
TWELVE THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT TIBET AND CHINA

1. Chinese Communist forces invaded the nation of Tibet in 1949. Since that time, over 1.2 million Tibetans have died as a result of the occupation, over 6,000 monasteries have been destroyed, and thousands of Tibetans have been imprisoned and tortured for their political or religious beliefs.

2. The Dalai Lama, Tibet's political and spiritual leader, fled Tibet in 1959. He escaped to India and established the Tibetan Government in Exile in Dharamsala. It is estimated that 130,000 Tibetan refugees live in exile around the world, including over 5,000 in the United States and Canada. In this world of violence, the vast majority of Tibetans continue to adhere to the Buddhist principle of non-violence and compassion in their struggle for freedom.

3. Tibet was independent. While the Chinese government claims that Tibet has always been part of China, there is much historical evidence to the contrary. Tibetans have a distinct culture, religion, and political system. As an independent state, Tibet had a sovereign government, currency, postal system, language, laws, and customs. Prior to 1951, the Tibetan government had also signed treaties with foreign nations, including Britain, Mongolia, and Nepal.

4. The Tibetan Autonomous Region (T.A.R.) is not Tibet. Currently, the Chinese government has divided historical Tibet into many regions and prefectures. T.A.R. encompasses only the central area and

some of the eastern regions of historical Tibet. Well over half of Tibet's original territory has been absorbed into China proper.

5. In Tibet today, the basic freedoms of speech, religion, and press are strictly limited, and arbitrary arrests continue. According to human rights organizations, there are currently over 1,200 political prisoners in Tibet, including: a Fulbright scholar named Ngawang Choephel; the nine-year-old Panchen Lama (a highly revered religious figure in Tibet) who was made to disappear by Chinese authorities in 1995 — and hundreds of other monks, nuns and lay people who are suffering in Chinese gulags and prisons.

6. The Chinese Government's policies of forced abortion, sterilization, and population transfer of thousands of Chinese citizens into Tibet, threaten the very survival of the Tibetan civilization. Chinese settlers now outnumber Tibetans in most urban areas and many rural areas, making Tibetans a minority in their own country. Meanwhile, thousands of Tibetans continue to flee from occupied Tibet, making the treacherous journey over mountain passes into the uncertain world of exile.

7. Historically, Tibet was a vast nation, whose area was roughly equal to all of Western Europe combined. Most of the Tibetan plateau lies above 14,000 feet. Tibet is the source of five of Asia's greatest rivers, providing water for 2 billion people. Since 1959, the Chinese have endangered Tibet's fragile environment through strip-mining, nuclear waste disposal, and extensive deforestation. One result of this deforestation is massive flooding, which destroys millions of acres of land, kills thousands of people and livestock, and

leaves many more homeless and destitute. Furthermore, Tibet's most sacred lake, the Yamdrok Tso, is currently being drained for a government hydroelectric power plant.

8. Tibet has become a militarized zone. Though China has spent millions of dollars building infrastructure in Tibet, many of the roads, buildings, and power plants directly support heavy militarization of the plateau. Modern Tibet resembles a military state because of the thousands of police and troops stationed in and around urban centers. Furthermore, few of the jobs or economic opportunities created by development currently benefit the average Tibetan person.

9. Within China itself, human rights abuses continue. The Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989 is only one example of government crackdowns and policies that continue to oppress personal and collective freedoms. It is estimated that there are as many as 20 million Chinese working in prison camps. Recently, it was revealed that prison officials are known to extract blood and organs from prisoners for sale on the open market. Sadly, forced prison labor, arbitrary arrests, and the imposition of the death penalty for minor offenses continues.

10. The world community has done very little to pressure China to improve its human rights record. Major corporations from around the world continue to do business with China. Despite continuing pressure, the United States Government has de-linked human rights from trade considerations. The U.S. continues to extend Normal Trade Relations status to China (previously known as Most Favored Nation trading status). China represents a gigantic market, and its associated businesses have such a strong lobby in the

U.S. congress that politicians are reluctant to impose any trade sanctions.

11. Money isn't the answer. Despite the assertion by the U.S. government that the presence of U.S. businesses in China will improve conditions there, things have only gotten worse in Tibet. The 1999 Human Rights U.S State Department study for 1999 states the "Chinese government authorities continued to commit serious human rights abuses in Tibet, including instances of torture, arbitrary arrest, detention without public trial, and lengthy detention of Tibetan nationalists for peacefully expressing their political views..." As cited in this study by the Tibet Information Network (TIN), political protests by and the detention of Tibetans is both increasing and spreading throughout ethnic Tibetan areas.

12. China refuses to negotiate Human rights violations, environment degradation, and restrictions on personal freedoms are symptoms of a greater problem needing a political solution. In order to non-violently resolve the situation in Tibet, there must be negotiations without preconditions between His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Chinese leadership. Only through substantive dialogue can meaningful progress be made on this critical issue.

*TIME IS RUNNING OUT FOR THE
PEOPLE OF TIBET. THE TIME
TO TAKE ACTION IS NOW!*

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