Alarmed by continuing human rights violations and lack of democratic freedom in Tibet, the Canada Tibet Committee (CTC) was founded in 1987 as an independent non-governmental organization (NGO) of Tibetans and non-Tibetans living in Canada. The CTC seeks to end the ongoing destruction of the Tibetan culture, alleviate the suffering of the Tibetan people, and restore Tibet to its status as an independent state within the family of nations.

The Committee is committed to the principle of non-violence and recognizes the Tibetan Government-in-Exile as the legitimate representative of the Tibetan people.

The CTC offers concerned Canadians an opportunity to work with their Tibetan friends to promote public awareness. Our founding members laid out basic principles which form the framework for the organization today. These principles include: the commitment to non-violence, a spirit of volunteerism, the inclusion of Tibetans in the decision-making process and the goal of Tibetan independence.

The CTC presents a unified voice for the Tibetan movement in Canada with the federal and provincial governments. Working relationships have developed with officials at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, CIDA, the Department of Immigration, and Heritage Canada. The CTC participates annually in government consultations on human rights and facilitates meetings between Tibetan representatives visiting Canada and government officials.

At the Parliamentary level, we initiated Canadian Parliamentary Friends of Tibet (PFT) in 1989. The PFT now numbers some 30 members of Parliament and senators from all parties. The PFT issued the invitation to His Holiness the Dalai Lama for his first Ottawa visit in 1990, facilitated two parliamentary hearings on Tibet, and has hosted several receptions and events in Ottawa. PFT members speak at Tibet rallies and participate in letter-writing campaigns. PFT member Senator Consiglio Di Nino sits on the World Parliamentarians’ Convention on Tibet. The CTC also works in partnership with other Canadian NGOs who share common goals, including human rights, health, women’s, indigenous and environmental organizations.

Internationally, the CTC participates in activities coordinated by the Canadian Network for International Human Rights (NIHR) and the International Tibet Support Network (ITSN). As a member of the NIHR, the CTC receives information regarding the activities of the
United Nations, the OECD, the World Trade Organization and Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum. We participate in joint NIHR programs such as urgent actions, letter campaigns, public statements and preparatory work for United Nations' conferences and government consultations.

The CTC administers World Tibet News, a global electronic communication system designed to serve the Tibet support community. It also publishes the “Canada Tibet Newsletter”, distributed across the country and to Canadian MPs twice a year.

There are five branches of the CTC across Canada. Branches organize rallies, lecture series, film festivals, cultural events and more. The goal of our grassroots activities is to develop a base of support at the community level which in turn supports national and international campaigns.

As the CTC enters our twentieth year of activities, projects are pursued by a young and dynamic membership. With their efforts and with the compassion and guidance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Tibet will once again become a “zone of peace”, an independent state valuing universal responsibility welcomed into the international community of nations.

The CTC is funded entirely by private donations, special events and our membership campaign.
• In 1895, Canadian missionary Dr. Susie Rijnhart became the first western woman to enter Tibet. Her attempt to reach Lhasa ended in failure with the death of her husband and infant son. Years later, she died in Tibet.

• In 1960, 1961, and 1965, Canada voted Yes for United Nations General Assembly Resolutions 1353, 1723, and 2079, which called for the end of practices that deprive the Tibetan people of their human rights and freedoms.

• In 1971 and 1972, over two hundred Tibetan refugees were admitted to Canada from India under a new government program.

• In 1980, His Holiness the Dalai Lama visited Canada for the first time. He was met by the Governor General. He did not meet with the Prime Minister of Canada.

• In 1990, five representatives from the Canadian House of Commons and the Senate issued a joint invitation for the Dalai Lama to visit Ottawa in the fall of 1990. These five representatives then formed the Canadian Parliamentary Friends of Tibet.

• On 28 May 1990, Canadian Ambassador to China (Diller) became the first representative of a foreign power to visit Tibet since the imposition of martial law. The visit included the signing of agreements for Canadian assistance to Tibet.

• In October 1990, the Dalai Lama visited Ottawa for the first time. Secretary of State for Multiculturalism, Gerry Weiner greeted the Dalai Lama on the government’s behalf. During the visit, His Holiness was invited to speak to the Parliamentary Committee on External Affairs and International Trade, at which time his Five Point Peace Plan was tabled.

• After the 1990 visit, Canada’s position on Tibet’s political status was amended to: “In 1970 when Canada established diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China, it recognized the PRC as the sole legitimate government of China. Canada takes no position with regard to specific Chinese territorial claims; it neither challenges nor endorses them.”

• On 12 May 1993, the Parliamentary Sub-Committee on Human Rights and Development held a hearing on the current situation in Tibet.
In June 1993, the Dalai Lama visited Montreal and Vancouver where he offered Buddhist teachings. He was met by Canada’s Minister of External Relations Barbara McDougall. He did not meet with the Prime Minister Brian Mulroney.

