

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	463
Land:	Kina
Kilde:	US Department of State
Titel:	2016 Report on International Religious Freedom – Kina (Tibet)
Udgivet:	15. august 2017
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	7. september 2017

[EN](#) | [DE](#)

- **Source:**
USDOS - US Department of State
- **Title:**
2016 Report on International Religious Freedom - China (Tibet)
- **Publication date:**
15 August 2017
- **ecoi.net summary:** Tibet: Annual report on religious freedom (covering 2016) [ID 345284]
- **Countries:**
China
- **Original link** <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2016/eap/268724.htm>

Recommended citation:

USDOS - US Department of State: 2016 Report on International Religious Freedom - China (Tibet), 15 August 2017 (available at ecoi.net)

http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/345284/476435_en.html (accessed 25 August 2017)



2016 Report on International Religious Freedom - China (Tibet)

Executive Summary

The United States recognizes the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and Tibetan autonomous prefectures and counties in other provinces to be a part of the People's Republic of China. The constitution of the People's Republic of China states citizens "enjoy freedom of religious belief" but limits protections for religious practice to "normal religious activities" without defining "normal." In the TAR and other Tibetan areas, authorities engaged in widespread interference in religious practices, especially in Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and nunneries. There were reports of forced disappearance, physical abuse, prolonged detention without trial, and arrests of individuals due to their religious practices. Travel restrictions hindered traditional religious practices and pilgrimages. Repression increased around politically sensitive events, religious anniversaries, and the Dalai Lama's birthday, according to numerous sources. Although the number of self-immolations has continued to decline, there were three cases of self-immolation and three other suicides in protest of government policies. Reportedly, authorities evicted more than 2,000 monks and nuns from Buddhist institutes at Larung Gar and Yachen Gar, destroying the homes where they resided and subjecting many of them to "patriotic re-education." The government routinely denigrated the Dalai Lama, whom most Tibetan Buddhists revere as their most important spiritual leader, and forbade Tibetans from venerating him and other religious leaders associated with him. Authorities often justified their interference with Tibetan Buddhist monasteries by claiming they engaged in separatist or pro-independence activities.

Some Tibetans encountered societal discrimination when seeking employment, engaging in business, or when traveling, according to multiple sources.

The U.S. government repeatedly pressed Chinese authorities to respect religious freedom for all faiths and to allow Tibetans to preserve, practice, teach, and develop their religious traditions and language. In June the President met with the Dalai Lama and emphasized the strong support of the United States for the preservation of Tibet's traditions and heritage and the equal protection of Tibetan human rights in China. In his visits to China, the Secretary of State consistently raised Tibet and called for the protection of human rights in Tibetan regions. The Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy and Human Rights met with the Dalai Lama in India in January to discuss nonviolent approaches to conflict resolution and preservation of Tibetan religion and culture. In December the U.S. Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom met with the Dalai Lama and Tibetan exile community in India and discussed the interest of many exiled Tibetans in returning to Tibet in the future. Embassy and other U.S. officials urged the Chinese government to re-examine the policies that threaten Tibet's distinct religious, cultural, and linguistic identity, raised the ongoing demolition campaign at the Larung Gar Tibetan Buddhist Institute, and said that decisions on the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama should be made by faith leaders. While diplomatic access to the TAR remained tightly controlled, U.S.

officials were allowed three tightly managed visits during the year, one for a delegation led by the U.S. Consul General in Chengdu in May, and U.S. consular visits in June and December.

Section I. Religious Demography

According to official data from China's most recent census in November 2010, 2,716,400 Tibetans make up 90 percent of the TAR's total population. Han Chinese make up approximately 8 percent. Other ethnicities make up the remainder. Some experts, however, believe the number of Han Chinese and other non-Tibetans living there is significantly underreported. Overall, official census data show Tibetans constitute 24.4 percent of the total population in Qinghai Province, 2.1 percent in Sichuan Province, 1.8 percent in Gansu Province, and 0.3 percent in Yunnan Province, although the percentage of Tibetans is much higher within jurisdictions of these provinces designated as autonomous for Tibetans.

