

**Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale**

<b>Bilagsnr.:</b>	<b>443</b>
Land:	Kina
Kilde:	US Department of State
Titel:	2015 Report on International Religious Freedom – China (Tibet)
Udgivet:	10. august 2016
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	31.oktober 2016

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

- **Source:**  
USDOS - US Department of State
- **Title:**  
2015 Report on International Religious Freedom - China (Tibet)
- **Publication date:**  
10 August 2016
- **ecoi.net summary:** Annual report on religious freedom (covering 2015) [ID 328362]
- **Countries:**  
China
- **Original link** <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2015/eap/256099.htm>

**Recommended citation:**

USDOS - US Department of State: 2015 Report on International Religious Freedom - China (Tibet), 10 August 2016 (available at ecoi.net)

[http://www.ecoi.net/local\\_link/328362/455638\\_en.html](http://www.ecoi.net/local_link/328362/455638_en.html) (accessed 30 August 2016)



## 2015 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 death in prison, forced disappearance, physical abuse, prolonged detention without trial, and arrests of individuals due to their religious practices. Travel restrictions also hindered traditional religious practices. Repression increased around politically sensitive events, religious anniversaries, and the Dalai Lama's birthday, according to numerous sources. According to reports by journalists and nongovernmental organizations, seven Tibetans, including monks, nuns, and laypersons, self-immolated. The government routinely denigrated the Dalai Lama, whom most Tibetan Buddhists revere as their most important spiritual leader, and restricted the rights of Tibetans to venerate him and other religious leaders at temples and monasteries. The government blamed the "Dalai [Lama] Clique" or other outside forces and foreign media reporting for instigating the self-immolations and other protests against government practices. Authorities often justified their interference with Tibetan Buddhist monasteries by attributing to them separatist and 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 at multiple levels to respect religious freedom for all faiths and to allow Tibetans to preserve, practice, teach, and develop their religious traditions. In his meetings with TAR government officials in May, the U.S. Ambassador emphasized the importance of individual expression of religious beliefs. In September at a joint press conference during the state visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping, President Obama called on "Chinese authorities to preserve the religious and cultural identity of the Tibetan people, and to engage the Dalai Lama or his representatives." In meetings with visiting senior Chinese officials in Washington, DC, the Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights and the U.S. Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues raised U.S. government concerns about religious freedom in Tibet and urged China to comply with the freedoms guaranteed in China's constitution. The U.S. Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom raised religious freedom concerns in Tibet directly with central government officials during a visit to China in August. The Assistant Secretary for Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor raised Tibet issues during a visit to Beijing in October. The U.S. government regularly raised individual cases and incidents with the Chinese government. Embassy and other

U.S. officials urged the Chinese government to reexamine the policies that threaten Tibet's distinct religious, cultural, and linguistic identity. While diplomatic access to the TAR remained tightly controlled, U.S. officials did see increased, although still tightly managed, access during the year, with authorities granting one visit by the U.S. Ambassador in May, a U.S. consular visit in November, and a separate congressional delegation visit in November.

## Section I. Religious Demography

According to official data from China's most recent census in November 2010, 2,716,400 Tibetans make up 91 percent of the TAR's total population. Some experts, however, believe the number of ethnic 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 very small minorities practice Islam, Catholicism, and 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 ethnic Chinese, many of whom practice Buddhism (including Tibetan Buddhism), Daoism, Confucianism, traditional folk religions, or profess atheism; Hui Muslims; and non-Tibetan Catholics and Protestants.

## Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

### Legal Framework

The constitution 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. 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, Roman Catholic, and Protestant), however, are permitted to register with the government and legally hold worship services or other religious ceremonies and activities.

The government's April white paper titled *Tibet's Path of Development Is Driven by an Irresistible Historical Tide* states "the freedom of religious belief of various ethnic groups is respected and protected by the Constitution and the laws, with all religions and sects being treated equally," and "no state organ, public organization or individual may compel citizens to believe in, or disbelieve in, any religion."

The government's September white paper titled *On Successful Practice of Regional Ethnic Autonomy in Tibet* states "the central government and the local government of Tibet Autonomous Region have fully respected citizens' right to freedom of religious belief, and given equal attention and protection to all religions and sects to ensure normal religious activities and religious beliefs are protected according to law."

Regulations issued by the State Administration of Religious Affairs (SARA) codify government control over the selection of Tibetan religious leaders, including reincarnate lamas. These regulations stipulate city governments and higher-level administrative entities may deny permission for a lama to be recognized as a reincarnate. Provincial or higher-level governments must approve reincarnations, and 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 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. TAR 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.

