

China in Tibet: a brutal occupation

The Invasion

For centuries Tibet, a high altitude plateau between China and India, remained remote from the rest of the world with a widely dispersed population of nomads, farmers, monks and traders. Tibet had its own national flag, its own currency, a distinct culture and religion, and controlled its own affairs. In 1949, following the foundation of the Chinese Communist state, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) invaded Tibet and soon overpowered its poorly equipped army and guerilla resistance.

Tibet Today

China's actions in Tibet over the past 50 years have created a climate of fear that still continues today - torture and imprisonment for peaceful protest, and economic plans that discriminate against Tibetans, threatening their unique identity. The PLA maintains a strong presence in Tibet and China's military control is expected to increase with the 2006 opening of the Qinghai-Tibet Railway.

Human rights conditions in Tibet remain dismal. Under the Chinese occupation, the Tibetan people are denied most rights guaranteed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights including the rights to self-determination, freedom of speech, assembly, movement, expression and travel. Signs of support for His Holiness the Dalai Lama are banned by the Chinese government.



Dalai Lama's Peace Proposal

His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the exiled leader of the Tibetan people, has become one of the world's greatest proponents of peaceful resolution to global conflict. The Dalai Lama ceased calling for Tibetan independence more than a decade ago and has since consistently called for genuine autonomy within the PRC. More than ever before, the Dalai Lama needs the weight of international support to press the Chinese leadership to peacefully resolve the Tibet issue in a mutually acceptable way.

The International Campaign for Tibet recommends that:

- China directly engages the Dalai Lama and his representatives to find a negotiated solution for Tibet; and that
- China allow Tibetans to freely practice their cultural, social and religious traditions without fear of persecution.

Q & A:

Wasn't Tibet under Chinese control before 1949?

No, international legal scholars agree that from 1911 until the Chinese invasion in 1949, Tibet operated as a fully independent state by modern standards.

How autonomous is the Tibet Autonomous Region?

The Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), setup by China in 1965, is 'autonomous' in name only. In practice, Tibet is governed by officials chosen by the Chinese government, with policy decisions subject to approval from Beijing – there has never been a Tibetan in the most senior role of Party Secretary of the TAR.

The TAR does not include all of Tibet. After 1949, other Tibetan areas (Amdo and Kham) were incorporated into the neighboring Chinese provinces of Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan, and Yunnan.

How you can help...

1. Join the ICT Action Network to receive regular updates and calls for action by going to www.savetibet.org/enews.
2. Volunteer with a Tibet Support Group in your area. For a list of these organizations, visit the International Tibet Support Network directory at www.tibetnetwork.org/members.
3. Inspire others! Learn more about Tibet by going to www.savetibet.org and then help us spread the word by discussing the issue with your friends and family.