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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 (PRC).

The constitution of the PRC states that Chinese citizens enjoy "freedom of religious belief," but limits protections for religious practice to "normal religious activities." The government applied this term in a manner that does not meet international human rights standards for freedom of religion and routinely enforced other laws and policies that restricted religious freedom. The constitution also stipulates the right of citizens to believe in or not believe in any religion. However, only religious groups belonging to one of the five state-sanctioned "patriotic religious associations" (Buddhist, Taoist, Muslim, Roman Catholic, and Protestant) are permitted to register with the government and legally hold worship services. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) demands that religion "adapt to socialism." CCP members are forbidden from holding religious beliefs and from participating in religious activities.

The government's respect for and protection of religious freedom in the TAR and other Tibetan areas deteriorated markedly, with a substantial increase in official interference in religious practice, especially in Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and nunneries. Repression was severe throughout the year, but tightened further in the lead-up to and during politically sensitive and religious anniversaries and events. Official interference in the practice of Tibetan Buddhist religious traditions continued to generate profound grievances. An increasing number of Tibetans self-immolated during the year. The government routinely denigrated the Dalai Lama, whom most Tibetan Buddhists venerate as a spiritual leader, and blamed the "Dalai clique" and "other outside forces" for instigating the 83 self-immolations by Tibetan monks, nuns, and laypersons that reportedly occurred during the year. Chinese authorities often publicly associated Tibetan Buddhist monasteries with "separatism" and pro-independence activism, and characterized disagreement with religious policy as seditious behavior.

There were numerous reports of societal discrimination, including of Tibetans who encountered discrimination in employment, obtaining hotel accommodation, and in business transactions, but because Tibetan Buddhists' ethnic identity is closely linked with religion, it can be difficult to categorize incidents solely as examples of either purely ethnic or religious intolerance. Many Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns reported that they wore regular civilian clothes as opposed to their monastic robes when traveling in other parts of China in order to avoid being targeted for discrimination or arbitrary police checks.

The U.S. government repeatedly urged Chinese authorities at multiple levels to respect religious freedom for all faiths and allow Tibetans to preserve, practice, teach, and develop their religious traditions. The U.S. government raised individual cases and incidents with the Chinese government. U.S. government officials urged the Chinese government to engage in constructive dialogue with the Dalai Lama and his representatives, as well as to address the policies that threaten Tibet's distinct religious, cultural, and linguistic identity and are a primary cause of grievances among Tibetans. U.S. government officials have submitted more than 10 requests for diplomatic access to the TAR since the last official U.S. visit to the area in May 2011, but none was granted. The government occasionally barred U.S. diplomatic personnel from visiting Tibetan areas for which permission was not required, particularly during anniversaries and periods Chinese authorities deemed "sensitive." In the TAR and most other Tibetan areas, the ability of U.S. diplomatic personnel to speak openly with Tibetan residents and members of the monastic community was severely restricted.

Section I. Religious Demography

According to official data from China's sixth decennial national census, conducted in November 2010, the TAR's 2,716,400 ethnic Tibetans make up 91 percent of the TAR's total population. Official census data also show ethnic Tibetans constituting 1.8 percent of the total population of Gansu Province, 24.4 percent in Qinghai Province, 2.1 percent in Sichuan Province, and 0.3 percent in Yunnan Province.

Most ethnic Tibetans practice Tibetan Buddhism, although a sizeable minority practices Bon, an indigenous religion, and very small minorities practice Islam, Catholicism, or Protestantism. Some scholars estimate that there are as many as 400,000 Bon followers across the Tibetan Plateau. Scholars also estimate that there are up to 5,000 ethnic Tibetan Muslims and 700 ethnic Tibetan Catholics in the TAR.

Many Tibetan government officials and CCP members in Tibet are religious believers, despite government and CCP prohibitions against officials' holding religious beliefs or participating in religious activities.

Other residents of traditionally Tibetan areas include ethnic Han Chinese, many of whom practice Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, or traditional folk religions; Hui Muslims; and non-ethnic Tibetan Catholics and Protestants. Approximately 4,000 to 5,000 Muslims worship at mosques in the TAR. A Catholic church with 560 members is located in the traditionally Catholic community of Yanjing in the eastern TAR. Cizhong (Tsodruk), in Diqing (Dechen) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (TAP), Yunnan Province, is also home to a large Tibetan Catholic congregation. The TAR is home to a small number of Falun Gong adherents, as well as unregistered Christian churches.

According to the State Council Information Office's 2011 White Paper "Sixty Years Since Peaceful Liberation of Tibet," the TAR has over 1,700 "venues for religious activities and about 46,000 monks and nuns." While no recent data on the number of Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in other Tibetan areas of China are available, according to a 2009 article in the People's Daily (the official newspaper of the CCP), altogether in the TAR and in Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan and Yunnan Provinces, there are 3,000 Tibetan Buddhist monasteries with 120,000 Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns.

Section II. Status of Government Respect for Religious Freedom

Legal/Policy Framework

The constitution states that citizens enjoy "freedom of religious belief," but limits protections for religious practice to "normal religious activities" and does not define "normal." The government applies this term in a manner that does not meet international human rights standards for freedom

of religion, and routinely enforces other laws and policies that restrict religious freedom. The constitution bans the state, public organizations, and individuals from compelling citizens to believe in, or not believe in, any religion. The constitution states that religious bodies and affairs are not to be "subject to any foreign control."