At the national level, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Committee's Central Tibet Work Coordination Group, the CCP's United Front Work Department (UFWD), and the SARA are responsible for developing religious management policies, which are carried out with support from the "patriotic religious associations." At local levels, party leaders and branches of the UFWD, SARA, and the Buddhist Association of China 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 ethnic 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 death in prison, forced disappearance, physical abuse, prolonged detention and arbitrary arrest of people due to their religious practice, and restrictions on religious gatherings, according to media reporting and human rights organizations. Some Tibetans continued to engage in self-immolation as a protest against government policies. Human rights advocates stated that authorities used intimidation 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. At various times monasteries were surrounded by security forces and security forces maintained a permanent presence at some monasteries. Police detained students, monks, laypersons, and others in many Tibetan areas 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. Restrictions were particularly severe around politically and religiously sensitive anniversaries and events. Authorities scrutinized and sought to control monastic operations and restricted travel for religious purposes, according to human rights organizations.

Prominent Buddhist reincarnate lama and political prisoner Tenzin Delek Rinpoche died in prison July 12, after serving 13 years of a life sentence for allegedly setting off explosions and inciting separation of the state, according to CNN. Authorities denied requests from his family to return the body so traditional Tibetan Buddhist funeral rites could be conducted. Authorities allowed relatives and religious leaders to witness the cremation of his body but later forced family members to return his ashes, according to a Radio Free Asia (RFA) report.

The Chinese government did not disclose the location of the Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, Tibetan Buddhism's second-most prominent teacher after the Dalai Lama. Chinese authorities detained him in 1995 when he was six years old. His whereabouts remained unknown. In September a Chinese government official publicly stated that the now 26-year-old Gedhun Choekyi Nyima was "living a normal life, growing up healthily, and does not wish to be disturbed." Authorities ignored requests by international observers to visit Gedun Choekyi Nyima.

The government continued to insist Gyaltsen Norbu, whom it selected in 1995, was the Panchen Lama's true reincarnation. Gyaltsen Norbu has been appointed to two political positions, as vice president of the Buddhist Association of China and as a member of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. According to numerous Tibetan Buddhist monks and scholars in the country, UFWD, and Religious Affairs Bureau officials frequently pressured monks and laypeople, including government officials, to attend sessions presided over by Gyaltsen Norbu. When Gyaltsen Norbu visited Tibetan areas in Yunnan Province in late May, officials reportedly ordered monks and villagers to greet him.

Some Tibetans continued to engage in self-immolation as a protest against government policies. At least seven Tibetans, four women and three men, reportedly self-immolated, as compared to the 11 self-immolations reported in 2014 and the 26 self-immolations reported in 2013. Among the group were a monk and a nun. Yeshe Kandro, a nun, called for the long life of the Dalai Lama, for the Dalai Lama to be invited to Tibet, and for freedom for Tibet as she set herself on fire in April, according to a report by the International Campaign for Tibet. Some experts said the declining number of reported self-immolations was due to tightened 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 the 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. In numerous cases, officials shut down or restricted local access to the internet and cellular phone services for this purpose, according to reports.

There were reports of authorities physically abusing individuals during detention or arrest. In June police in the TAR's Changdu (Chamdo) Prefecture detained monk Tashi Gyaltzen in a government building where he was "severely beaten up," according to an RFA report. Authorities later released Tashi Gyaltzen after questioning.

There were reports of the arbitrary arrest and prolonged detention of religious figures without criminal charges. In June Chinese authorities in Gansu Province arrested four monks from Labrang Monastery on unspecified charges, according to an RFA report. Their whereabouts remained unknown as of the end of the year. In addition, according to the International Campaign for Tibet, in November a court sentenced Lobsang Kelsang, a monk from Kirti Monastery, to three and a half years in prison. Public security officials detained him in March for carrying an image of the Dalai Lama through the main street of Sichuan's Aba (Ngaba) County and calling for freedom in Tibet.

Authorities arrested and sentenced to prison some individuals for possessing pictures of the Dalai Lama on their cell phones. Tsering Dhondup was arrested in Qinghai Province's Tongren (Rebkong) County for allegedly posting images of the Tibetan flag and the Dalai Lama to mark the Dalai Lama's 80th birthday on his account on *WeChat*, a popular Chinese messaging application, according to a June Tibet Post International report.

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 646 Tibetan political prisoners who had been detained by September 1, and who were presumed to remain detained or imprisoned. Of the 646 political prisoners, 635 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 43 percent, or 275 cases, of the 635.

Although authorities permitted some traditional religious ceremonies and practices, including public manifestations of religious belief, they confined many religious activities to officially designated places of worship, often restricted or canceled religious festivals, at times forbade monks from traveling to villages to conduct religious ceremonies, and maintained tight control over the activities of religious leaders and religious gatherings of laypeople. The government suppressed religious activities it viewed as vehicles for political dissent. During the month of July, when Tibetans celebrated the Dalai Lama's 80th birthday, local authorities told many monasteries and lay people not to celebrate or organize any public gatherings. According to media reports, Chinese authorities restricted celebrations of the Dalai Lama's birthday across the Tibetan Plateau. Chinese authorities prohibited a June horse race in Gansu Province because participants in the race were required to save the life of at least one animal and dedicate the act to the Dalai Lama's long life, according to a RFA report.

