

**Statement of His Holiness the Dalai Lama on the Forty-First
Anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising Day
10th March 2000**

My sincere greetings to my fellow countrymen in Tibet as well as in exile and to our friends and supporters all over the world on the occasion of the 41st anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising Day of 1959.

We are at the beginning of the 21st century. If we look at the events that took place in the 20th century mankind made tremendous progress in improving our material wellbeing. At the same time, there was massive destruction, both in terms of human lives and physical structures as peoples and nations sought recourse to confrontation instead of dialogue to resolve bilateral and multilateral problems. The 20th century was therefore in a way a century of war and bloodshed. I believe that we have learned valuable lessons through these experiences. It is clear that any solution resulting from violence or confrontation is not lasting. I firmly believe that it is only through peaceful means that we can develop better understanding between ourselves. We must make this new century a century of peace and dialogue.

We commemorate this March 10th anniversary at a time when the state of affairs of our freedom struggle is complex and multifarious, yet the spirit of resistance of our people inside Tibet continues to increase. It is also encouraging to note that worldwide support for our cause is increasing. Unfortunately, on the part of Beijing there is an evident lack of political will and courage to address the issue of Tibet sensibly and pragmatically through dialogue.

Right from the beginning, ever since the time of our exile, we have believed in hoping for the best but preparing for the worst. In this same spirit, we have tried our best to reach out to the Chinese government to bring about a process of dialogue and reconciliation for many years. We have also been building bridges with our overseas Chinese brothers and sisters, including those in Taiwan, and to enhance significantly mutual understanding, respect and solidarity.

At the same time we have continued with our work of strengthening the base of our exiled community by creating awareness about the true nature of the Tibetan struggle, preserving Tibetan values, promoting nonviolence, augmenting democracy and expanding the network of our supporters throughout the world.

It is with great sadness I report that the human rights situation in Tibet today has taken a critical turn in recent years. The "strike hard" and "patriotic re-education" campaigns against Tibetan religion and patriotism have intensified with each passing year. In some spheres of life we are witnessing the return of an atmosphere of intimidation, coercion and fear, reminiscent of the days of the Cultural Revolution. In 1999 alone there have been six known cases of deaths resulting from torture and abuse. Authorities have expelled a total of 1,432 monks and nuns from their monasteries and nunneries for refusing to either oppose Tibetan freedom or to denounce me. There are 615 known and

documented Tibetan political prisoners in Tibet. Since 1996, a total of 11,409 monks and nuns have been expelled from their places of worship and study. It is obvious that there has been little change with regard to China's ruthless political objective in Tibet since the early sixties when the late Panchen Lama, who personally witnessed Communist China's occupation of Tibet from the 50s to the beginning of the 60s, wrote his famous 70,000-character petition. Even today the present young reincarnate Panchen Lama is under virtual house arrest, making him the youngest political prisoner in the world. I am deeply concerned about this.

The most alarming trend in Tibet is the flood of Chinese settlers who continue to come to Tibet to take advantage of Tibet's opening to market capitalism. This along with the widespread disease of prostitution, gambling and karaoke bars, which the authorities quietly encourage, is undermining the traditional social norms and moral values of the Tibetan people. These, more than brute force, are successful in reducing the Tibetans to a minority in their own country and alienating them from their traditional beliefs and values.

This sad state of affairs in Tibet does nothing to alleviate the suffering of the Tibetan people or to bring stability and unity to the People's Republic of China. If China is seriously concerned about unity, she must make honest efforts to win over the hearts of the Tibetans and not attempt to impose her will on them. It is the responsibility of those in power, who rule and govern, to ensure that policies towards all its ethnic groups are based on equality and justice in order to prevent separation. Though lies and falsehood may deceive people temporarily and the use of force may control human beings physically, it is only through proper understanding, fairness and mutual respect that human beings can be genuinely convinced and satisfied.

The Chinese authorities see the distinct culture and religion of Tibet as the principal cause for separation. Accordingly, there is an attempt to destroy the integral core of the Tibetan civilization and identity. New measures of restrictions in the fields of culture, religion and education coupled with the unabated influx of Chinese immigrants to Tibet amount to a policy of cultural genocide.