Most Tibetans practice Tibetan Buddhism, although a sizeable minority practices Bon, a pre-Buddhist indigenous religion, and small minorities practice Islam, Catholicism, or Protestantism. Some scholars estimate there are as many as 400,000 Bon followers across the Tibetan Plateau. Scholars also estimate there are up to 5,000 Tibetan Muslims and 700 Tibetan Catholics in the TAR. Other residents of traditionally Tibetan areas include Han Chinese, many of whom practice Buddhism (including Tibetan Buddhism), Taoism, Confucianism, or traditional folk religions, or profess atheism; Hui Muslims; and non-Tibetan Catholics or Protestants.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal Framework

The constitution of the People's Republic of China states citizens enjoy "freedom of religious belief," but limits protections for religious practice to "normal religious activities" without defining "normal." The constitution bans the state, public organizations, and individuals from compelling citizens to believe in, or not believe in, any religion. It says religion may not be used to disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens or interfere with the educational system. The constitution states religious bodies and affairs are not to be "subject to any foreign control." The constitution also stipulates the right of citizens to believe in or not believe in any religion. Only religious groups belonging to one of the five state-sanctioned "patriotic religious associations" (Buddhist, Taoist, Muslim, Catholic, and Protestant), however, are permitted to register with the government and legally hold worship services or other religious ceremonies and activities.

Regulations issued by the central government's State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA) codify its control over the selection of Tibetan religious leaders, including reincarnate lamas. These regulations stipulate that, depending on the perceived geographical area of influence of the lama, relevant administrative entities may deny permission for a lama to be recognized as reincarnated and relevant administrative entities must approve reincarnations. The State Council has the right to deny the recognition of reincarnations of high lamas of "especially great influence." The regulations also state no foreign organization or individual may interfere in the selection of reincarnate lamas, and all reincarnate lamas must be reborn within China. The government maintains a registry of officially recognized reincarnate lamas.

Within the TAR, regulations issued by SARA assert state control over all aspects of Tibetan Buddhism, including religious venues, groups, and personnel. Through local regulations issued under the framework of the national-level Management Regulation of Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries, governments of the TAR and other Tibetan areas control the registration of monasteries, nunneries, and other Tibetan Buddhist religious centers. The regulations also give the government formal control over the building and management of religious structures and require monasteries to obtain official permission to hold large-scale religious events or gatherings. To establish places of worship, religious organizations must receive approval from the religious affairs department of the relevant local government both when the facility is proposed and again before services are held. Religious organizations must submit dozens of documents in order to register during one or both approval processes, including detailed management plans of their religious activities, exhaustive financial records, and personal information on all staff members.

The TAR government has the right to deny any individual's application to take up religious orders. The regulations also require monks and nuns to obtain permission from officials in both the originating and receiving counties before traveling to other prefectures or county-level cities within the TAR to "practice their religion," engage in religious activities, study, or teach. Tibetan autonomous prefectures outside of the TAR have formulated similar regulations.

At the central government level, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Committee's Central Tibet Work Coordination Group, the CCP's United Front Work Department (UFW), and SARA are responsible for developing religious management policies, which are carried out with support from the five "patriotic religious associations." At local levels, party leaders and branches of the UFW, SARA, and the state-controlled Buddhist Association of China (BAC) are required to coordinate implementation of religious policies in monasteries, and many have stationed party cadres and government officials, including public security agents, in monasteries in Tibetan areas.

CCP members, including Tibetans, are required to be atheists and are forbidden from engaging in religious practices. CCP members who belong to religious organizations are subject to expulsion, although these rules are not universally enforced.