The government's 2005 White Paper on Regional Autonomy for Ethnic Minorities states, "Organs of self-government in autonomous areas, in accordance with the provisions of the constitution and relevant laws, respect and guarantee the freedom of religious belief of ethnic minorities and safeguard all legal and normal religious activities of people of ethnic minorities." Organs of self-government include governments of autonomous regions, prefectures, and counties.

At the national level, the CCP Central Committee's Central Tibet Work Coordination Group, the CCP's United Front Work Department (UFWD), and the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA), with support from officially recognized Buddhist, Catholic, Islamic, and Protestant "patriotic religious associations," are responsible for developing religious management policies. Provincial, prefectural, county, and local Party leaders and branches of the UFWD, SARA, and the Buddhist Association of China coordinate implementation of religious policies in monasteries.

During a January 4 official meeting on stability maintenance, TAR Party Secretary Chen Quanguo announced that Party cadres and government officials would be routinely stationed at all TAR temples and monasteries to strengthen monastery management. A February 15 report in the *Global Times*, a commercially focused newspaper affiliated with the official daily of the CCP Central Committee, announced that Monastery Management Committees (MMC) headed by Party and government officials had been established in each of the TAR's 1,787 monasteries. General monastery affairs in TAR monasteries, which in the past had been managed by Democratic Management Committees (DMCs) staffed primarily by monks from the respective monasteries, are now overseen by MMCs and Monastery Government Working Groups (also composed of governmental officials and Party members). In accordance with official guidelines for monastery management, leadership of and membership in the various committees and working groups is restricted to "politically reliable, patriotic, and devoted monks, nuns, and Party and government officials." Government-selected monks have primary responsibility for conducting "patriotic education campaigns" at each monastery. In some cases, the government has established "official working groups" at monasteries, and religious affairs and public security officials personally lead the patriotic education.

In Tibetan areas outside the TAR, provincial, prefectural, county, and local governments have stationed CCP cadres and established police stations or security offices on the premises of or adjacent to many monasteries. Some local governments outside the TAR have adopted the MMC model of monastery management. On April 4, the government of Luhuo (Draggo) County in Ganzi (Kardze) TAP, Sichuan Province, announced that a 24-member MMC composed of 13 government officials and 11 monks had been established at the restive Draggo Monastery to oversee its management directly.

As part of its ongoing public campaign to denigrate the Dalai Lama, the Chinese Government has consistently accused the "Dalai clique" and "other outside forces" of instigating Tibetan self-immolations, alleging that they are attempts to "split" China. As recently as November 16, the spokesperson for China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that the self-immolations were orchestrated by the Dalai Lama group, that "China condemns self-immolation as against national laws, Buddhist teachings, and human conscience," and that "such despicable acts should be condemned by all." Premier Wen Jiabao expressed some sympathy for self-immolating young monks during a March 14 press conference at the close of the National People's Congress in Beijing, saying they were "innocent," that he was "deeply distressed by their actions," and that China respected "the religious freedom of our Tibetan compatriots, and their religious faith is protected by the law." He then reverted, however, to the standard rhetoric, stating that the Central

Tibetan Administration in India was "a theocracy, the purpose of which is to separate Tibet and other Tibetan areas from the motherland."

In a December 2011 article published in *Qiushi Online* (an official journal of the CCP Central Committee), Zhu Weiqun, Executive Deputy Director of the UFWD, reiterated the principle that party members "must not be allowed to have religious faith," particularly those cadres involved in religious work. On May 24, the official *Tibet Daily* newspaper reported that the TAR CCP Discipline Inspection Commission had promulgated a circular criticizing current and retired Party members and government workers who "lack political acuity, solid ideals, and a firm belief, and who are ambivalent in their understanding and wavering in their attitude on major issues of right and wrong, especially in the anti-separatism struggle, even openly following the Dalai Lama," and calling on Party organizations to "follow the law in strictly punishing party member-cadres who believe in religion, go abroad to worship the Dalai Lama, participate in religious activities, and have other behaviors that violate political discipline."

As of 2007 (the most recent year for which official data are available), approximately 615 Tibetan religious figures held positions in provincial and lower-level People's Congresses (PCs) and committees of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) in the TAR. The CPPCC is a political advisory body that nominally serves to allow non-CCP delegates to participate in the administration of state affairs. Although CCP cadres are not permitted to practice religion, Tibetan religious figures who hold government positions (for example, on the local NPC or CPPCC) are permitted to practice Buddhism. The government-recognized 11th Panchen Lama, Gyaltzen Norbu, who is distinct from the Dalai Lama-recognized 11th Panchen Lama, Gedun Choekyi Nyima, is the vice president of the Buddhist Association of China and a member of the CPPCC.

Rules and regulations provide the ostensible legal basis for government control over and authoritative reinterpretation of Tibetan religious traditions. The Management Measures on Reincarnation, issued by SARA, codify government control over the selection of Tibetan religious leaders, including reincarnate lamas. The regulations stipulate that city governments and higher political levels can deny the required permission for a lama to be recognized as a reincarnate, or "tulku." Provincial-level or higher governments must approve reincarnations, while the State Council reserves the right to deny the recognition of reincarnations of high lamas, often referred to by the Chinese term "Living Buddhas," of "especially great influence." Regulations state that no foreign organization or individual can interfere in the selection of reincarnate lamas, and all reincarnate lamas must be reborn within the country. The government maintains a registry of officially recognized reincarnated lamas.

