. Your decision to hold this hearing clearly demonstrates your care and concern for Tibet and the Tibetan people. I also want to thank the esteemed members of the Commission for their support and participation.

Mr. Chairman, I was by His Holiness the Dalai Lama's side during his recent visit to Dallas, Orange County and New York. The visit was organized to celebrate His Holiness' 80th birthday. I'm pleased to inform you that His Holiness at 80 is still strong, active and tirelessly promoting his message of oneness of humanity, compassion, preservation of Tibet's Buddhist culture and environment, and a world free of violence. On behalf of His Holiness and the Tibetan people, I would like to express my deep gratitude for the outpouring of support and positive messages that we received from members of Congress on His Holiness' 80th birthday.

Mr. Chairman, I, also, want to express my deep sadness over the recent death of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, the well-known Tibetan human rights activist who was serving a twenty-year sentence for charges Rinpoche has always denied. I want to especially thank you Chairman McGovern for your active support in calling for the release of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche on medical parole. Tenzin Delek Rinpoche's case exhibits the strong Tibetan spirit that no amount of Chinese repression can crush.

For many Tibet evokes images of monks in crimson robes, towering mountains powdered with snow and the smiling face of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. However, the reality of the situation in Tibet is not nearly as beautiful. For over fifty years, Tibet has been under the harsh rule of China. On July 10, Sonam Tobgyal, a 26-year-old Tibetan monk set himself on fire in Kyegudo, Tibet. With this latest self-immolation, at least 141 Tibetans have self-immolated in protest against the Chinese government and its hardline policies since 2009.

Instead of investigating the conditions compelling Tibetans to take extreme measures such as self immolation and redressing its flawed policies, the Chinese government continues its policies of political repression, cultural assimilation, social discrimination, economic marginalization and environmental destruction in Tibet. The policies of the Chinese government have created an environment of profound mistrust and have deeply alienated Tibetans.

Today, I would like to focus my remarks on the Tibetan leadership's Middle Way Approach to securing genuine autonomy for Tibetans, and the upcoming electoral process for electing the Sikyong, the Tibetan political leader, and the election of other Tibetan leaders.

The Middle Way Approach for Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People ("Umaylam" in Tibetan) is a policy conceived by His Holiness the Dalai Lama in 1974 to engage the Chinese government in dialogue and find a peaceful way to protect the unique Tibetan culture and identity. It is a policy that was adopted democratically through a series of discussions held over many decades by the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) and the Tibetan people. It is a win-win proposition, which straddles the middle path between the status quo and independence – one that categorically rejects the present repressive and colonial

policies of the Chinese government towards the Tibetan people while not seeking separation from the People's Republic of China.

To this day, His Holiness the Dalai Lama remains steadfast in his endorsement of this approach as a realistic and pragmatic solution to the grave and now urgent problems faced by Tibetans in Tibet. The policy's first accomplishment came with the establishment of direct contact between Dharamsala and Beijing when Deng Xiaoping said in 1979 that, "apart from independence, all issues can be discussed." Four factfinding delegations visited Tibet from 1979-1985. Two exploratory delegations from Dharamsala met the highest Chinese leadership in Beijing in 1982 and 1984, and there were official contacts between Dharamsala and Beijing until August 1993.

Since 1987, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has presented the Middle Way Approach in a range of forums around world – including the U.S. Congress and the European Parliament – hoping to once again draw the Chinese leadership into discussions. Dialogue resumed in earnest in 2002, and has led to a total of nine rounds of talks. During the 7th round of talks in 2008 – the year in which unprecedented and widespread protests erupted across Tibet – the Chinese government asked the Tibetan leadership to put in writing the nature of the autonomy it sought. The Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People was presented during the 8th round of talks in 2008.

The Chinese government expressed a number of concerns and objections to the Memorandum. To address these, during the 9th and last round of talks in January 2010 the Tibetan leadership presented the Note on the Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People. The Memorandum and the Note elaborate how genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people would operate within the framework of the People's Republic of China: its constitution, sovereignty and territorial integrity, the hierarchy and authority of the Chinese Central Government. The Note further addresses specific concerns raised by the Chinese government in respect to the Form of Single Administration; Political, Social and Economic systems; Public Security; Regulation of Population Migration; Language; and Religion.

Under the Middle Way Approach, Tibetans are seeking a form of self-governance, which would allow them to meet their basic needs but not challenge the unity and stability of the People's Republic of China. They are seeking a form of autonomy where Tibetan people share customs and value systems, language, way of life and geography. Uniting them under a single administrative unit would be a more efficient and effective form of governance than the existing structure where Tibetans are divided into the so called Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and neighboring provinces with a Chinese majority, namely, Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu and Yunnan.

