



RESPONSE TO PETITION

Prepare in English and French marking 'Original Text' or 'Translation'

PETITION No.: **421-03025**

BY: **MR. GARRISON (ESQUIMALT-SAANICH-SOOKE)**

DATE: **DECEMBER 3, 2018**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **SIGNED BY THE HONOURABLE CHRYSTIA FREELAND**

Response by the Minister of Foreign Affairs

SIGNATURE

Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

SUBJECT

TIBET

ORIGINAL TEXT

REPLY

The promotion and protection of human rights are an integral part of Canadian foreign policy and a priority in our government's engagement with China. The Government of China's ongoing persecution of Tibetans is incompatible with its international obligations, as well as its Constitution.

Canada remains deeply concerned about the human rights situation affecting Tibetans, including restrictions on freedom of expression and freedom of religion or belief, as well as the protection of linguistic and cultural rights. Canada has consistently called on China to respect, protect and promote freedom of expression, of assembly and of association, and of religion or belief for all Chinese citizens.

In the past, Canadian officials have visited the Tibet Autonomous Region. Unfortunately, Canadian government officials, including Canada's Ambassador, have been denied access to visit Tibet since 2015. The Embassy of Canada in Beijing has made consistent representations to visit Tibet and will continue to do so.

Canada has publicly voiced concerns about the intimidation and repression of ethnic minority and religious groups, including for Tibetans, and will continue to do so at every opportunity. Canadian engagement on human rights encompasses high level visits; public statements; representations on specific issues and cases of concern bilaterally as well as in multilateral forums; interventions and advocacy by the Embassy of Canada; as well as outreach to civil society. We have raised concerns regarding human rights practices directly with Chinese authorities on numerous occasions. These concerns are raised at the highest levels, including during the Prime Minister's visit to China in December 2017, the two back-to-back high-level leaders' visits in 2016, the Governor General's visit to China in July 2017, and during a visit to China by the Foreign Affairs Minister in August 2017. The Prime Minister and Chinese Premier Li Keqiang also had a frank and open discussion on human rights, freedom of expression, and freedom of religion as part of the third Canada-China Annual Leaders' Dialogue on November 14, 2018.

In July 2018, Canada co-sponsored a statement, at a Ministerial Meeting to Advance Religious Freedom in Washington, where parties expressed their concerns about the significant restrictions on religious freedom in China and call on the Chinese government to respect the human rights of all individuals. The text stated that many members of religious minority groups in China face severe repression and discrimination because of their beliefs, including Tibetan Buddhists.

For your awareness, on November 6, 2018, Canada made public recommendations to China on human rights as part of its Universal Periodic Review at the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva. At that time, Canada recommended that China end the prosecution and persecution on the basis of religion or belief, including for Tibetan Buddhists. In March 2014, Canada also spoke at the United Nations Human Rights Council, stating that the government of China's ongoing persecution of religious and ethnic minorities, especially in Xinjiang and Tibet, was incompatible with its international obligations, as well as its Constitution. Canada urged authorities to immediately release all individuals detained for exercising their human rights, including their right to freedom of religion and expression, and to protect advocates for linguistic and cultural rights.

Canada will continue to raise its concerns about the human rights situation in China and Tibet, and we will continue to call on China to live up to its international obligations.