The TAR Implementation of the Religious Affairs Regulations (the "Implementing Regulations"), also issued by SARA, assert state control over all aspects of Tibetan Buddhism, including religious groups, venues, and personnel. The TAR government has the right under the Implementing Regulations to deny any individual's application to take up religious orders. The Implementing Regulations codify the practice of controlling the movement of nuns and monks, requiring them to seek permission from county-level religious affairs officials to travel to another prefecture or county-level city within the TAR to "practice their religion," engage in religious activities, study, or teach.

In Tibetan Buddhism, a key component of religious education is to visit different monasteries and religious sites in the region and abroad to receive specialized training from experts in particular theological traditions. The Implementing Regulations require that monks who travel across county or provincial lines for religious teaching or study must obtain permission from the Religious Affairs Bureau (RAB) of both the sending and receiving counties. Such restrictions sometimes also apply to monks visiting other monasteries within the same county for short-term study or teaching. Tibetan Buddhist monks say that these restrictions have resulted in a decline in the quality of monastic education.

The Implementing Regulations also give the government formal control over the building and management of religious structures and the holding of large-scale religious gatherings, each of which requires official permission. The TAR maintains tight government control over the use of Tibetan Buddhist religious relics and maintains that the relics, as well as the religious buildings and institutions themselves, are state property.

In an attempt to counter claims that religious freedom is not protected in Tibet, the government issued a White Paper in 2011 entitled "Sixty Years Since Peaceful Liberation of Tibet," which states that "freedom of religious belief of all ethnic groups is respected and protected in Tibet. All religions, all sects are equal in Tibet. The Living Buddha reincarnation system, unique to Tibetan Buddhism, is fully respected. People are free to learn and debate Buddhist doctrines, get ordained as monks, and practice Buddhist rites."

The last round of talks between officials from the UFWD and envoys of the Dalai Lama was held in January 2010. Lodi Gyari and Kelsang Gyaltsen, who had served as the Dalai Lama's representatives in several rounds of talks with Chinese officials, resigned effective June 1, citing the "deteriorating situation in Tibet" and the difficulty of conducting "substantive dialogue."

There are no national official religious holidays. However, the Shoton Festival, originally a religious festival, is celebrated as a weeklong official holiday in the TAR.

Government Practices

There were numerous and severe abuses of religious freedom, including incarceration of religious prisoners and detainees. Monasteries were increasingly forbidden to deliver traditional educational and medical services to the people of their communities, and official intimidation was used to compel acquiescence and preserve a facade of stability.

Progressively more heavy-handed measures were implemented to compel acquiescence, convey the appearance of popular support, and prevent public protest in many Tibetan areas. At various times during the year major monasteries in the TAR and other Tibetan areas were surrounded by security forces. Students, monks, laypersons, and others in many Tibetan areas were detained after calling for freedom, human rights, and religious freedom, and expressing their support for the Dalai Lama and solidarity with individuals who had self-immolated. In the lead-up to the 18th Party Congress and the related central leadership transition, security measures taken by authorities across the Tibetan Plateau contributed to a further deterioration of religious freedom. Tibetan Buddhist monasteries were increasingly hindered from delivering the religious, educational, and medical services they traditionally provided to their communities, as well as from carrying out environmental protection, a traditional element of both religious and conservation practice. Continued restrictions on the exchange of monks between monasteries resulted in the reported decline of monastic educational standards. In the second half of the year, it became nearly impossible for Tibetans, particularly monks and nuns from outside the TAR, to enter the TAR, and officials expelled from TAR monasteries many monks and nuns originally from Tibetan areas outside the TAR.

Repression was severe throughout the year, but tightened further in the lead-up to and during politically and religiously sensitive anniversaries and events, such as the 15-day observance of Tibetan New Year (Losar), which started February 22; the fourth anniversary of the protests and riots in Tibetan areas that began on March 10, 2008; the observance of "Serf Emancipation Day" on March 28; the Dalai Lama's birthday on July 6; the celebration of China's National Day on October 11; and the 18th National Party Congress and related central leadership transition, which commenced on November 8.

Government and CCP control over the day-to-day management of monasteries further tightened, and the government exercised its authority over the approval of all reincarnations of Tibetan

Buddhist lamas and the supervision of their education. Chinese authorities often publicly associated Tibetan Buddhist monasteries with "separatism" and pro-independence activism and characterized disagreement with religious policy as seditious behavior.

Tibetan monks, nuns and laypersons increasingly self-immolated, often at or near a monastery and usually resulting in death. The self-immolations, which began in February 2009, gained momentum over the course of the year, with at least 83 reported self-immolations by Tibetan Buddhist clergy and laypersons across the Tibetan Plateau. While each of the 12 individuals who self-immolated in 2011 was believed to be current or former monks or nuns, laypersons made up nearly half of those who committed the act in 2012. Six self-immolations took place in the TAR.

More than 20 of the 83 self-immolators were affiliated with Kirti Monastery and other monasteries and nunneries located in Sichuan Province's Aba (Ngaba) Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture (T&QAP), where many self-immolations occurred in 2011 and where repression was ongoing and particularly intense. An especially alarming surge in self-immolations took place from October through early December, when 43 Tibetan monks, nuns and laypersons reportedly self-immolated, including 18 in Gansu Province (which had previously seen only two such incidents), 16 in Qinghai Province, six in Sichuan Province, and three in the TAR. For example, Tamdin Dorje, the grandfather of the 7th Gungtung Rinpoche, an important and highly revered young reincarnate lama, self-immolated October 13 near Tsoe Gaden Choeling Monastery in Hezuo (Tsoe) County, Gannan (Kanlho) TAP, Gansu Province. On November 25, Sangay Dolma, a young nun from the Gonshul Nunnery, self-immolated outside a government building in Duohemao (Dokarmo) Township, Zeku County, Malho (Huangnan) TAP, Qinghai Province. Many of the self-immolators, including a large number of laypersons, were reported to have been clutching photos of the Dalai Lama and calling for religious freedom and the Dalai Lama's return to Tibet as they set themselves alight. The vast majority of these incidents resulted in death.