Government Practices

Across the Tibetan Plateau there were reports of forced disappearance, physical abuse, prolonged detention, and arbitrary arrest of people due to their religious practice, as well as forced expulsions from monasteries, restrictions on religious gatherings, and destruction of monastery related dwellings, according to media reporting and human rights organizations. Although the number of self-immolations has continued to decline, there were three cases of self-immolation and three other suicides in protest of government policies. Human rights advocates stated authorities used intimidation, including collective punishment of family or community members for acts of dissent, to compel acquiescence with government regulations and to attempt to reduce the likelihood of antigovernment demonstrations, thereby projecting an image of stability and the appearance of popular support. Security forces maintained a permanent presence at some monasteries. In many Tibetan areas police detained monks and lay persons who called for freedom, human rights, and religious liberty, or who expressed support for the Dalai Lama or solidarity with individuals who had self-immolated. Several monks were detained without formal criminal charges. Restrictions on religious activities were particularly severe around politically and religiously sensitive anniversaries and events. Tibet scholars stated the Chinese government's ban on minors entering monasteries and nunneries and restrictions on travel of monks and nuns threatened the traditional transmission and practice of Tibetan Buddhism. According to human rights organizations, authorities scrutinized and sought to control monastic operations and restricted travel for religious purposes, including to neighboring countries such as India and Nepal. According to reports, Bon members are subject to many of the same restrictions as Tibetan Buddhists.

Nyima Lhamo, the niece of prominent Buddhist reincarnate lama and political prisoner Tenzin Delek Rinpoche escaped to India in July, one year after her uncle's death in prison. In India, she said that Chinese authorities had denied requests by the rinpoche's family for his body to be returned to them for traditional Tibetan Buddhist funeral rites following his death, allowing relatives and religious leaders to witness the cremation of the rinpoche's body in prison but prevented his followers from constructing a stupa. According to Radio Free Asia (RFA), authorities later forced his family to return his ashes. The rinpoche's family also reported the government continued to deny their requests for his religious order to search for his reincarnation, and detained Nyima Lhamo and her mother for 18 days on accusations of leaking state secrets to outside media following the funerary proceedings.

During the year, there was a report that Chinese officials said for the first time that Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the 11th Panchen Lama, is living within the TAR. Authorities, however, continued to ignore requests by international observers to visit him. Chinese authorities detained him and his parents in 1995 when he was six years old. The Panchen Lama is Tibetan Buddhism's second-most prominent teacher after the Dalai Lama. The government continued to insist that Gyaltzen Norbu, whom it selected in 1995, was the Panchen Lama's true reincarnation, and not Gedhun Choekyi Nyima. According to numerous Tibetan Buddhist monks and scholars, UFW and Religious Affairs Bureau officials frequently pressured monks and laypeople, including government officials, to attend religious study sessions presided over by Gyaltzen Norbu, including ordering every Tibetan family in Xigaze (Shigatse) City to send at least two members to a July Kalachakra (Wheel of Time) ceremony in order to ensure hundreds of thousands of people attended.

The government continued to exercise its authority over the approval of reincarnations of Tibetan Buddhist lamas and the supervision of their religious education. In addition, authorities closely supervised the education of many key young reincarnate lamas. In a deviation from traditional custom, government officials, rather than religious leaders, managed the selection of the reincarnate lamas' religious and lay tutors in the TAR and some other Tibetan areas. According to state-run media reports, in April the BAC announced its database of 1,311 "living buddhas" that it deemed "authentic" was nearly complete. The Dalai Lama was not on this list.

Although the number of self-immolations has continued to decline, as in previous years some Tibetans engaged in self-immolation as a protest against government policies. During the year, three Tibetans reportedly self-immolated, as compared to seven individuals in 2015, 11 in 2014, and 26 in 2013. Some experts attributed reports of the declining number of self-immolations to tighter controls by authorities. Local authorities prosecuted and imprisoned an unknown number of Tibetans whom authorities said had aided or instigated self-

immolations, including family members and friends of self-immolators, according to press reports. Authorities also reportedly took measures to limit news of self-immolations and other protests from spreading within Tibetan communities and beyond. There were also numerous reports of officials shutting down or restricting local access to the internet and cellular phone services for this purpose.

