

Tibet, in particular self-immolation by nuns and monks

European Parliament resolution of 27 October 2011 on Tibet, in particular self-immolation by nuns and monks

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on China and Tibet, in particular its resolution of 25 November 2010¹,
 - having regard to Article 36 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, which guarantees all citizens the right to freedom of religious belief,
 - having regard to Rule 122(5) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas respect for human rights, freedom of religion and freedom of association are founding principles of the EU and a priority of its foreign policy;
- B. whereas the Chinese Government has imposed drastic restrictions on Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in the Aba/Ngaba county prefecture in Sichuan province, and in other parts of the Tibetan plateau, including brutal security raids, arbitrary detention of monks, increased surveillance within monasteries and a permanent police presence inside the monasteries in order to monitor religious activities;
- C. whereas these security measures are designed to curtail the right to free expression, freedom of association and freedom of religious belief in Tibetan Buddhist monasteries;
- D. whereas Phuntsog (aged 20) and Tsewang Norbu (aged 29) died after setting fire to themselves, on 16 March and 15 August 2011 respectively, as a protest against restrictive Chinese policies in Tibet;
- E. whereas Phuntsog's younger brothers, Lobsang Kelsang and Lobsang Kunchok (both aged 18), set fire to themselves at the Aba/Ngaba county market on 26 September 2011, and whereas, although they survived, their present condition remains unclear;
- F. whereas Dawa Tsering, a 38-year-old monk at Kardze Monastery, set fire to himself on 25 October 2011, whereas Chinese security personnel doused the flames and tried to take him away, whereas the monk is currently being protected by fellow monks at the monastery and whereas his condition is critical;
- G. whereas Kelsang Wangchuk, a 17-year-old monk at Kirti Monastery, immolated himself on 3 October 2011 and was immediately carried away by Chinese soldiers, who extinguished the fire and beat him strenuously before taking him away, and whereas his current state of well-being and whereabouts are unknown;
- H. whereas two former monks from Kirti, Choephel (aged 19) and Kayang (aged 18), clasped their hands together and set fire to themselves while calling for the return of the Dalai Lama

¹ Texts adopted, P7_TA(2010)0449.

and the right to religious freedom, and whereas they died following this protest;

- I. whereas former Kirti monk Norbu Damdrul (aged 19), who set fire to himself on 15 October 2011, was the eighth Tibetan to self-immolate, and whereas his current whereabouts and state of well-being are unknown;
- J. whereas on 17 October 2011 a nun from Ngaba Mamae Dechen Choekorling Nunnery, Tenzin Wangmo (aged 20), died, and whereas she was the first female to commit self-immolation;
- K. whereas self-immolation can be seen as a form of protest and an expression of the increasing desperation felt by young Tibetans, especially within the community of Kirti Monastery;
- L. whereas, whatever personal motivations may underlie these acts, they must be considered in the wider context of religious and political repression in Aba/Ngaba county, which can be traced back many years;
- M. whereas the tightening of state control over religious practice via a series of regulations passed by the Chinese Government in 2007 has contributed to the desperation of Tibetans across the Tibetan plateau;
- N. whereas current regulations have dramatically expanded state control over religious life, with many expressions of religious identity being subject to state approval and control, including the recognition of reincarnate lamas;
- O. whereas a Chinese court sentenced three Tibetan monks to imprisonment over the death of their fellow monk Phuntsog, who set himself on fire on 16 March 2011, on the grounds that they had hidden him and deprived him of medical attention, and whereas it accused them of 'intentional homicide';
- P. whereas in March 2011, following the first immolation incident, armed personnel surrounded Kirti Monastery and cut off its access to food and water for several days; whereas the new security officials dispatched to the monastery imposed a compulsory new 'patriotic education' programme, and whereas more than 300 monks were taken away in military trucks and detained at unspecified locations to undergo several weeks of political indoctrination;
- Q. whereas the Chinese Government has accused the monks at Kirti Monastery of being involved in acts 'aimed at disturbing social order', including vandalism and self-immolation;
- R. whereas in recent months the Chinese authorities have tightened security in Tibet, especially in the area surrounding Kirti Monastery, whereas journalists and foreigners are banned from visiting the region, and whereas the monastery is patrolled by police in full riot gear; whereas foreign media have been banned from entering restless parts of Tibet, whereas Chinese state television has failed to report on the protests, and whereas monks are forbidden from speaking out about the protests;
- 1. Condemns the Chinese authorities' continued crackdown on Tibetan monasteries and calls on them to lift the restrictions and security measures imposed on monasteries and lay

communities, and to restore the lines of communication to the monks of Kirti Monastery;