In late November, Tsering Woesser, a well-known poet and blogger based in Beijing, posted on her blog the final words of 18 Tibetan self-immolators, including those of Tenzin Khedup, a 24-year-old former monk who died after self-immolating with his friend Ngawang Norphel on June 20 in Zaduo Township, Chenduo (Tridu) County, Yushu (Yulshul) TAP, Qinghai Province. (An English-language translation was later posted by the Netherlands-based online community Global Voices.) Tenzin Khedup left behind a recording lamenting his inability to help Tibetan culture and religion, and stating that he and others chose to self-immolate "for the sake of our Tibetan race" and for the Dalai Lama's return to Tibet.

Authorities continued their crackdown on Kirti Monastery in Sichuan Province's Aba (Ngaba) T&QAP, where in March 2011 up to 1,000 residents protested the violent beating by police of Kirti monk Phuntsog, the first Tibetan to commit self-immolation since 2009. Hundreds of monks were removed from the monastery, and some were forced to return to their hometowns. At least 14 current and former monks and laypersons affiliated with Kirti Monastery, including a number of teenagers, self-immolated during the year. According to Tsering Woesser, Tsultrim Gyatso, a senior monk from Detsa Monastery in Haidong (Tsoshar) TAP, Qinghai Province, died January 22 after being tortured by security officers in Gonghe (Chabcha) County, Hainan (Tsolho) TAP, Qinghai Province. Tsultrim was arrested in July 2011, reportedly in connection with a 2006 trip he made to India to attend Kalachakra, a Buddhist teaching conference convened by the Dalai Lama, and his participation in a peaceful protest in March 2008.

In a number of self-immolation cases, security personnel reportedly beat, kicked, or otherwise physically abused individuals as they burned. For example, video footage obtained by the U.S. non-governmental organization (NGO) International Campaign for Tibet shows armed police kicking former Andu monk Losang Jamyang after he set himself on fire on the main street of Aba County Town, Aba (Ngaba) T&QAP, Sichuan Province on January 14. When local Tibetans gathered, police reportedly fired into the crowd, blinding one woman and injuring several others. Losang Jamyang died a few days later.

On January 23, security forces in Luhuo (Draggo) County, Ganzi (Kardze) TAP, Sichuan Province fired at a crowd of protesters, wounding at least 32 and killing at least one – Norpa Yonten, a 49-year-old layperson – overseas media and human rights groups reported. According to some reports, the protesters were demonstrating against the arbitrary detention of Tibetans and calling for the return of the Dalai Lama to Tibet and for additional self-immolations if Tibetans' concerns were ignored. According to a report published by the exile Tibetan website Phayul.com, Tsering Gyaltzen, a monk from Draggo Monastery in Luhuo County, died February 9 from injuries sustained after being beaten by police who were arresting him for allegedly participating in the January 23 protest.

According to a July 16 Phayul.com report, police stopped Pema Norbu, a monk from Lhopu Monastery in Changdu (Chamdo) Prefecture, TAR, at a checkpoint en route to his hometown and beat him to death.

The overseas NGO Tibet Center for Human Rights and Democracy reported that Karwang, a monk from Nyagrong Monastery in Xinlong (Nyagrong) County, Ganzi (Kardze) TAP, Sichuan Province, died after being tortured in police custody in May or June. The police had detained him on suspicion of hanging posters calling for freedom for Tibet.

On November 6, Phayul.com reported that four monks from Draggo Monastery and the abbot of Gochen Monastery, a reincarnate lama, received prison sentences of five to seven years for their alleged participation in the January protest, reportedly after months of incommunicado detention. The specific charges against them and their current whereabouts remained unknown at year's end.

The whereabouts and well-being of Kelsang Wangchuk, whom authorities beat when he self-immolated in Aba County Town, Aba (Ngaba) T&QAP, in October 2011, remained unknown.

The U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) Political Prisoner Database (PPD) recorded 595 Tibetan political prisoners imprisoned in Tibetan areas as recorded in the PPD database on March 15, 2013. The actual number of Tibetan political prisoners and detainees was believed to be much higher, but the lack of access to prisoners and prisons, as well as the dearth of reliable official statistics, made this impossible to determine. An unknown number of prisoners was held under the reeducation through labor system, to which the Public Security Bureau (PSB) can commit people for up to three years without judicial review. Of the 595 Tibetan political prisoners tracked by the CECC, 571 were detained between March 10, 2008, and December 31, 2012, and 24 were detained before the outbreak of protests in Lhasa and other Tibetan areas on March 10, 2008. Of the 571 Tibetan political prisoners who were detained on or after March 10, 2008, 270 were held in Sichuan Province, 137 in the TAR, 62 in Gansu Province, 101 in Qinghai Province, and one in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, according to PPD information. Males accounted for 86 percent of cases (492 cases), females made up 9 percent (53 cases), and gender information was unavailable for 5 percent (26 cases). Tibetan Buddhist monks, nuns, and teachers made up 54 percent (306 cases) of the 571. Sentence information available in the PPD for 150 of the 571 cases from March 10, 2008, onward showed 144 fixed-term sentences ranging in length from one to 20 years (with an average sentence of six years and eight months), and six cases in which prisoners were sentenced to life imprisonment or death with a two-year reprieve (death sentences were usually commuted to life imprisonment if a prisoner committed no new crimes). Officials were not responsive to requests for information regarding detained Tibetans.