The Chinese authorities have claimed that it is the Tibetan leadership's intention to expel "all Chinese" from Tibetan areas. In fact, the Memorandum clearly articulates that when it states, "our intention is not to expel non-Tibetans. Our concern is the induced movement of primarily Han, but also some other nationalities, into many Tibetan areas, which in turn marginalizes the native Tibetan population." The Memorandum calls for the Tibetan areas to have a Tibetan majority for the preservation and promotion of the unique Tibetan identity. The Tibetan population in the People's Republic of China is estimated at 6.2 million (6th National Population Census of PRC), which is approximately 0.47% of China's total population.

A Tibetan regional administration would govern the protection and promotion of the 11 Basic Needs of Tibetans, which encompasses the following: language, culture, religion, education, environmental protection, utilization of natural resources, economic development and trade, public health, public security, regulation on population migration, and cultural, educational and religious exchanges with other countries. This proposal is consistent with both the National Regional Autonomy Law and the Constitution of the People's Republic of China.

In 2011 His Holiness the Dalai Lama transferred his political responsibilities to the elected Tibetan leadership – the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) under the leadership of the Sikyong, the democratically elected Tibetan political leader. As stated in the Memorandum, His Holiness has made it clear on numerous occasions that he will not hold any political position in Tibet. As symbol of Tibetan

unity and identity, he is a beacon of hope for the Tibetan people. Tibetan people place their hope in his spiritual leadership as the person most trusted with and capable of bringing about a peaceful resolution to the situation inside Tibet. As a Tibetan, he remains deeply committed to lending whatever support is needed to reach a resolution to the current impasse and remains a staunch and unwavering advocate of the Middle Way Approach.

The Tibetan leadership believes the Middle Way Approach is the most viable solution to the current urgent situation inside Tibet. It is also the approach which has enjoyed the strongest international support. Many national governments have officially stated their support for dialogue between the envoys of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and representatives of the Chinese leadership, including the U.S., E.U., Britain, France, Germany, Australia and New Zealand. In the past three years alone, resolutions, motions and statements of support for dialogue have been passed in several parliaments across the world including the U.S., E.U, France, Italy, Japan, Australia, Brazil amongst others.

The Middle Way Approach has also gained strong support from the Chinese community especially Chinese intellectuals and artists such as Noble Laureate Liu Xiaobo, Wang Lixiong, Zhang Boshu and Ran Yunfei. In 2012, 82 Chinese NGOs based in 15 countries sent a petition to the United Nations, EU and various foreign governments and parliaments exhorting them to “urge the Chinese government to start negotiations as soon as possible.”

The Middle Way Approach has also been supported by a number of Nobel Peace Laureates including Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa, Elie Wiesel and Jody Williams of the U.S., Lech Walesa of Poland, Shirin Ebadi of Iran, and several other laureates. In 2012, 12 Nobel Peace Laureates wrote an open letter to Chinese President Hu Jintao, strongly urging the Chinese government to seize the opportunity for meaningful dialogue with His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

To put the Middle Way Approach into effect, numerous global leaders have called for dialogue including several U.S. Presidents. After President Obama’s meeting with His Holiness on July 16, 2011 and February 21, 2014, the White House applauded “the Dalai Lama’s commitment to non-violence and dialogue with China and pursuit of the Middle Way Approach,” and encouraged “direct dialogue to resolve the long-standing differences”, saying “that a dialogue that produces results would be positive for China and Tibetans.”

Lastly, prominent leaders inside Tibet have supported the Middle Way Approach including the late Panchen Lama who openly expressed support for the policy. The late Ngapo Ngawang Jigme, a former minister of the Tibetan government in Tibet, urged the Chinese government to implement regional autonomy in Tibet as promised in its 17-Point Agreement. The late Baba Phuntsok Wangyal, a senior Tibetan official of the Chinese Communist Party, stated that “the Dalai Lama’s Middle Way Approach of seeking only a meaningful autonomy for Tibet rather than independence, is an expression of the great responsibility he takes in giving serious thoughts over the fundamental interests, future and fate of Tibet and Tibetans as a whole...and it is a thinking based on reality and foresight.”

The Tibetan leadership is seeking the support of the Chinese community and the wider international community to encourage the Chinese government to resume dialogue in a spirit of reconciliation, keeping in mind the many benefits to both sides that would stem from genuine autonomy.