In one case of self-immolation from the year, the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) reported that Tashi Rabten self-immolated in Maqu (Machu) County, Gansu Province, in December while calling for the return of the Dalai Lama. According to the Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy, county police detained Rabten's wife, two children, and other relatives when they requested the return of his body following the incident. According to RFA, police then beat and tortured Rabten's wife and daughters after they refused to sign a document saying Rabten had self-immolated because of domestic conflicts, rather than as a response to government policies. Rabten's wife and children subsequently signed the document, and authorities released them.

In September Chinese authorities detained Sangdak Kyab, who had evaded custody for three years, for supporting a self-immolation protest in 2013 by removing the protester's remains to the man's home. On September 12, two monks from the Labrang Monastery, Jinpa Gyatso and Kelsang Monlam, were each sentenced to a year and a half in prison in a secret trial for what authorities said was their suspected involvement in a May 2015 self-immolation protest, according to RFA.

The government placed restrictions on the size of Buddhist monasteries and institutions. During the year, the government announced that by September 30, 2017, Larung Gar, Ganzi (Kardze) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, the site of the world's largest Tibetan Buddhist institute, must reduce the number of residents, including monks, nuns, and laypeople, to half its current size, not to exceed 5,000 persons, with all other homes set to be demolished. According to Human Rights Watch and multiple media outlets, beginning in July officials demolished more than 2,000 residences and an estimated 1,500 police and paramilitary troops expelled more than 2,000 monks and nuns from the site. According to press reports, the government said the demolition was to prevent fires and promote crowd controls. Local sources reported that the destruction was to clear way for tourist infrastructure, and to prevent nuns and monks from outside the area, particularly ethnic Han, from studying at the institute. Larung Gar's monastic leadership reportedly advised residents not to protest the demolitions in hopes of saving the institute.

According to ICT, authorities also expelled 1,000 religious practitioners from Yachen Gar, also in Ganzi (Kardze) Prefecture. Human Rights Watch reported that nuns from Yachen Gar who have returned to their hometowns were told they were prohibited from joining any other monastery or nunnery there, or participating in any public religious practices.

There were reports of the arbitrary arrest and physical abuse of religious prisoners and prolonged detention of religious figures without criminal charges. In October authorities detained Lobsang Tsultrim, a monk from Kirti Monastery, for shouting slogans supportive of the Dalai Lama in public. RFA reported police severely beat Tsultrim; at year's end, he was awaiting trial at Wenchuan County Detention Center in Aba (Ngaba) Prefecture.

In September family members located Lobsang Kelsang, a Kirti Monastery monk missing since his 2015 detention by police following a solitary protest while carrying an image of the Dalai Lama in Sichuan Province, in Deyang Prison after being sentenced to three years in a secret trial, according to RFA. RFA's source said another Kirti monk named Adak was also secretly given a three year sentence in August.

In February media reported Ven Pagah and Geshe Orgyen, the Abbot and a monk from the Chongri Monastery in Ganzi (Kardze) Prefecture, Sichuan Province, were detained after the monastery helped organize a mass prayer for the recovery of the Dalai Lama, who was then undergoing medical treatment in the United States.

In June Lobsang Tsering, a monk from Kirti Monastery, was reportedly detained in Aba (Ngaba) County following a solo protest against Beijing's rule in Tibet in which he wore a ceremonial scarf and carried a photo of the Dalai Lama, calling for his long life. He was reportedly beaten in custody.

In December nine Tibetans were sentenced to prison terms of five to 14 years for their participation in the Dalai Lama's 80th birthday celebration the previous year. Some of them were monks from Kirti Monastery, and had previously been imprisoned and reportedly tortured.

Limited access to information about prisoners made it difficult to ascertain the exact number of Tibetan prisoners of religious conscience, determine the charges brought against them, or assess the extent and severity of abuses they suffered. The U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China's Political Prisoner Database included records of 649 Tibetan political prisoners who had been detained by October 11, and who were presumed to remain detained or imprisoned. Of the 649 political prisoners, 640 were detained on or after March 10, 2008, the start of a wave of political protests that spread across the Tibetan areas of China. Tibetan Buddhist monks, nuns, and teachers made up 277 cases, of the 640.