Authorities across Tibetan areas continued to detain arbitrarily Tibetan monks and laypeople for indefinite periods of time. Several of these detentions appeared to be linked to the government's attempts to punish those suspected of being associated with self-immolations or those who refused to cooperate with official demands to hand over the remains of self-immolation victims.

An editorial that appeared in the December 3 *Gansu Daily* noted that the Supreme People's Court, the Supreme People's Procuratorate, and the Ministry of Public Security had jointly issued the

Opinion on Handling Cases of Self-Immolation in Tibetan Areas According to Law, which criminalizes various activities associated with self-immolation, including "organizing, plotting, inciting, compelling, luring, instigating, or helping others to commit self-immolation," each of which may be prosecuted as "intentional homicide." According to the *Opinion*, the motive of self-immolators is "generally to split the country," and the act itself constitutes criminal behavior, as it poses a threat to public safety and public order. The *Opinion* states that "ringleaders" will be targeted for "major punishment."

Soon thereafter, a number of friends, relatives, and associates of self-immolators across the Tibetan Plateau were detained, arrested, or sentenced. For example, on December 9, the Xinhua News Agency reported that police had detained Kirti Monastery monk Lorang Konchok and his nephew, Lorang Tsering, and accused them of instigating eight self-immolations since 2009. Phayul.com reported December 14 that Chinese officials arrested five Tibetan monks and nuns in connection with the December 9 self-immolation of 17-year-old Bhenchen Kyi, a student in Zeku (Tsekhog) County, Malho (Huangnan) TAP, Qinghai Province. The whereabouts of the five Tibetans are unknown.

Limited access to information about prisoners and prisons made it difficult to ascertain the exact number of Tibetan prisoners of religious conscience, assess the extent and severity of abuses, or determine the charges brought against them.

According to contacts in Yajiang (Nyagqu) County, Ganzi (Kardze) TAP, Sichuan Province, prominent Buddhist figure Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, who is serving a life sentence in a Sichuan prison on separatism, firearms, and explosives charges that he has denied since 2002, is suffering from heart disease and circulatory problems.

According to the Dharamsala-based Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD), security officials in Xiahe (Sangchu) County, Gannan (Kanlho) TAP, Gansu Province, detained Bora Monastery monks Sanggyal Gyatso, Kalsang Lodroe, Sonam, and Tashi Gyatso on March 23. Their whereabouts and the charges against them remained unknown at year's end. However, two days earlier, security officials reportedly detained 40 Bora Monastery monks after 100 Bora monks marched in front of government buildings carrying Tibetan flags and pictures of the Dalai Lama. After fellow monks assembled to demand that the 40 be released, police reportedly made the detainee monks sign "personal statements" admitting their "mistakes" and then released them.

Khenpo Gyewala, abbot of the Gyegyel Zogchen Monastery and founder of a school serving local children in Zaduo (Zatoe) County, Yushu (Yushul) TAP, Qinghai Province, was sentenced April 6 to a two-year prison term on unspecified charges, according to the TCHRD. The abbot had disappeared March 8 and was held incommunicado for twenty days after students and teachers at his school protested an official prohibition of celebrating a religious festival.

The government detained, convicted, and/or sentenced a number of Kirti monastery monks throughout the year. For example, according to an October 1 Radio Free Asia (RFA) report, the government sentenced Kirti monks Lobsang Tsultrim and Lobsang Jangchup in early September to 11 and eight years' imprisonment, respectively. The two teenagers had been detained since March in connection with their alleged involvement in the March 9 self-immolation of fellow Kirti monk Gepey.

Chinese authorities reportedly detained hundreds of Tibetans who attended an important Buddhist teaching conference in India convened by the Dalai Lama from December 31, 2011, to January 10. Detainees, many of whom had traveled to India legally with valid travel documentation, were reportedly detained as they reentered China or in the months following their return and forced to attend "political education" sessions while in detention. According to sources cited by RFA, on May 26 Chinese border officials forcibly sent back to Nepal nine Tibetan pilgrims who had attended the Kalachakra and were attempting to return to China. Chinese authorities reportedly

severely beat the pilgrims and detained them for a week before handing them over to Nepalese officials. There were also continued reports that Chinese border security forces detained Tibetans seeking to cross the border from Tibet to Nepal for religious purposes. Such detentions reportedly lasted as long as several months and sometimes took place without formal charges.

There have been no updates to the case of Christian house church persecution that occurred in early October 2011 in Lhasa, TAR, when Lhasa authorities reportedly detained 11 members of a Protestant house church for nearly a month, insulted and beat church members, and confiscated Tibetan-language Bibles.

According to various reports, between 500 and "several thousand" students at a medical college in Gonghe (Chabcha) County, Hainan TAP, Qinghai Province, staged a demonstration on November 26, reportedly protesting a booklet that had been distributed at the college that contained inflammatory statements about self-immolation, the Dalai Lama, and bilingual education. Local police officers reportedly responded with force, injuring as many as 20 students. On December 12, Phayul.com reported that eight of the students received five-year sentences for their alleged roles in the November 26 protest and that the school remained under strict surveillance.

Although authorities permitted some traditional religious ceremonies and practices during the year, including public manifestations of religious belief, they rigorously confined most religious activities to officially designated places of worship, often restricted or canceled religious festivals, 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 or advocacy of Tibetan independence.

