**TEN REASONS WHY YOU SHOULD SUPPORT SELF-DETERMINATION FOR THE TIBETAN PEOPLE**

1. **TIBET HAS BEEN ILLEGALLY AND FORCIBLY OCCUPIED BY CHINA SINCE 1950**

Prior to 1950, Tibet was an independent sovereign state with a fully functioning government headed by the Dalai Lama. China's invasion of Tibet by 40,000 troops in 1950 was an act of unprovoked aggression. Annexation by force is in violation of Article 2(4) of the United Nations Charter and there was no internationally accepted legal basis for China's claim of sovereignty.

Tibet was indisputably an independent country before the 13th century. Tibet then came under Mongol domination several decades before the Mongols conquered China. During Tibet's 'Second Kingdom,' from 1349 to 1642, Tibet was a secular state free of both Mongol and Chinese control. During the Qing Dynasty until 1911, Chinese troops were garrisoned in Tibet as part of a protectorate "priest-patron" relationship but the Tibetans continued to rule themselves. The Nationalist Government of China attempted to unilaterally assert control over Tibet until 1918 and again beginning in 1931, but was unsuccessful. Tibet expelled the last remaining Chinese representatives in 1949.

As recently as 1914, a treaty was signed by Britain, China and Tibet that formally recognized Tibet as a fully independent country and demarcated Tibet's borders. The 17-Point Agreement of 1951, which the People's Republic of China (PRC) claims resolved Tibet's status, was signed under the threat of violence and is not considered legally valid.

The State of Tibet continues, despite the illegal occupation, through the existence and activities of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile. The Dalai Lama remains the Head of State with executive functions organized under the cabinet, or Kashag.

2. **THE HUMAN COST TO THE TIBETAN PEOPLE IS OF TRAGIC PROPORTIONS**

The International Commission of Jurists concluded in its 1959 and 1960 reports that there was a prima facie case of genocide committed by the Chinese upon the Tibetan nation. Reprisals for the 1959 National Uprising against the Chinese occupation alone involved the "elimination" of 87,000 Tibetans. Tibetan exiles claim that 430,000 died during the uprising and the subsequent 15 years of guerrilla warfare.

A total of some 1.2 million Tibetans are estimated to have been killed as a result of Chinese actions since 1950 including up to 260,000 people who have died in prisons and labor camps between 1950 and 1984. Over 110,000 Tibetans have left Tibet to seek sanctuary in other countries.

Since 1987, some 3,000 people are believed to have been detained for political offences in Tibet, many of them for writing letters, distributing leaflets or talking to foreigners. Any
expression of opinion contrary to Chinese Communist Party ideology can result in arrest. As of January 2004, 145 known Tibetans remain in Chinese prisons or detention centers because of their political views. Of these, nine are women. Two thirds of the prisoners are nuns, monks, former monks or reincarnate lamas.

Those detained are often denied legal representation. The Chinese have refused to allow independent observers to attend so-called public trials. Prison sentences are regularly decided before the trial. Fewer than 2% of cases are won by the defense. A political prisoner in Tibet can now expect an average sentence of 6.5 years. Possessing an image of the Tibetan national flag can lead to beatings and a seven-year jail term.

Detailed accounts show that the Chinese conducted a systematic campaign of torture against Tibetan dissidents in prison from March 1989 to May 1990. Despite China having ratified a number of UN conventions, including those relating to torture, women, children and racial discrimination, Chinese authorities in Tibet still repeatedly violate these conventions. Beatings and torture are regularly used against virtually all political detainees and prisoners today.

3. **THE REPRESSION OF THE TIBETAN PEOPLE IN THEIR OWN LAND CONTINUES TO THIS DAY AND COMPOUNDS THE ILLEgitMACY OF THE CHINESE RULE**

The PRC’s government in Tibet was imposed on the Tibetans by force, not by an exercise of self-determination. Moreover, a government’s legitimacy derives from its conduct in accordance with its obligation to protect and promote the fundamental human rights of all its people, without discrimination. This requires that the government’s authority not only be based on the will of the governed, but on the guarantee of political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights applied equally to the governed population.

China, however, has persistently and systematically abused the rights of Tibetans through religious repression, population transfer, birth control policies, discrimination, destruction of the environment, involuntary disappearances, arbitrary arrest, torture and arbitrary extra-judicial executions.

A state that does not protect and promote these rights, but instead, as China is doing in Tibet today, represses the people, economically exploits them and enforces policies that destroy their culture, cannot claim to be a legitimate government of the Tibetan people.