The Tibetan leadership believes the Chinese Government can no longer defend its current counter productive policy towards Tibetans in Tibet. The Tibetan people must be granted a genuine say in their own affairs in order for them to live in harmony with basic rights and with dignity. Through the Middle Way Approach, the People’s Republic of China can ensure regional peace and stability. Internationally, it also stands to gain by improving its image in the minds and hearts of people around the world. The Middle Way Approach is a mutually beneficial proposition that can serve as a model for resolving other conflicts in the world. By melding dialogue, nonviolence and compromise the Middle Way Approach creates lasting peace and satisfaction for all parties involved.

However, there has been no dialogue with the Chinese since 2010. Despite this, the Tibetan

leadership remains steadfast in its commitment to the Middle Way Approach and to finding a lasting solution through dialogue between the envoys of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the representatives of the Chinese leadership.

Besides the Middle Way Approach, another lasting gift and legacy of His Holiness the great 14th Dalai Lama is his contribution to deepening promotion of democracy. Here Tibetans have benefited greatly from living in India, the greatest democracy of the world. India has not only been a generous host for Tibetans, but many of our democratic practices and reforms have been taken from India. For this we are most grateful to the government and people of India.

Upon arriving in exile in India in 1959, His Holiness established the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) and entrusted it with the responsibility of rehabilitating Tibetan refugees through education and cultural preservation while sustaining the Tibetan freedom movement. The democratic reforms that His Holiness had long wanted to initiate in Tibet, which was thwarted by the Chinese, became possible in exile.

As a way to transition into a democratic future for Tibet, His Holiness advised the Tibetan people to elect their own representatives by introducing a new way of governance, one that prioritizes the needs of Tibet and of the Tibetan people above all else. On September 2nd of 1960, the Tibetan parliament in exile, then called the Commission of Tibetan People's Deputies, was inaugurated. This historic date is observed by the Tibetan exile community as Tibetan Democracy Day.

On March 10, 1963 His Holiness promulgated a Tibetan constitution. He also made structural changes to the governmental institutions and the way in which civil servants serving under the CTA are appointed. The term of the elected parliamentarians was set at three years, and it was also decided that there should be an elected Chairman and a Vice Chairman of the Parliament.

On June 14, 1991, The Constitution Redrafting Committee drafted the Charter of the Tibetans in Exile, which serves as the supreme law governing the functions of the CTA. It was then reviewed and adopted by the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile. Based on the spirit of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Charter guarantees to all Tibetans equality before the law and enjoyment of rights and freedom without discrimination on the basis of sex, religion, race, language and social origin. It provides for a clear separation of power among the three organs of the administration: judiciary, legislature and executive.

His Holiness had faith in the Tibetan people to establish a democratic system of government. Although this experimental stage of democracy was difficult in the beginning, a stable structure has been gradually established. Today, the CTA has three independent branches of the Executive (Kashag), Legislature (Chitue) and the Judiciary, along with the three autonomous departments comprised of the Election Commission, Office of Auditor General and the Public Service Commission. The Kashag oversees the departments of Religion and Culture, Home, Health, Information and International Relations, Finance, Education and Security. There is great deal of transparency and proper checks and balances in place to ensure that the CTA remains free of corruption and abuse.

In 2001, His Holiness encouraged the Tibetan Parliament to amend the charter and allow for the direct election of the Kalon Tripa (later renamed 'Sikyong'), the Chief Executive of the CTA and the Political Leader, by the Tibetan people. The first directly elected Kalon Tripa was Venerable Samdhong Rinpoche who was elected on August 20, 2001 and reelected for another five-year term in 2006.

The Tibetan charter limits an individual serving in the office of the Kalon Tripa to two terms of five years each. In an open field that drew a large number of candidates for the March 2011 Kalon Tripa elections, Dr. Lobsang Sangay polled 55 percent votes in the 2011 elections and became the second popularly-elected Kalon Tripa

Prior to 2011, the Kalon Tripa position was subordinate to the office of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. However, His Holiness made a historic announcement on March 10, 2011 where he announced that he would formally relinquish his political leadership in the exiled Tibetan administration to the elected

leader of the CTA led by the Kalon Tripa. This decision was intended to strengthen the democratic structure of the Tibetan movement. "My desire to devolve authority has nothing to do with a wish to shirk responsibility. It is to benefit Tibetans in the long run," His Holiness said.