Authorities permitted some major religious gatherings at other times, however. For example, in June over 110,000 people attended a large religious gathering near Gansu Province's Labrang Monastery, according to a report by *Gansu Economic Daily News*, a state-controlled media outlet. In September tens of thousands of people were allowed to celebrate the Kalachakra ceremony, a Tibetan Buddhist ritual, at Qinghai Province's Kumbum Monastery.

Multiple sources reported open veneration of the Dalai Lama, including the display of his photograph, remained prohibited in almost all areas and officials, many of whom considered the images to be symbols of opposition to the CCP and local officials, had removed pictures of the Dalai Lama from monasteries and private homes during visits by senior officials. Despite the ban on images of the Dalai Lama, many Tibetans continued to own and privately display photos of the Dalai Lama in their homes, in lockets, and on cellular telephones.

The ability of Tibetans to display the Dalai Lama's picture varied regionally and with the political climate. In Tibetan areas outside the TAR, visitors saw pictures of the Dalai Lama prominently displayed in private homes, shops, and monasteries, although monks reported they would temporarily remove such photos during inspections by officials from the local Religious Affairs Bureau or other agencies.

The government also continued to ban pictures of Gedun Choekyi Nyima, whom the Dalai Lama and the overwhelming majority of Tibetan Buddhists recognize as the 11th Panchen Lama.

The TAR government also continued to maintain 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.

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 a June report by state-controlled media, 25 newly recognized reincarnate lamas attended a UFDW-organized "TAR Training Class for New Reincarnate Lamas" in Lhasa.

International media reported authorities attempted to exercise significant control over religious institutions. The government restricted the number of monks and nuns at many monasteries and nunneries and expelled monks and nuns from some monasteries and nunneries, according to media reports. According to an April white paper, there were 1,787 sites for religious activities, over 46,000 resident monks and nuns, and 358 “Living Buddhas” in Tibet. Government officials in Qinghai Province’s Chenduo (Tridu) County expelled monks not officially registered at the Nyatso Zilkar Monastery, according to a June RFA report. Local authorities expelled 106 Tibetan Buddhist nuns from Jada Ganden Khachoeing convent in the TAR’s Biru (Driru) County and demolished several residential buildings at the nunnery. Authorities stated the nuns did not possess the proper documents and exceeded the number of nuns that authorities permitted to live at the nunnery, according to an RFA report. In many areas, monks and nuns under the age of 18 were forced to leave their monasteries. In January Sichuan Province’s Ganzi (Kardze) Prefecture issued regulations mandating the removal of all monks under the age of 18 from monasteries and Buddhist schools and required that all such monks receive “patriotic education.” Monasteries and nunneries in some areas outside of the TAR routinely accepted minors and unregistered monks and nuns, including from distant areas. 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.

Authorities often justified interference with Tibetan Buddhist monasteries by associating the monasteries with “separatism” and pro-independence activities, as reported in state media. General 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.

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 government also required all monasteries to fly the Chinese national flag. In April state media reported TAR Party Secretary Chen Quanguo reiterating that Tibetan monasteries and nunneries were required to display prominently the national flag and the portraits of the five CCP leaders from Mao Zedong to Xi Jinping.

Provincial, prefectural, county, and local governments stationed CCP cadres in, and established police stations or security offices on the premises of, or adjacent to, many monasteries. For example, the TAR had more than 7,000 government cadres working in 1,787 monasteries, according to an August report on a government website. Security forces continued to block access to and from important monasteries during politically sensitive events and religious anniversaries. Heavy police presence within and surrounding some monasteries restricted the movement of monks ahead of the March anniversary of the failed 1959 Tibetan uprising, as well as the July birthday of the Dalai Lama. Additionally, observers reported police set up overt camera surveillance inside many monasteries.

The traditional monastic system also suffered because many top Buddhist teachers remained in exile in India and 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, as well as Bon leader Gyalwa Menri Trizin – all resided in exile. Authorities often hindered Tibetan Buddhist monasteries from delivering religious, educational, and medical services

Authorities also hindered Tibetan Buddhist monasteries from carrying out environmental protection, a traditional element of both religious and conservation practice. For example, in January authorities forced a monastery in Qinghai’s Yushu (Yulshul) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture to cancel a workshop that taught Tibetan grammar, logic, and traditional sciences to local children. Authorities reportedly feared the workshop would create a sense of pride among the Tibetan children and an awareness of their distinctness from Chinese culture, according to *Phayul*, an exile-run online news portal. According to government policy, newly constructed government-subsidized housing units in Tibetan areas were located near 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 viewed such measures as CCP and government efforts to dilute religious belief and weaken the ties between monasteries and communities.