“Patriotic education” campaigns, in which authorities forced monks and nuns to participate in “legal education,” denounce the Dalai Lama, study materials praising the leadership of the CCP and the socialist system, and express allegiance to the government-recognized Panchen Lama, continued at many monasteries and nunneries across the Tibetan Plateau, according to reports. In a November UFWD-organized training course, ICT reported authorities “compelled” newly recognized reincarnate lamas to “demonstrate their allegiance to the CCP” by visiting military bases and Mao Zedong’s birthplace in Hunan Province and by “paying tribute” to him. According to RFA, authorities forced many monks and nuns evicted from Larung Gar to attend “patriotic” re-education classes for up to six months.

According to many observers, primary sources of grievances among Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns included the requirement that all monks under the age of 18 studying at monasteries and Buddhist religious institutions undergo “patriotic education;” strict controls over religious practice; and intrusive surveillance of many monasteries and nunneries, including the permanent installation of CCP and public security officials and overt camera surveillance systems at religious sites and monasteries.. Senior monks at some monasteries reported informal agreements were reached with local officials whereby resident monks would not stage protests or commit self-immolation as long as the government adopted a hands-off approach to the management of their monasteries.

The CCP forbid its members from participating in religious activities of any kind, despite reports that many Tibetan government officials and CCP members held religious beliefs. The new TAR Party Secretary Wu Yingjie said in September that countering the Dalai Lama would be the top priority during his term in office and later stated publicly on November 15 that the “Dalai Clique” was the biggest threat to the region, and that the Party must exert religious, political, and economic control over monasteries. Government officials regularly denigrated the Dalai Lama publicly and accused the “Dalai Clique” and other outside forces of instigating Tibetan protests, stating such acts were attempts to split China. Authorities in the TAR continued to prohibit the registration of children’s names that included parts of the Dalai Lama’s name, or names included on a list blessed by the Dalai Lama.

Although authorities permitted some traditional religious ceremonies and practices, they maintained tight control over the activities of religious leaders and religious gatherings of laypeople, confining many religious activities to officially designated places of worship, restricting or canceling religious festivals, and preventing monks from traveling to villages for politically sensitive events and religious ceremonies. The government suppressed religious activities it viewed as vehicles for political dissent. For example, during July celebrations of the Dalai Lama’s 81st birthday, and the anniversaries of the March 10, 1959 Tibetan uprising and the March 14, 2008 outbreak of unrest, local authorities ordered many monasteries and laypeople not to celebrate or organize any public gatherings. Sichuan provincial authorities cancelled the annual Sangsol religious festival at Dhargye Monastery in August after local Tibetans refused to fly the PRC flag and cancelled the Dechen Shingdrup festival at Larung Gar Buddhist Institute in November.

During Lunar New Year celebrations in February, RFA reported authorities imposed “intense restrictions” in Tibetan areas. At Kumbum Monastery in Haidong (Tsoshar) Prefecture, authorities deployed large numbers of police and, according to a local RFA source, conducted exercises to “intimidate the monks and other Tibetans in the area.”

Multiple sources reported open veneration of the Dalai Lama, including the display of his photograph, remained prohibited in almost all areas. Local officials, many of whom considered the images to be symbols of opposition to the CCP, removed pictures of the Dalai Lama from monasteries and private homes during visits by senior officials. The government also banned pictures of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, whom the Dalai Lama and the overwhelming majority of Tibetan Buddhists recognize as the 11th Panchen Lama. Punishments in certain counties for displaying images of the Dalai Lama included closing of venues, expulsion from monasteries, and criminal prosecution.

The TAR government maintained tight control over the use of Tibetan Buddhist religious relics and declared the relics, as well as religious buildings and institutions themselves, to be state property.

Sources continued to report security personnel targeted individuals in religious attire, particularly those from Naqu (Nagchu) and Changdu (Chamdo) Prefectures in the TAR and Tibetan areas outside of the TAR, for arbitrary questioning on the streets of Lhasa and other cities and towns. Many Tibetan monks and nuns reportedly chose to wear nonreligious garb to avoid such harassment when traveling outside of their monasteries and around the country.