On September 20, 2012, the 15th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile unanimously voted to amend the Tibetan charter and change the title of Kalon Tripa to Sikyong which translates to "political leader" as distinct from "spiritual leader."

Sikyong Dr. Lobsang Sangay led 14th Kashag's (Executive Cabinet) and the current 15th Tibetan Parliament's five year term will expire this fall. The Election Commission of the Central Tibetan Administration announced on June 10, 2015 the dates for the primary and general elections of the Sikyong of the 15th Kashag and members of the 16th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile. The preliminary election is slated for October 18, 2015 and March 20, 2016.

The 2016 general election will elect the fourth directly-elected Sikyong (earlier Kalon Tripa) and the 16th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile. The 16th Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile will be composed of 45 members with ten representatives each from the three traditional Tibetan provinces; two representatives each from the four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism and Bon religion, two representatives from North and South America, two representatives from Europe and Africa, and one representative from Australia and Asia (excluding India, Nepal and Bhutan).

Mr. Chairman and honorable members of the Committee, let me again reiterate the full commitment of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan leadership to a peaceful, negotiated settlement to the Tibet question within the framework of the People's Republic of China, and to further deepening the democratic reforms initiated by His Holiness.

In closing, I want to thank you and the US Congress for your continued support. It is important that the United States, the leading nation of the free world, speaks up for the plight of the Tibetan and other oppressed people around the world.

Mr. McGOVERN. Well, thank you very much.

I want to thank all three of you for your testimony.

They just called a series of votes, so I am not going to ask any questions, other than to simply say that I think we need to look at the Chinese President's visit here in September as an opportunity. I think you have raised some, I think, very constructive points, I think, that we can try to impress upon him before he comes here. I think it would be a terrible wasted opportunity if he comes here and this issue is not front and center. And we are going to do what we can.

I want to say to the distinguished minority leader, who was not here when I made the suggestion, but I volunteered her to lead a bipartisan delegation to Tibet. We asked the State Department if they would pass that request on to the Chinese Government

Ms. PELOSI. We have to get a visa. That has always been the challenge.

Mr. McGOVERN. Well, and I think--you know, I think that is a test of whether or not there is any flexibility or any willingness to engage.

But let me yield to anybody on the panel here who has any comments or questions.

Mr. GERE. Mr. Chairman, before you leave, there was another incredible suggestion you had. It was for an international conference.

Mr. McGOVERN. Right, a group of friends. Right. Yeah.

So we have a lot of follow-up here. But I think the important thing is that we are not going away, and our commitment to this issue has been intensified by the hearing today.

But let me yield to anybody here who has any--Nita Lowey?

Ms. LOWEY. Well, first of all, I won't give my whole testimony since we have to go and vote, but I just want to join the chair and the Commission for welcoming you here today.

I had the privilege of celebrating His Holiness's birthday with my distinguished friend Richard Gere, and it was really, truly an honor.

And I just want to say that there is such strong support in the Congress. As you well know, we not only provide \$7 million in economic development but a total of \$15 million from the Foreign Ops Subcommittee for a whole variety of important programs broadcasting operations, academic/professional exchange programs.

And so I am delighted to be here today. I am sorry that we have to go vote to interrupt this hearing. But we welcome you, as some of us were so thrilled to have an opportunity to wish His Holiness happy birthday. And we look forward to continuing to work together. And thank you so much for appearing here today.

Mr. McGOVERN. Mr. Hultgren?

Mr. HULTGREN. Let me just say

Mr. McGOVERN. Oh, Pitts first.

Mr. PITTS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you. You honor us with your testimony and presence here today.

We have heard some very good suggestions. We will follow up with some written questions that we have so that you can respond.

Mr. PITTS. But I look forward to working in Congress and in this commission to support the efforts of the Tibetan people as they seek a new way forward toward freedom.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. McGOVERN. Randy?

Mr. HULTGREN. Thank you, Chairman McGovern.

Thank you, Chairman Pitts.

Thank you so much for our distinguished panelists for being here, for your work, for your words. This is so important, and it is something that brings us together to fight for friends around the world who are suffering.

Again, with votes coming up, I will shorten my comments, as well, but I do believe we have important work to do. And this feels like a pivotal time, where we can put some pressure, as the U.S. Congress, as the U.S. Government, as the U.S. people, to push the Chinese Government to do the right thing.