In addition to restricting foreign travel, authorities also continued to restrict travel by Tibetans inside China, particularly for Tibetans living outside the TAR who wished to visit the TAR during sensitive times, such as for religious pilgrimages in March and July. Buddhist clergy said the restrictions on movement hindered a key component of religious education within Tibetan Buddhism calling for nuns and monks to visit different monasteries and religious sites to receive specialized training from experts in Buddhist traditions. Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns stated these restrictions have damaged and fragmented the quality of monastic education. Many monks expelled from their TAR monasteries after the 2008 Lhasa riots still had not returned, and some reported they had been prevented from joining new monasteries.

Tibetans continued to encounter difficulties in traveling to India for religious purposes. Many Tibetans, including monks, nuns, and laypersons, sought to travel to India for religious purposes, including to seek audiences with the Dalai Lama, or to continue their studies with key Tibetan Buddhist religious leaders and teachers. In many cases, Public Security Bureau officials refused to approve the passport applications of Tibetans. This was particularly true for Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns. 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 Qinghai and Sichuan provinces waited for up to five years before being allowed a passport, apparently without any explanation being given for the delay, according to Human Rights Watch. Some Tibetans attributed the passport restrictions to an official effort to hinder travel for religious purposes. There were instances in which authorities confiscated and cancelled passports previously issued to Tibetans.

Sources reported 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 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, and required other hotels to notify police departments when Tibetan guests checked in, according to an RFA report.

The CCP continued to forbid its members from participating in religious activities despite reports that many Tibetan government officials and CCP members held religious beliefs. TAR Party Secretary Chen Quanguo stated in November the Party would investigate government officials thought to violate party discipline, including by following the “Dalai Clique.” Chen said such violations would include following the Dalai Lama, renouncing religion in public while embracing it in private, failing to be faithful to the rhetoric and decisions of the CCP Central Committee, participating in “illegal organizations,” having an “incorrect view” of ethnicity, going on pilgrimage to India, and sending one’s children to study with Tibetans in exile. Twenty Tibetan officials in the TAR were punished during the first eight months of the year for violations of “political discipline,” according to Chen.

Government officials continued to denigrate the Dalai Lama publicly and accused the “Dalai Clique” and other outside forces of instigating Tibetan self-immolations and public 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.

“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, were carried out at many monasteries and nunneries across the Tibetan Plateau, according to reports. Many monks and nuns continued to report that political activities mandated by the party and government, including “patriotic education” campaigns and “legal education” campaigns, detracted from their religious studies.

According to many observers, the continued requirement for implementation of “patriotic education,” coupled with continued controls over religious practice, including the permanent installation at many monasteries and nunneries of CCP and public security officials, were primary sources of grievance among Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns, and the impetus behind some of the self-immolations and protests. Senior monks at some monasteries continued to report informal agreements reached with local officials that 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 government permitted a U.S. congressional delegation to visit the TAR in November.

## **Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom**

Since ethnicity and religion are tightly intertwined for many Tibetan Buddhists, it was sometimes difficult to categorize incidents solely as ethnic or religious intolerance. Tibetans, particularly those who wore traditional and religious attire, regularly reported incidents in which they were denied hotel rooms, avoided by taxis, and/or discriminated against in employment opportunities or business transactions.

Many ethnic 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 ethnic Han Buddhists. In addition, a growing number of ethnic Han Buddhists visited Tibetan monasteries,

although officials sometimes imposed restrictions that made it difficult for ethnic 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. The U.S. Ambassador and other U.S. officials at the most senior levels urged China to ease restrictions on religious freedom, including repressive policies in Tibetan areas. The U.S. Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom raised religious freedom concerns in Tibet directly with central government officials during a visit to China in August. U.S. officials repeatedly raised Tibetan religious freedom issues – such as the Chinese government’s refusal to engage in dialogue with the Dalai Lama – in public remarks and with Chinese government counterparts at multiple levels. 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 September at a joint press conference during the state visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping, President Obama called on “Chinese authorities to preserve the religious and cultural identity of the Tibetan people, and to engage the Dalai Lama or his representatives.”

U.S. diplomats maintained contact with a wide range of religious leaders and practitioners 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 see increased access during the year, with authorities granting one visit by the U.S. Ambassador in May, a U.S. consular visit in November, and a separate congressional delegation visit in November. Officials from the Embassy in Beijing and the Consulate General in Chengdu made several trips throughout the year to visit Tibetan monasteries and nunneries in Sichuan, Gansu, Qinghai, and Yunnan Provinces.

---

published on  ecoi.net