Local contacts reported that government authorities issued an order banning the celebration on February 9 of Dechen Shingdrup, an important local religious festival held at Gyegyel Zogchen Monastery in Zaduo Township, Chenduo (Tridu) County, Yushu (Yulshul) TAP, Qinghai Province. That day, approximately 1,000 local citizens and monastery students reportedly staged a march protesting the cancellation of the festival. Khenpo Gyewala (also known as Lama Gewa), the monastery's abbot and head of its school, was briefly detained by local officials on February 10, but was released after 800 students protested demanding his release. He was again detained March 8 and reportedly sentenced to two years' imprisonment on unknown charges.

A May 24 circular promulgated by the TAR CCP Discipline Inspection Commission banned Party members, cadres, government officials, and students from participating in "religious activities," singling out the important Tibetan Buddhist religious festival of Saga Dawa, and called for strict punishment of those who disobeyed. According to the circular, "no CCP members, state functionaries, or students are allowed to participate in "Saga Dawa" or other religious activities. The circular went on to say that regardless of the modes of participation, once discovered, the participants themselves would be strictly punished, and the major leaders of their employment units would be held accountable. It stated that CCP members, the leading cadres at all levels in particular, should actively perform their duties, and educate and guide their family members and people around them not to participate in "Saga Dawa" and other religious activities.

"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 11th Panchen Lama, were carried out with intensity and frequency at monasteries and nunneries across the Tibetan Plateau. Monks and nuns reported patriotic education campaigns detracted from their religious studies, and some fled their monasteries and nunneries because they faced expulsion for refusing to comply with the education sessions. The relentless implementation of patriotic education, coupled with strengthened controls over religious practice, including the permanent installation at some monasteries and nunneries of party and public security officials, were believed

by many observers to be among the primary sources of discontent among Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns, and the impetus behind many of the self-immolations. Senior monks at a few monasteries claimed to have reached informal agreement with local officials that resident monks would not stage protests or commit self-immolation so long as the government adopted a hands-off approach to the management of their monasteries.

The number of Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns in monasteries and nunneries fluctuated significantly, due in part to religious personnel leaving their monasteries and nunneries to avoid government-imposed "patriotic education" and "legal education" campaigns, forced denunciations of the Dalai Lama, and other acts they felt constituted a betrayal of their religious beliefs. Authorities in the TAR and other Tibetan areas tightened enforcement of long-standing regulations forbidding monasteries and nunneries from accepting individuals under the age of 18 for training. The government reportedly continued to remove from monasteries and nunneries monks under the age of 18, unregistered monks and nuns, and monks and nuns who came from other areas. Nevertheless, monasteries and nunneries in some areas routinely accepted minors into their training programs.

Monasteries were prohibited from operating schools, although some continued to do so. Children were removed from schools attached to monasteries and enrolled in public schools or provided no alternative arrangements. During the year, local authorities continuously pressured parents, especially those who were CCP members or government employees, to withdraw their children from monasteries in their hometowns, private schools attached to monasteries, or Tibetan schools in India. In some cases local authorities confiscated identity documents of parents whose children were studying at Tibetan schools in India as a means of forcing the parents to return their children to China. In the absence of such documents, the parents risked losing their jobs.

Official rhetoric denigrating the Dalai Lama intensified during the year. On March 24, online commentary carried by China's state-run Xinhua news agency equated the Dalai Lama's policies to those of the Nazis during the Holocaust, calling him a "tricky liar skilled in double dealing." An article that appeared in the August 5 edition of the Lhasa-based Party daily *Xizang Ribao* bemoaned the fact that CCP propaganda on Tibetan issues had failed to cause "the Dalai clique" to abandon its plot to "split the motherland." During a November 13 press briefing, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson called the Dalai Lama "a political exile engaged in separatist activities under the guise of religion."

Although some government officials have maintained there is no law against possessing or displaying pictures of the Dalai Lama, multiple sources reported that open veneration of the Dalai Lama remained prohibited and that officials, who considered the images to be symbols of opposition to the CCP and the state, removed pictures of the Dalai Lama from monasteries and private homes. The county government in Tongren (Rebkong) County, Malho (Huangnan) TAP, Qinghai Province, released an official policy statement on September 17 prohibiting all "cultural enterprises" from selling photographs of the 14th Dalai Lama. 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 Implementing Regulations state, "religious personnel and religious citizens may not distribute books, pictures, or other materials that harm the unity of the nationalities or endanger state security." Some officials deemed photos of and books by or about the Dalai Lama and Gedun Choekyi Nyima to be materials that violated the Implementing Regulations.

Nevertheless, many Tibetans displayed photos of the Dalai Lama and Gedun Choekyi Nyima 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 RAB or other agencies. As one homeowner in Ganzi

(Kardze) TAP, Sichuan Province, stated: "Asking us to take down our pictures of the Dalai Lama is the greatest insult you can make to a Tibetan."

The prohibition against celebrating the Dalai Lama's birthday on July 6 was enforced. Authorities in many Tibetan areas confiscated or defaced photographs of the spiritual leader in monasteries and private residences.

Authorities in the TAR prohibited the registration of names for children that included one or more of the names of the Dalai Lama or certain names included on a list of blessed names approved by the Dalai Lama.