It is true that the root cause of the Tibetan resistance and freedom struggle lies in Tibet's long history, its distinct and ancient culture, and its unique identity. The Tibetan issue is much more complex and deeper than the simple official version Beijing upholds. History is history and no one can change the past. One cannot simply retain what one wants and abandon what one does not want. It is best left to historians and legal experts to study the case objectively and make their own judgements. In matters of history political decisions are not necessary. I am therefore looking towards the future.

Because of lack of understanding, appreciation and respect for Tibet's distinct culture, history and identity China's Tibet policies have been consistently misguided. In occupied Tibet there is little room for truth. The use of force and coercion as the principal means to rule and administer Tibet compel Tibetans to lie out of fear and local officials to hide the truth and create false facts in order to suit and to please Beijing and its stewards in Tibet.

As a result China's treatment of Tibet continues to evade the realities in Tibet. This approach is shortsighted and counter-productive. These policies are narrow-minded and reveal the ugly face of racial and cultural arrogance and a deep sense of political insecurity. The development concerning the flights of Agya Rinpoche, the Abbot of Kumbum Monastery, and more recently Karmapa Rinpoche are cases in point. However, the time has passed when in the name of national sovereignty and integrity a state can continue to apply such ruthless policies with impunity and escape international condemnation. Moreover, the Chinese people themselves will deeply regret the destruction of Tibet's ancient and rich cultural heritage. I sincerely believe that our rich culture and spirituality not only can benefit millions of Chinese but can also enrich China itself.

It is unfortunate that some leaders of the People's Republic of China seem to be hoping for the Tibetan issue to disappear with the passage of time. Such thinking on the part of the Chinese leaders is to repeat the miscalculations made in the past. Certainly, no Chinese leader would have thought back in 1949/50 and then in 1959 that in 2000 China would still be grappling with the issue of Tibet. The old generation of Tibetans has gone, a second and a third generation of Tibetans have emerged. Irrespective of the passage of time the freedom struggle of the Tibetan people continues with undiminished determination. It is clear that this is not a struggle for the cause of one man nor is it that of one generation of Tibetans. It is therefore obvious that generations of Tibetans to come will continue to cherish, honor and commit themselves to this freedom struggle. Sooner or later, the Chinese leadership will have to face this fact.

The Chinese leaders refuse to believe that I am not seeking separation but genuine autonomy for the Tibetans. They are quite openly accusing me of lying. They are free to come and visit our communities in exile to find out the truth for themselves.

It has been my consistent endeavor to find a peaceful and mutually acceptable solution to the Tibetan problem. My approach envisages that Tibet enjoy genuine autonomy within the framework of the People's Republic of China. Such a mutually beneficial solution would contribute to the stability and unity of China - their two topmost priorities - while at the same time the Tibetans would be ensured of the basic right to preserve their own civilization and to protect the delicate environment of the Tibetan plateau.

In the absence of any positive response from the Chinese government to my overtures over the years, I am left with no alternative but to appeal to the members of the international community. It is clear now that only increased and concerted international efforts will persuade Beijing to change its policy on Tibet. In spite of immediate negative reactions from the Chinese side, I strongly believe that such expressions of international concern and support are essential for creating an environment conducive for the peaceful resolution of the Tibetan problem. On my part, I remain committed to the process of dialogue. It is my firm belief that dialogue and a willingness to look with honesty and clarity at the reality of Tibet can lead us to a viable solution.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the numerous individuals, governments, members of parliaments, non-governmental organizations and various religious orders for their support. The sympathy and support shown to our cause by a growing number of well-informed Chinese brothers and sisters is of special significance and a great encouragement to us Tibetans. I also wish to convey my greetings and express my deep sense of appreciation to our supporters all over the world who are commemorating this anniversary today. Above all I would like to express on behalf of the Tibetans our gratitude to the people and the Government of India for their unsurpassed generosity and support during these past forty years of our exile.

With my homage to the brave men and women of Tibet who have died for the cause of our freedom, I pray for an early end to the sufferings of our people.

The Dalai Lama
March 10, 2000