



BAY AREA FRIENDS OF TIBET

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For immediate release

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Coalition Urges President Obama to Raise Tibet During US-China Summit

(San Francisco) - Thirty Nine Tibetan organizations and Tibet support groups in the United States have written to President Barack Obama to ask that Tibet be a substantive part of the agenda when he meets with Chinese President Hu Jintao in Washington on January 19.

"We urge President Obama to help produce concrete results leading to a resolution for Tibet and champion human rights when he meets with President Hu," said Giovanni Vassallo, president of the Bay Area Friends of Tibet. "China needs to commit to a sincere results-oriented dialogue with the Dalai Lama's government-in-exile, free the thousands of Tibetan political prisoners, and do more to protect Tibet's fragile environment" he added.

The letter states that "the Tibetan people have been denied their fundamental human rights" and comes at a time when Chinese leaders are escalating their violent and repressive policies in Tibet, including a full-scale attack against Tibetan writers, artists and intellectuals.

The groups thank President Obama for his past "public expressions of support for the Tibet issue" and reiterate their call for him to publicly and vigorously raise Tibet during the U.S.-China Summit. The letter states that the United States' "long-standing history of supporting the Tibetan people creates an incumbent duty on this Administration to continue to raise the issue with Chinese leaders at the highest levels."

The letter argues that China's failed policies in Tibet have consequences far beyond Tibet's borders. China's wide-scale construction of dams on the upper-reaches of Asia's largest rivers that originate on the Tibetan plateau and flow into India, Cambodia and other neighboring countries, are fast becoming a potential source of regional instability. The letter also highlights the recent protests by thousands of students in eastern Tibet against a new Chinese-government policy announced in October that will replace Tibetan with Chinese as the language of instruction in Tibetan schools.

The text of the letter and list of signatory groups are as follows:

Dear Mr. President:

We, the undersigned Tibetan Associations and Tibet support groups, are writing to ask that you make Tibet a substantive part of the agenda when President Hu Jintao visits Washington on January 19.

You have spoken often of the universality of fundamental human rights, most recently to mark the awarding of the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize to imprisoned Chinese writer and democracy activist Liu Xiaobo.

As you are aware, for the past six decades, the Tibetan people have been denied their fundamental human rights. President Hu Jintao's visit to Washington is a unique opportunity to



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meaningfully engage him on the Tibet issue and showcase the ideals and values cherished by Americans, including openness, democracy and individual liberty. These principles underlie your remarks about rights that are universal to all human beings.

The United States has a long-standing history of supporting the Tibetan people and their peaceful struggle for human rights and freedom. This support has become institutionalized within the U.S. government through the development of policies and programs designed to help Tibetans preserve and promote their culture, identity and dignity. You have commended His Holiness the Dalai Lama's tireless efforts to negotiate a resolution for Tibet with the Chinese government, a position consistent with long-standing U.S. policy.

Tibet is an integral part of the U.S.-China relationship for moral, historical and strategic reasons. The position the United States has adopted on Tibet creates an incumbent duty on this Administration to continue to raise the issue with Chinese leaders at the highest levels. Tibet must be on the agenda of your summit with President Hu.

The recent protests by Tibetan students objecting to the central government's plans to subordinate the Tibetan language to Mandarin as the language of instruction is emblematic of China's policy failures in Tibet.

Moreover, there is a growing recognition of the potential impact China's infrastructure projects on the Tibetan plateau will have on access to water in downstream countries, as Secretary Clinton noted during her visit to Cambodia. The role of Tibet, also known by scientists as the "Third Pole," in global climate change is further evidence that developments in Tibet are anything but the exclusive internal affairs of the People's Republic of China. Without a multilateral framework to address these issues, Chinese policies in Tibet could exacerbate regional instability. A just and lasting solution for Tibet that includes Tibetans as integral stakeholders will bring greater stability for China, its regional neighbors and indeed the world.

These points underlie the central message that we ask you to convey to President Hu - that the United States has, and will continue to have, a strong interest in Tibet and will remain committed to facilitating a just and lasting resolution for Tibet. This commitment comes with an expectation that Tibetans must be freely able to exercise their basic human rights and freedoms, preserve their distinctive culture, and address the ecological, educational, political and economic consequences of the Chinese government's failed policies in Tibet.

The U.S. government should continue to press China's leadership for results- oriented negotiations to achieve a political solution for Tibet and engage China in topical areas, including education policies pertaining to Tibetans and regional discussions on water security.

Your proactive approach will demonstrate to the Chinese government that Tibet is an integral part of the U.S.-China relationship as are basic universal values of human rights and dignity. Again, we thank you for your public expressions of support for the Tibet issue and for your leadership in raising the Tibet issue with Chinese leaders, and look forward to your continuing to exert this leadership when you meet with President Hu.