I look forward to engaging in further discussion about current U.S. policy on Tibet, especially in this context of China's treatment of the Tibetan community and ethnic and religious minorities. I believe the United States must continue to register our concerns over China's human rights record and treatment of ethnic and religious minorities as it concerns the Tibetan community and apply political pressure when we have the opportunity. And I believe we have that opportunity, maybe, unlike we have in the past. We must remain vigilant in speaking out against Chinese oppression even as we work towards lasting settlements here.

So thank you all for being here.

Thank you, Chairman, for your great work.

Leader Pelosi, thank you, too, for your involvement.

And, with that, I yield back.

Mr. McGOVERN. Leader Pelosi.

Ms. PELOSI. I just shouted out on the visa piece, but that is not to diminish the importance of the suggestion that you made, Mr. Chairman. And let us plan a bipartisan delegation, starting with this commission, and ask once again. When I last went to China, they said, "You can go anyplace you want," and I said, "Tibet," and they said, "Not there." So let's try--

Mr. McGOVERN. Good.

Ms. PELOSI. --let's try again. Because I think it will be very important to make the request and, hopefully, get a different answer this time.

I want to join my colleagues in thanking Secretary Sewall; Sophie Richardson for your good work, Sophie; Richard Gere, of course, again and again; and Kaydor Aukatsang for your leadership.

And, once again, our hearts and prayers go to the family of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche. It is so very--so should we hold up his pictures again as we close the meeting?

But thank you for your persistence, your dissatisfaction, your insistence on the truth, as we say His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, instructs us to do.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. McGOVERN. And thank you again.

And, again, our prayers are with the family and friends of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche.

And we will follow up on the names, Richard, that you provided here today to make sure that they get the attention they deserve.

But, look, I appreciate you all being here. I think we all feel reenergized on this issue. This is an important moment, and I look forward to working with you all. So thank you very much.

[Whereupon, at 3:23 p.m., the Commission was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD



Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Hearing

Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Hearing

Tibet & China: Searching for a New Way Forward

Tuesday, July 14th, 2015

1:30 PM – 3:30 PM

HVC-210 U.S. Capitol Visitor Center

Please join the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission for a hearing on the current human rights and political situation in Tibet, and recommendations for strategies that could contribute to ensuring genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people.

On July 6, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama celebrated his 80th birthday, while also marking the fifty-sixth year that he has spent in exile from China after the Tibetan Uprising of 1959, when Tibetans in Lhasa attempted to declare independence from China. Chinese military forces crushed the uprising, causing the deaths of thousands of Tibetans. The Dalai Lama fled to northern India, followed by 80,000 of his compatriots. Since then, thousands more Tibetans have fled, primarily to India and Nepal, to escape human rights abuses by the Chinese government, which continues to oppress the Tibetans and other ethnic and religious minorities within its borders.

The U.S. government and human rights organizations, among others, have continually raised concerns about the human rights situation in Tibetan areas of China, and have called upon the Chinese government to engage in meaningful dialogue with His Holiness the Dalai Lama or his representatives, leading to a negotiated settlement on Tibet. A recent example is H. Res. 337, passed on July 8, 2015, urging the executive branch to fully implement the Tibet Policy Act of 2002, including by encouraging substantive dialogue, and to consistently raise Tibetan human rights and political and religious freedom concerns in high-level bilateral meetings with China. A Tibetan proposal for moving forward exists, the Middle Way Approach, which seeks to guarantee and deepen autonomy for Tibetans within the framework of the Chinese constitution.

Witnesses will discuss current U.S. policy on Tibet, including in the context of U.S.-China relations; reflect upon China's treatment of the Tibetans and other ethnic and religious minorities; and examine the upcoming electoral process for the political leader

of the Tibetan exile community, and the Middle Way Approach to securing genuine autonomy for Tibetans within the framework of the People's Republic of China.

Panel I:

- **Dr. Sarah Sewall**, Under Secretary for Civilian Security, Democracy and Human Rights, and Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, Department of State

Panel II:

- **Ms. Sophie Richardson**, China Director, Human Rights Watch
- **Mr. Richard Gere**, Chairman of the Board, International Campaign for Tibet
- **Mr. Kaydor Aukatsang**, Representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to the Americas

For any questions, please contact Kimberly Stanton (Kimberly.Stanton@mail.house.gov, 202-225-3599) or Shad Klein (Shadman.Klein@mail.house.gov, 202-225-3599) for Rep. McGovern, or Carson Middleton (Carson.Middleton@mail.house.gov, 202-225-2411) for Rep. Pitts.

Sincerely,

James P. McGovern
Co-Chair, TLHRC

Joseph R. Pitts
Co-Chair, TLHRC