



Get Involved with the Tibetan Freedom Movement

Students For a Free Tibet
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10 Quick Facts About Tibet

- 1. The country of Tibet** was invaded by China in 1949/50. Since that time, over 1.2 million Tibetans have died as a direct 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, was forced to flee Tibet in 1959. He escaped to India along with over 120,000 other Tibetans, and established the Tibetan Government in Exile in Dharamsala. In 1989, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his steadfast dedication to nonviolence.
- 3. Tibet was independent.** Tibet had a sovereign government, currency, postal system, language, laws, and customs. Prior to 1950, the Tibetan government signed treaties with foreign nations including Britain, Mongolia, and Nepal. While the Chinese government claims that Tibet has "always" been part of China, its invasion of Tibet resembles the same imperialist aggression that China accuses other powers of exhibiting.
- 4. The "Tibet Autonomous Region" (TAR) is not Tibet, nor is it autonomous.** The Chinese government has divided historical Tibet into one "region" and several "prefectures" and "counties." The TAR encompasses only the central area and some of the eastern regions of Tibet. Well over half of Tibet's original territory has been absorbed into Chinese provinces. "Autonomous" is a euphemism for direct control by Beijing.
- 5. In Tibet today**, the basic freedoms of speech, religion, and assembly are strictly limited, and arbitrary arrests continue. According to human rights groups, there are currently hundreds of political prisoners in Tibet, including the young Panchen Lama, imprisoned since age six. Torture of political prisoners is commonplace.
- 6. The Chinese government's** policies of cultural assimilation and population transfer of ethnic Chinese into Tibet threaten the very survival of the Tibetan identity. Chinese colonists outnumber Tibetans in most urban areas and many rural areas, making Tibetans a minority in their own nation. Meanwhile, thousands of Tibetans continue to flee from Tibet every year, making the treacherous journey over the Himalayas and into the uncertain world of exile.
- 7. Historical Tibet was a vast country**, whose area was roughly equal to Western Europe. Tibet is the source of five of Asia's largest rivers, which provide the lifeblood for 2 billion people. China has endangered Tibet's fragile environment through strip-mining, nuclear waste dumping, and extensive deforestation.
- 8. Although the Chinese government claims to have developed Tibet**, most good jobs benefit Chinese colonists, not Tibetans. Tibetans have little or no say in how their country is developed. China has spent millions of dollars building infrastructure in Tibet, but neglected education and healthcare, and many of the roads, buildings, and power plants that have been built directly support heavy militarization of the plateau, allowing China to maintain Tibet as a police state.
- 9. China is aggressively seeking foreign investment** for its "Go West" campaign in Tibet, East Turkestan, and other occupied areas. China is trying to use international funds to develop Tibet as a resource extraction colony and consolidate control over the region. Foreign investment in Chinese companies gives legitimacy to China's colonization of Tibet, and the exploitative projects they fund do not benefit Tibetans.
- 10. The world community has done very little** to address the core issue of China's illegal occupation of Tibet. China represents a gigantic market and cheap labor force, and its associated businesses have such a strong lobby that politicians are reluctant to take any substantive measures against the Chinese government. Since western countries adopted policies of so-called "constructive engagement" with China in the 1990s, the human rights situation in Tibet has drastically deteriorated. In order for this to change, world governments must take decisive action to pressure China into respecting human rights and ending its occupation of Tibet.



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Human Rights in China — hrchina.org

UN Human Rights Council — ohchr.org

Human Rights Watch — hrw.org/asia/china-and-tibet

Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy — tchrd.org