



RESPONSE TO PETITION

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

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PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **SIGNED BY THE HONOURABLE STÉPHANE DION**

Response by the Minister of Foreign Affairs

SIGNATURE
Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

SUBJECT

Tibet

ORIGINAL TEXT

REPLY

The promotion and protection of human rights is an integral part of Canadian foreign policy and a long-standing priority in our relationship with China. Canada stands up for human rights and takes principled positions on important issues to ensure that freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, values that define this country, are enjoyed around the world.

Canada has consistently called on China to respect, protect and promote the freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of assembly and association, and freedom of religion or belief of all Chinese citizens.

Specifically, the Government of Canada continues to closely monitor the human rights situation in Tibet. As was done most recently during the Prime Minister's first official visit to China, Canada will continue to have frank discussions with China on respect for human rights and the rule of law, including in relation to religious freedom and the situation in Tibet. Canada has also consistently advocated for substantive and meaningful dialogue between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama or his representatives to work toward a resolution of issues acceptable to both sides.

Senior officials of the Canadian Embassy in China have undertaken several diplomatic visits to the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). Canada will continue to seek greater access to Tibet for our diplomats, parliamentarians, NGOs and visiting delegations. Allowing foreign diplomats and journalists unimpeded and regular access to Tibetan areas would allow us to better understand the realities on the ground.

Specific to the case of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the Government of Canada first raised the matter with the Chinese authorities in 1995. In 1998, the Canadian Embassy in Beijing delivered to Chinese counterparts 1,000 birthday cards for Gedhun Choekyi Nyima from Canadian children.

Since then, Canada has regularly requested that China provide information on the location of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his parents, the level of education that Gedhun has completed and the expected date for his return along with his parents. The Chinese Government has not responded.

Moreover, Canada has called on China to allow the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion and Belief to visit Gedhun Choekyi Nyima.

After persistent requests from the international community and Tibetan advocates, on September 6, 2015, Chinese officials responded that the Panchen Lama, then 26 years old, is living under China's control. "The reincarnated child Panchen Lama you mentioned is being educated, living a normal life, growing up healthily and does not wish to be disturbed," said Norbu Dunzhub, a member of the Tibet Autonomous Region's United Front Work Department.

The Government of Canada will continue to urge the Government of China to respect the rights of ethnic Tibetans, and to take steps to improve the human rights situation in Tibetan areas.