4. **CHINA DENIES THE TIBETAN PEOPLE’S RIGHT TO DEMOCRATICALLY ELECT THEIR OWN POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVES**

By the 17-Point Agreement of 1951, China undertook not to interfere with Tibet's existing system of government and society, but never kept these promises in eastern Tibet and in 1959 reneged on the treaty altogether. China has renamed two out of Tibet's three provinces, Kham and Amdo, as parts of the Chinese provinces of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan, and renamed the remaining province of U'Tsang as the Tibet Autonomous...
Region (TAR). There is no evidence to support China’s claim that the TAR is autonomous: all local legislation is subject to the approval of the central government in Beijing; all local government is subject to the regional party, which in Tibet has never been run by a Tibetan. Tibetans must pledge their allegiance to the Chinese government.

China, in violation of the norms set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) established by the United Nations, deprives the Tibetan people of their right to democratically elect its political representatives. In particular the UDHR provides for the right: "... to take part in the government of one’s country directly or through freely chosen representatives" and "the will of the people shall be the basis of that authority of the government."

5. **The Use of the Chinese Language in Tibetan Schools and as the Effective Official Language of Tibet Represses Tibetan Culture and Has Marginalized Many Tibetans**

All secondary school classes for Tibetan children are taught in Chinese and Chinese culture is emphatically promoted. Tibetan students suffer from prohibitive and discriminatory fees and inadequate facilities in rural areas. Many Tibetan children are sent away to China for education, usually for a period of seven years. Although English is a requirement for most university courses, Tibetan students cannot learn English unless they forfeit study of their own language.

Since 1994, the Chinese have strengthened their drive to re-educate young Tibetans about their cultural past at all levels of Tibetan education. A distorted history program is used which omits all references to an independent Tibet. At school, no unrehearsed discussion of Tibetan cultural, religious and social issues is allowed. Party positions must actively be upheld.

Early on, Chinese replaced Tibetan as the official language of Tibet. Despite official statements, there has been no practical change in this policy. Without an adequate command of Chinese, Tibetans find it difficult to get work in the state sector. Such discriminatory and colonial policies allow the Chinese authorities to give job preference and other advantages to Chinese settlers, under the pretext that Tibetans are under-qualified.

The Chinese authorities have imposed policies that make the Tibetan language redundant or secondary in all sectors. The result is both the progressive disappearance of Tibetan culture as well as the marginalization of Tibetans in economic, educational, political and social spheres to the point where they are becoming second-class citizens in their own land.
6. **TIBETANS ARE AGGRESSIVELY PREVENTED FROM FREELY PURSUING THEIR RELIGIOUS PRACTICES**

In 1960, the International Commission of Jurists found that: "Acts of genocide had been committed in Tibet in an attempt to destroy the Tibetans as a religious group." Religious practice was forcibly suppressed until 1979, and up to 6,000 monasteries and countless religious artifacts were destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. Today, the Chinese authorities closely monitor the activities of the remaining and rebuilt monasteries through a police presence.

The 1982 Constitution of the People's Republic of China guarantees freedom of religious belief, but China restricts the numbers of monks and nuns entering Tibetan monasteries and forbids initiates under 18. After serving arbitrary sentences imposed for pro-independence activities, nuns and monks released from prison are frequently banned from rejoining their monasteries.

In 1995, the Chinese authorities rejected the six-year-old boy recognized by the Dalai Lama as the 11th Panchen Lama, the reincarnation of Tibet’s second-ranking spiritual leader, and selected and installed their own Panchen Lama. The Chinese have admitted holding the boy and his family in “protective custody”. Despite international efforts, their location is still unknown and their condition remains uncertain.

In 1996 the "Strike Hard" campaign was initiated, specifically targeting Tibetan Buddhism. This campaign has been vehemently pursued in recent years. Between 1996 and 1998, 492 monks and nuns were arrested and 9,977 expelled from their religious institution by the Chinese. Attempts have been made to discredit the spiritual authority of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Possessing an image of the Dalai Lama is today illegal in Tibet and China recently declared Tibet to be non-Buddhist.

7. **CHINESE POLICIES HAVE ENCOURAGED CHINESE SETTLERS TO THE POINT WHERE TIBETANS HAVE BECOME A MINORITY IN MANY AREAS OF TIBET**

Beijing has admitted a policy of deliberately encouraging Chinese immigrants to settle on a long-term basis in Tibet. The aim of the Western China Development Program launched in 1999 is to create the infrastructure to facilitate the exploitation of the vast natural resources of Tibet and to encourage hundreds of thousands of unemployed Chinese workers to migrate to the inhabited areas of Tibet. This state-sanctioned population transfer is in violation of Article 49 of the 4th Geneva Convention.

The initial influx of Chinese nationals destabilized the Tibetan economy. Forced agricultural modernizations led to extensive crop failures and Tibet's first recorded famine (1960-1962), in which 340,000 Tibetans died. Tibetan farms and grazing lands have been confiscated and incorporated into collectivized and communal farms.

Resettlement of Chinese migrants has placed Tibetans in the minority in many areas, including Lhasa, causing chronic unemployment among Tibetans. Official figures put the
number of non-Tibetans in the TAR at 79,000. Independent research puts the figure at 250,000 to 300,000, and for the whole of Tibet at between 5 and 5.5 million Chinese versus 4.5 million Tibetans. In Kham and Amdo the Chinese outnumber Tibetans many times over.