2. Is deeply concerned by reports, since last April, of eight Tibetan Buddhist monks and one nun self-immolating near the Ngaba Kirti Monastery in China's Sichuan province;
3. Urges the Chinese Government to lift the restrictions and heavy-handed security measures imposed on the Kirti Monastery, and to provide information as to the whereabouts of monks forcibly taken from the monastery; urges the Chinese authorities to allow independent international media and human rights monitors to visit the area;
4. Calls on the Chinese Government to guarantee freedom of religion to all its citizens in accordance with Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and to abolish criminal and administrative penalties which target religion and have been used to punish citizens for exercising their right to freedom of religion;
5. Calls on the Chinese authorities to respect the rights of Tibetans in all Chinese provinces and to take proactive steps to resolve the underlying grievances of China's Tibetan population;
6. Calls on the Chinese authorities to cease promoting policies which threaten the Tibetan language, culture, religion, heritage and environment, in contravention of the Chinese Constitution and the Chinese law granting autonomy to ethnic minorities;
7. Urges the Government of the People's Republic of China to provide full details as to the status of the 300 monks who were taken away from Kirti Monastery in April 2011, in relation to which several Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, including the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, have intervened;
8. Urges the Government of the People's Republic of China to be accountable for the status of those Tibetans who have been 'hospitalised' after self-immolating, including as regards their access to medical treatment;
9. Condemns the sentencing of the Kirti monks and insists on their right to a fair trial and to the provision of adequate legal assistance for the length of that trial; calls for independent observers to be allowed access to the Kirti monks held in detention;
10. Calls on the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to release a public statement expressing the EU's concern as regards the escalating situation in Aba/Ngaba county and urging respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, along with restraint on the part of security police;
11. Calls on the Chinese authorities to refrain from implementing counterproductive policies and aggressive 'patriotic education' programmes in Tibetan-populated areas such as Sichuan, Gansu and Qinghai, places where human rights violations have created tensions;
12. Calls on the Chinese authorities to respect traditional Tibetan death rites and to return remains in accordance with Buddhist rituals and without delay or hindrance;
13. Asks the EU and its Member States to call on the Chinese Government to resume its dialogue with the Dalai Lama and his representatives with a view to bringing about genuine autonomy for Tibetans within the People's Republic of China, and to stop its campaign to

discredit the Dalai Lama as a religious leader;

14. Calls on the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the Commission to raise human rights issues at the next EU-China Summit, and calls on the President of the Commission and the President of the European Council clearly to uphold Tibet's unique religious, cultural and linguistic identity in the course of their official speeches during the opening or closing of the summit, in the event that it is not on the agenda for discussion;
15. Calls on the EEAS and the EU delegation to China constantly to monitor the human rights situation in China and to continue to raise – in meetings and correspondence with Chinese officials – the specific cases of individual Tibetans imprisoned for the peaceful exercise of religious freedom, and to present a report to Parliament within the next 12 months, suggesting actions to be taken or policies to be implemented;
16. Reiterates its call to the Council to appoint an EU Special Representative for Tibet with a view to facilitating the resumption of dialogue between the Chinese authorities and the Dalai Lama's envoys in relation to the determination of genuine autonomous status for Tibet within the People's Republic of China;
17. Calls on those Member States which are members of the G-20, and on the President of the Commission and the President of the European Council, to raise the human rights situation in Tibet with the President of the People's Republic of China, Hu Jintao, at the upcoming G-20 Summit in Cannes on 3 and 4 November 2011;
18. Urges the People's Republic of China to respect the religious freedoms and basic human rights of the monastic and lay communities in Ngaba, and to suspend the implementation of religious control regulations in order to allow Tibetan Buddhists to identify and educate religious teachers in a manner consistent with Tibetan traditions, to review the religious and security policies implemented in Ngaba since 2008, and to open a transparent dialogue with the leaders of Tibetan Buddhist schools;
19. Urges the Government of the People's Republic of China to respect internationally agreed human rights standards and to abide by its obligations under international human rights conventions with respect to freedom of religion or belief;
20. Expresses the need for the rights of China's minority communities to be put on the agenda for future rounds of the EU-China human rights dialogue;
21. Urges the Chinese Government to ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
22. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the High Representative of the Union / Vice-President of the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States and the Government and Parliament of the People's Republic of China.