

**State Department reports on continued erosion of religious freedom in Tibet**  
**By International Campaign for Tibet**  
**31 July, 2012**

The U.S. State Department has identified Chinese policies as a cause of the self-immolations in Tibet. In its just-released annual report on religious freedom, the Department wrote that, "official interference in the practice of Tibetan Buddhist religious traditions generated profound grievances and contributed to a series of self-immolations by Tibetans."

"We welcome the Department's advocacy on Tibet and its focus on the severe restrictions on religious freedom that are exacerbating the self-immolation crisis," said Todd Stein, Director of Government Relations at the International Campaign for Tibet. "We know that Tibet was raised in last week's human rights dialogue with the Chinese, and look forward to hearing whether the Chinese had any positive response to the U.S.'s concerns on Tibet, and what the State Department's consequential next step will be if they did not."

The findings are located in the special Tibet section of the State Department's 2011 International Religious Freedom Report, an annual assessment of countries' respect for religious liberty, mandated by Congress in 1998. The Tibet section can be found at [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov).

The report's assessments come amidst a roll-out across Tibetan areas of rules and regulations which "provide the ostensible legal basis for [Chinese] government control over and authoritative reinterpretation of Tibetan Buddhism." Such measures, first implemented in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), are being extended to other Tibetan autonomous jurisdictions in eastern Tibet, which have witnessed the greatest number of self-immolations.

Examples include codified "government control over the selection of religious leaders, including reincarnate lamas," requiring government permission for large-scale religious gatherings and building construction, the permanent stationing of government officials inside monasteries, and 'patriotic education' activities that force monks and nuns to denounce the Dalai Lama and praise Chinese Communist leaders. The report found these measures to be the "primary sources of discontent among Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns, and the impetus behind such acts of protest as self-immolation."

The report cites a number of individual cases, but noted that "limited access ... made it difficult to ascertain the number of cases of Tibetan prisoners of religious conscience. It states that, "U.S. government officials repeatedly requested diplomatic access to the TAR but only one TAR visit was approved [in April 2011], and that visit was closely controlled and monitored." It further reported that U.S. diplomats and other foreigners seeking to travel in other Tibetan areas were turned back at roadblocks or refused transportation on public buses ... that were ostensibly open to foreign tourists."

The report's observations on religious freedom are consistent with those in a major report issued by the International Campaign for Tibet in April, entitled "60 Years of Misrule; Arguing Cultural Genocide in Tibet." It found that religious repression formed part of a consistent and systemic Chinese effort to replace organic Tibetan culture with a state-approved version to suit the Party's ideological, political and economic objectives. It argues that these policies are so systematic and persistent in their destruction of Tibetan culture, that they contain elements of cultural genocide.

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