In addition to putting Tibetans at an economic disadvantage, the continuing migration of massive numbers of Chinese into Tibet progressively erodes the ability of the Tibetan people to hold on to their distinct cultural heritage and ethnic identity.

8. **MAJOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DECISIONS FOR TIBET ARE MADE IN BEIJING AND BENEFIT CHINESE SETTLERS AND OFFICIALS MORE THAN TIBETANS**

The Chinese central government has a stated goal of 10% economic growth per year for the Tibet region. According to the TAR Economic Planning Commission's plan, the main thrust in the 1990s was "the exploitation of mineral resources". Mining and other mineral extraction is the largest economic activity in both the TAR and Amdo provinces. China is also pushing to incorporate Tibet into its new market economy by boosting agricultural output. Traditional barley farming, suited to the climate, is diminishing as new crops favored by the Chinese are introduced.

Unfortunately, Tibetans are not, in general, benefiting from this increasing economic activity. More than 70 per cent of Tibetans in the TAR now live below the poverty line. New jobs and new wealth are largely channeled into Chinese hands. Chinese traders are favored by lower tax assessments. Chinese have the dominant positions in government administration and are paid bonuses for working in Tibet. The Western China Development Program encourages unemployed Chinese workers to migrate to the Tibetan plateau. A railway line being constructed to connect Lhasa and Central Tibet with China's network of rail lines will speed both the influx of these Chinese migrants as well as the extraction of Tibet's mineral reserves.

In 2003, the Los Angeles Times published a report from Tibet called "Tibetans fear strangulation by rail". The report says, "Lhasa already has the look and feel of a Chinese city, with Chinese-style buildings and Chinese billboards proliferating across town. More than half the 200,000 residents here are believed to be Chinese. Even the main boulevard in front of the Dalai Lama's holy Potala Palace is named Beijing Road. Most of the people flocking to the palace are Chinese tourists. Officials hope the new train will bring more of them to boost the local economy."

9. **TIBET’S NATURAL RESOURCES ARE BEING PLUNDERED AND ITS ENVIRONMENT SERIOUSLY IMPERILED WITHOUT REGARD TO THE WISHES OF THE TIBETAN PEOPLE**

China deprives the Tibetan people’s right under UN Resolution 1803 (XVII) 1962 to permanent sovereignty over their natural resources. Deforestation, uncontrolled mining, hydro-electric projects and nuclear waste dumping that seriously imperil the environment
and do not support the interests of the Tibetan people is being carried out with impunity by Beijing and the Chinese authorities in Tibet.

Estimates of deforestation vary, but most reckon that at least half Tibet's natural forest cover has gone since the Chinese occupation. Between 1959 and 1985, the Chinese removed US$54 billion worth of timber from Tibet. An extensive road-building program is now opening up previously inaccessible areas of forest.

The Indian Government reports that there are three active nuclear missile sites in Amdo, and an estimated 300,000 troops are stationed in Tibet today. China's primary nuclear weapons research and design facility was constructed in the Haibei Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai province and designed all of China's nuclear bombs until the mid-1970s. China has admitted dumping high-level nuclear waste on the Tibetan plateau and a 20 square km dump for radioactive pollutants is known to exist near Lake Kokonor.

10. **THE TIBETAN PEOPLE ARE LEGALLY ENTITLED TO SELF-DETERMINATION**

Even if Tibet had not been an independent state in 1950, the Tibetan people are nonetheless legally entitled to exercise their right of self-determination. Article 1(2) of the United Nations Charter declares that its purpose is "to develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principles of equal rights and self-determination of peoples." Chapters IX, XI, XII and XIII of the Charter embody the principles of self-determination and impose obligations on member states to respect peoples' right to self-determination. This right is also set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is widely recognized as customary international law.

The UN General Assembly has declared that "All peoples have the right to freely determine, without external interference, their political status and pursue their economic, social and cultural development, and every State has the duty to respect this right in accordance with provisions of the Charter". The Tibetans are unquestionably a distinct "people" and, in 1961 and again in 1965, the UN General Assembly passed resolutions explicitly recognizing the Tibetan peoples right to self-determination.

**TODAY THE TIBETAN PEOPLE ARE ONE OF THE MOST ENDANGERED ETHNIC COMMUNITIES IN THE 21ST CENTURY.** The Tibetan people, with their distinct culture, religion, language and national identity, face the real and imminent threat of total assimilation and extinction. Tibetans, as a people, have the legal right to determine their political status and to pursue their own economic, social and cultural development. Only the restoration of a government and institutions freely chosen by the Tibetan people will end the abusive human rights practices and policies in Tibet. Through their rightful exercise of self-determination Tibetans have the chance to reclaim control of their own future.