Since the May 27 self-immolation in Lhasa of two young Tibetans from Sichuan and Gansu Provinces (the first instances of self-immolation in Lhasa in recent years), Tibetans from outside the TAR, particularly monks and nuns, have largely been banned from traveling to the TAR without first acquiring special official travel documents that are difficult to obtain. This not only made it impossible for Tibetans to make pilgrimages to sacred religious sites in the TAR, but also obstructed land-based travel to India through Nepal. In addition, many non-local Tibetan monks, nuns and laypersons who had been working or staying at TAR monasteries for as long as 15 years were expelled.

China further strengthened its border controls during the year, and Tibetans encountered substantial difficulties in traveling to India via Nepal for religious purposes. Many Tibetans, including monks and nuns, sought to travel to India for such religious purposes as seeking an audience with the Dalai Lama, an important rite for Tibetan Buddhists, or continuing their studies with key Tibetan Buddhist religious leaders and teachers. In many cases, PSB officials refused to approve the passport applications of Tibetans, even though citizens from other ethnic groups were able to receive passports from the same offices without undue delays. This was particularly true for Tibetan Buddhist religious personnel. Some attributed the passport restrictions to an official effort to hinder travel for religious purposes.

There were also instances in which authorities confiscated previously issued passports of Tibetans. In some cases, prospective travelers were able to obtain a passport only after paying substantial bribes to local officials, or promising not to travel to India or criticize the Chinese government or the Party while overseas. Sources reported that on the Tibet-Nepal border, the government increased its border patrols to prevent Tibetans from crossing the frontier without permission, and some alleged the Chinese government exerted pressure on the government of Nepal to forcibly return Tibetan refugees.

Tibetan Buddhist monks reported government restrictions on the ability of monks to travel and conduct exchanges with other monasteries severely damaged the quality of monastic education. In addition, many experienced teachers were in exile in India and elsewhere, older teachers were not replaced, educated young monks were not promoted due to lack of political credentials, and those who remained in Tibetan areas outside the TAR had difficulty securing permission to teach in other parts of China, abroad, or even within the TAR. Many monks who were expelled from their Lhasa monasteries after March 2008 have not returned, and some reported having been prevented from joining new monasteries. The heads of most major schools of Tibetan Buddhism – including the Karmapa, Sakya Trizin, and Gyalwa Menri Trizin – all resided in exile and maintained close ties with the Dalai Lama. The Karmapa, leader of Tibetan Buddhism's Karma Kagyu school and one of its most influential religious figures, stated he left because the government controlled his movements and refused to allow him to go to India to be trained by his spiritual mentors or allow his teachers to come to him. According to sources, with a few exceptions, the overall number of monks and nuns in monasteries and nunneries remained at significantly lower levels than before the unrest of March 2008.

Authorities closely supervised the education of young reincarnate lamas approved by the government and, in a major deviation from the traditional custom, government officials, rather than religious leaders, managed the selection of their religious and lay tutors.

In recent years, DMCs at several large monasteries began to use funds from the sale of entrance tickets or pilgrims' donations – and, in some cases, from government-controlled DMC-run hotels, shops, and restaurants – for purposes other than the support of monks engaged in full-time religious study under the government policy of monastery self-sufficiency. According to sources, although local government policies designed to attract tourists to religious sites have provided some monasteries with extra income, such activities also interfered with and deflected time and energy from the monasteries' provision of traditional services, such as religious instruction and education, community medical care, and the performance of religious rites and ceremonies for the local Tibetan community.

Spiritual leaders reportedly encountered difficulty reestablishing historical monasteries in rural areas, due in part to government denials of permission to build and operate religious institutions. Officials in some areas contended these religious venues drained local resources and served as a conduit for political infiltration by the Tibetan exile community. However, in some areas the government restored monasteries to promote tourism and boost revenue.

Security forces continued to block access to and from important monasteries, including those in the Lhasa area of the TAR and in Sichuan Province's Aba (Ngaba) T&QAP and Ganzi (Kardze) TAP. A heavy police presence within and surrounding the monasteries restricted the movement of monks and prevented "unauthorized" visits, including those by foreign diplomats, journalists, and other observers.

According to policy, government-subsidized housing units in Tibetan areas were constructed at new village sites located near county government seats or along major roads, which, in practical terms, often resulted in there being no nearby monasteries where newly resettled villagers could worship. Traditionally, Tibetan villages were clustered around monasteries, which provided religious and other services to members of the community. Many Tibetans saw such measures as illustrative of party and government efforts to dilute religious belief and weaken the ties between monasteries and the people they serve. In some cases, Tibetans were able to construct new villages near monasteries after negotiating with the local authorities.

The whereabouts of Gedun Choekyi Nyima, recognized by the Dalai Lama and the vast majority of Tibetans as the 11th Panchen Lama, remained unknown. The government refused requests by international observers to visit Gedun Choekyi Nyima, who turned 23 years old on April 25, and asserted that his identification as the 11th Panchen Lama was "illegal." At a March 2010 press conference, TAR Chairman Pema Choling said Gedun Choekyi Nyima and his family were "reluctant to be disturbed" and wanted to live "an ordinary life." The government continued to insist Gyaltsen Norbu, whom it selected in 1995, was the Panchen Lama's 11th reincarnation. According to numerous Tibetan Buddhist monks in China, UFWD and RAB officials frequently pressured monks to attend sessions presided over by Gyaltsen Norbu. For example, when he visited the TAR in July, monks and villagers were officially ordered to greet him. According to a *People's Daily* article, during a February 10 meeting Premier Wen Jiabao asked Gyaltsen Norbu to play a more important and active role in safeguarding the unification of the motherland and promoting ethnic unity. Gyaltsen Norbu made his first trip outside mainland China during the year, delivering an April 26 address at the 3rd World Buddhist Forum in Hong Kong.