In many areas, monks and nuns under the age of 18 were forced to leave their monasteries. In March Shiqu (Dzachuka) County in Ganzi (Kardze) Prefecture reported the government had removed 300 minors from local monasteries following a January 2015 provincial mandate to remove all monks and nuns under the age of 18 from monasteries and Buddhist schools to receive “patriotic education.”

The traditional monastic system continued to decline as many top Buddhist teachers remained or died in exile in India or elsewhere, and some of those who returned from India were not allowed to teach or lead their institutions. The heads of most major schools of Tibetan Buddhism – including the Dalai Lama, Karmapa, Sakya Trizin, and Taklung Tsetrul Rinpoche (who died in December 2015), as well as Bon leader Gyalwa Menri Trizin – all resided in exile.

Multiple sources also reported over the past two years the Chinese government has increasingly restricted Tibetan Buddhist monks from visiting Chinese cities to teach. For example, prominent Larung Gar Buddhist Institute religious leaders Khenpo Tsultrim Lode and Khenpo So Dargey, who both previously taught in Chinese cities, were no longer allowed to do so. Authorities also restricted Tibetans' travel inside China, particularly for Tibetans residing outside the TAR who wished to visit the TAR, during sensitive periods. During the year, many religious figures reported it was very difficult for them to enter the TAR to teach or study. Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns stated these restrictions have negatively impacted the quality of monastic education. Many monks expelled from their TAR monasteries after the 2008 Lhasa riots and from Kirti Monastery after a series of self-immolations from 2009 to 2015 still had not returned, some because the government prohibited them.

Many Tibetans, including monks, nuns, and laypersons, continued to encounter difficulties in traveling to India for religious purposes. In many cases, Public Security Bureau officials refused to approve the Tibetans' passport applications. In other cases, prospective travelers were able to obtain passports only after paying bribes to local officials, or after promising not to travel to India or to criticize Chinese policies in Tibetan areas while overseas. Numerous Tibetans in Gansu, Qinghai and Sichuan provinces waited for up to five years before receiving a passport, often without any explanation for the delay, according to Human Rights Watch and local sources. There were also instances of authorities confiscating and canceling previously issued passports as a way of preventing Tibetans from participating in the 34th Kalachakra Initiation by the Dalai Lama in India. Event organizers in India estimated as many as 7,000 Chinese Tibetans were barred from attending the 34th Kalachakra, some of whom were detained en route to the pilgrimage after they had left China. Authorities warned participants or any who were involved would face jail terms from 10 days to five years.

Authorities reportedly often hindered Tibetan Buddhist monasteries from delivering religious, educational, and medical services.

According to government policy, newly constructed government-subsidized housing units in many Tibetan areas were located near township and county government seats or along major roads, with no nearby monasteries where resettled villagers could worship. Traditionally, Tibetan villages were clustered around monasteries, which provided religious and other services to members of the community. Many Tibetans continued to view such measures as CCP and government efforts to dilute religious belief and weaken the ties between monasteries and communities.

Authorities often justified interference with Tibetan Buddhist monasteries by associating the monasteries with "separatism" and pro-independence activities, as reported in state media. General administrative affairs in TAR monasteries, which traditionally were managed by monks, were overseen by Monastery Management Committees and Monastic Government Working Groups, both of which were composed primarily of government officials and CCP members, together with a few government-approved monks. Since 2011, China has established such groups in all monasteries in the TAR and in many major monasteries in other Tibetan areas, such as Sichuan Province's Kirti Monastic Management Committee.

In accordance with official guidelines for monastery management, leadership of and membership in the various committees and working groups remained restricted to "politically reliable, patriotic, and devoted monks, nuns, and party and government officials." The TAR CCP committee and government required all monasteries to display prominently the PRC flag and the portraits of five CCP chairmen from Mao Zedong to Xi Jinping.