The government severely restricted contact between several important reincarnate lamas and the outside world. For example the 11th Pawo Rinpoche, whom the 17th Karmapa recognized in 1994, remained under official supervision at Nenang Monastery in the TAR. Foreign delegations have repeatedly been refused permission to visit him.

Sources reported security personnel targeted individuals in monastic attire for arbitrary questioning and other forms of harassment on the streets of Lhasa and other cities and towns. Many Tibetan monks and nuns chose to wear non-religious garb to avoid such harassment when traveling outside their monasteries and around China. Several Tibetan monks reported it remained difficult to travel outside their home monasteries, with officials frequently denying permission for outside monks to stay temporarily at other monasteries for religious education.

Section III. Status of Societal Respect for Religious Freedom

There were reports of societal discrimination based on religious affiliation, belief, or practice. Since ethnicity and religion are tightly intertwined for many Tibetan Buddhists, however, it is sometimes difficult to categorize incidents solely as ethnic or religious intolerance. Tibetans, particularly those who wore traditional religious attire, regularly reported incidents in which they were denied hotel rooms 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 in the summer, although the central government imposed restrictions that made it difficult for ethnic Han Buddhists to conduct long-term study at monasteries in ethnic Tibetan areas.

Section IV. U.S. Government Policy

The U.S. government, including the Department of State, the U.S. embassy in Beijing, and the U.S. consulate general in Chengdu, made a sustained and concerted effort to encourage greater religious freedom in Tibetan areas. U.S. government officials at the most senior levels urged China to ease restrictions on religious freedom, including repressive policies in Tibetan areas that have led to self-immolations. U.S. government officials repeatedly raised Tibetan religious freedom issues with Chinese government counterparts at multiple levels, including expressing concern over and seeking further information on individual cases and incidents of religious persecution or discrimination. U.S. officials also raised these concerns during the U.S.-China Human Rights Dialogue, at which the United States special coordinator for Tibetan issues delivered formal closing remarks.

On January 24 and December 5, the special coordinator for Tibetan issues released statements expressing grave concern over mounting self-immolations, reports of violence and heightened tensions in China's Tibetan areas, and noting that the dramatic expansion of Chinese policies that control religious life and practice were "counterproductive," created tensions, and threatened the "distinct religious, cultural and linguistic identity of the Tibetan people." The special coordinator called on the Chinese government to "resume substantive, results-oriented dialogue with the Dalai Lama or his representatives to address the underlying grievances of China's Tibetan population" and to "permit Tibetans to express their grievances freely, publically, peacefully, and without fear of retribution."

Speaking before the 19th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland, on March 2, the special coordinator noted that "the United States remains gravely concerned about recent violence and continuing tensions in Tibetan areas of China," and renewed her call for China's government to "respect the fundamental freedoms of religion and expression of all of its citizens, including members of ethnic minorities." The secretary of state raised concerns about the human rights situation in Tibet and the escalating number of Tibetan self-immolations in a September 27 meeting with Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi.

Throughout the year, the ambassador, the assistant secretary for East Asian and Pacific affairs, and the assistant secretary for democracy, human rights and labor repeatedly and consistently raised U.S. concerns over China's counterproductive Tibet policies with senior Chinese government interlocutors in Beijing and Washington, D.C. During an October 29 online forum, the ambassador urged the Chinese government to "meet with the representatives of the Tibetan people to address and re-examine some of the policies that have led to some of the restrictions and the violence and the self-immolations." In an interview broadcast November 27 on CNN, the ambassador expressed concerns about the heightened tensions in Tibetan areas and said the United States was constantly urging the Chinese government to re-examine "policies that threaten the linguistic identity, the cultural identity, and religious identity of the Tibetan people." In his December 10 International Human Rights Day statement, the ambassador expressed concern about "constraints on the religious freedom and practices of Tibetans," and said he was "deeply saddened by the increasing frequency of self-immolations in Tibetan areas of China." U.S. government officials urged counterparts in the Chinese government to engage in constructive dialogue with the Dalai Lama and his representatives, and to address the policies that threaten Tibet's distinct religious, cultural, and linguistic identity and constitute a primary cause of grievances among Tibetans. In addition, diplomatic personnel at the U.S. embassy coordinated closely on Tibet issues with counterparts at over a dozen foreign embassies and missions in Beijing.

U.S. diplomatic personnel 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 more difficult to visit and communicate with these individuals than in previous years. Following the outbreak of violent protests in Qinghai Province in January, diplomatic personnel from the U.S. embassy in Beijing traveled to Qinghai and Gansu Provinces to monitor the situation and attempt to visit affected monasteries. In late September the ambassador visited two monasteries in Aba (Ngaba) T&QAP. U.S. diplomatic personnel from the embassy and the consulate general in Chengdu made several trips throughout the year to visit monasteries and nunneries in Sichuan and Yunnan Provinces, including Sichuan's restive Aba (Ngaba) T&QAP and Ganzi (Kardze) TAP, although travel was sometimes prevented.

U.S. government officials have submitted more than 10 requests for diplomatic access to the TAR since the last official visit in May 2011, but the Chinese government has not granted any of them. The TAR and some other Tibetan areas were largely closed to foreign visitors for much of the year, and unpublished restrictions on travel by foreigners to the TAR and some other Tibetan areas often resulted in U.S. diplomats and other foreigners being turned back at police roadblocks, allegedly for their own safety, or being refused transportation on public buses to Tibetan areas outside the TAR that were ostensibly open to foreign visitors.