Provincial, prefectural, county, and local governments stationed CCP cadres in, and established police stations or security offices adjacent to or on the premises of many monasteries. For example, the TAR had more than 8,000 government employees working in 1,787 monasteries, according to local sources and Chinese government reporting in September. Security forces continued to block access to and from important monasteries during politically sensitive events and political religious anniversaries.

Authorities hindered Tibetan Buddhist monasteries from carrying out environmental protection activities, an important part of traditional Tibetan Buddhist practices, out of fear such activities could create a sense of pride among Tibetans, particularly children, and an awareness of their distinctness from Chinese culture, according to *Phayul*, an exile-run online news portal.

In some cases, authorities enforced special restrictions on Tibetans staying at hotels inside and outside of the TAR. Police regulations forbade some hotels and guesthouses in the TAR from accepting Tibetan guests, particularly monks and nuns, and required other hotels to notify police departments when Tibetan guests checked in, according to an RFA report and confirmed by several hotels.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

Because religion and ethnicity are often closely linked, it was difficult to categorize many incidents as being solely based on religious identity. Tibetans, particularly those who wore traditional and religious attire, regularly reported incidents in which they were denied hotel rooms, avoided by taxis, and discriminated against in employment opportunities or business transactions.

In August some Tibetan writers and monks reportedly tried to organize an informal event to discuss the current trends of Tibetan literature in a hotel in Chengdu's Tibet Town, but the hotel refused to rent the conference room and police officers told the organizers that "religious gatherings" required advance approval from relevant government departments. As a result, the event was cancelled.

Many Han Buddhists were interested in Tibetan Buddhism and donated money to Tibetan monasteries and nunneries. Tibetan Buddhist monks frequently visited Chinese cities to provide religious instruction to Han Buddhists. In addition, a growing number of Han Buddhists visited Tibetan monasteries, although officials sometimes imposed restrictions that made it difficult for Han Buddhists to conduct long-term study at many monasteries in Tibetan areas.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

U.S. government officials, including the President, the Secretary of State, the U.S. Ambassador in Beijing, and the U.S. Consul General in Chengdu, continued the sustained and concerted effort to encourage greater religious freedom in Tibetan areas.

During several visits to China, the Secretary of State consistently raised Tibet and called for the protection of human rights in Tibetan regions. The Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights, who also serves as Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, continued to coordinate U.S. government programs to preserve Tibetan heritage as well as promote dialogue between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama. U.S. officials repeatedly raised Tibetan religious freedom issues – such as the Chinese government's refusal to engage in dialogue with the Dalai Lama and the ongoing demolition campaign at the Larung Gar Tibetan Buddhist Institute – in public remarks and with Chinese government counterparts at multiple levels. In December the Under Secretary said decisions regarding the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama belongs to him and leaders of his faith, and not to the state. In addition to raising systemic issues, such as passport issuance to Tibetans, U.S. officials expressed concern and sought further information about individual cases and incidents of religious persecution and discrimination.

In June the President met with the Dalai Lama and emphasized the United States' strong support for the preservation of Tibet's religious, cultural, and linguistic traditions and heritage and the equal protection of Tibetan human rights in China. The President also expressed support of the Dalai Lama's commitment to peace and nonviolence and encouraged meaningful and direct dialogue between the Dalai Lama and his representatives with Chinese authorities to lessen tensions. In December the U.S. Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom met with the Dalai Lama and Tibetan exile community in India. The Ambassador at Large attended the inauguration ceremony of the Dalai Lama Institute for Higher Education. He also met with Tibetan monks and students who expressed interest in returning to Tibet in the future and reopening their monasteries there that remained vacant. The Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights met with the Dalai Lama in India in January to discuss nonviolent approaches to conflict resolution and preservation of Tibetan religion and culture.

U.S. officials maintained contact with a wide range of religious leaders and practitioners as well as NGOs in Tibetan areas to monitor the status of religious freedom, although travel and other restrictions made it difficult to visit and communicate with these individuals. Although diplomatic access to the TAR remained tightly controlled, U.S. officials did receive access during the year, with authorities granting one visit for a delegation led by the U.S. Consul General in May, as well as U.S. consular visits in June and December.