On 14 June 1995, the Senate of Canada passed a resolution on the situation in Tibet, urging Canada to encourage negotiations between China and representatives of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile.

In 1996, Canada de-linked the promotion of human rights from its trade promotion initiatives, with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade stating “the recent Canadian government decision is not to tie its economic relationship with China to the question of human rights”.

In 1997, with the establishment of Canada’s Bilateral Human Rights Dialogue with China agreement, Canada’s position on Tibet was modified as follows: “When Canada established diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China in 1970, we recognized the PRC as the sole legitimate government of China. Canada does not recognize the Tibetan Government-in-Exile led by the Dalai Lama based in Dharamsala, India.”

In November 1999, the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT) conducted its first official visit to the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR).

In December 1999, CIDA announced its first bilateral development assistance project in the Tibet Autonomous Region. The Tibetan Government-in-Exile was not consulted.

In June 2000, DFAIT’s Secretary of State for Asia-Pacific Raymond Chan made an official visit to Tibet, the first ever by a Canadian official at the ministerial level.

On 30 January 2001, more than 80 members of Parliament wrote to Prime Minister Jean Chrétien asking that his office intervene with China in an effort to convene negotiations with representatives of the Dalai Lama regarding Tibet.

In September 2002, while the Dalai Lama’s Envoys were in Beijing to re-open the stalled Tibet-China dialogue, Prime Minister Chrétien endorsed “China’s Tibet Cultural Week” by the Central Government’s External Propaganda Department. Promotional
materials referred to the Dalai Lama as a man “who engages in terrorist activities” and has “organized armed forces”.

• In January 2003, the Government of Canada, via its embassy in Beijing, submitted a formal expression of concern to Chinese authorities following the execution of Lobsang Dhondup and death sentence of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche.

• In February 2004, the Canadian International Development Agency released a new policy framework prioritizing China’s “western regions” for its development assistance projects. The framework focuses on poverty alleviation through support for equitable growth, sustainability, human rights and democratic development.

• In March 2004, the Canada Tibet Committee launched a letter writing campaign to the Prime Minister of Canada to be signed by Members in the House of Commons to support an active Canadian role for the Tibet/China negotiations.

• By April 2004, the Tibet-China Negotiation Campaign (TCNC) received support from more than 150 MPs. The campaign’s objective was to encourage the Prime Minister of Canada to broker a negotiated solution between representatives of the Dalai Lama and China for the peaceful resolution of the Tibetan issue. The campaign ultimately surpassed its goal by having a majority of the MPs (159) sign the letter.

• On 22 April 2004, the Dalai Lama visits Parliament Hill.


• In May 2004, the Canada Tibet Committee made presentations to the Subcommittee on Human Rights and International Trade of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade.

• On 26 July 2004, at the National Press Club in Ottawa, Champa Phuntsok, Governor of Tibet Autonomous Region, extended an invitation to Parliamentary Friends of Tibet Co-chair Hon. David Kilgour for a Canadian Parliamentary Delegation to travel to Tibet with unrestricted access.

• On 30 November 2004, Parliamentary Friends of Tibet adopt a constitution.

• On 2 December 2004, adoption of motions in the Senate and at the Subcommittee of Human Rights and International Trade requesting that “Canada uses its friendly relations with China to urge it to enter into meaningful negotiations, without preconditions, with representatives of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to peacefully resolve the issue of Tibet.

• In December 2004, The Hon. Pierre Pettigrew, Minister of Foreign Affairs, makes a public statement requesting China stop the execution of Tibetan Monk Tenzin Delek Rinpoche.

• On 10 March 2005, statements were read in the House of Commons and Senate concerning Tibet.

• On 21 April 2005, first year anniversary celebrations to honour the visit of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. More than 200 Members of Parliament wore Tibetan scarves Khatas in the House of Commons.

• In June 2005, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs passed a motion to request Ministers Pierre Pettigrew and David Emerson, and officials of Bombardier to appear at Committee hearings concerning the Tibetan Railway Project.

• In September 2005, Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin, in a joint Press Conference with President Hu Jintao of the People’s Republic of China, raised the issue of Tibet and specifically encouraged talks between representatives of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and China.

• On Friday, 23 June 2006, the House of Commons unanimously awarded the Dalai Lama Honorary Canadian Citizenship. This was only the third time in history that Parliament has bestowed this honour, with Nelson Mandela and Raoul Wallenberg being the other two recipients of this honorary citizenship.
• In September 2006, the Dalai Lama visited Vancouver to host the Vancouver Dialogues 2006 – the first in a series of dialogues sponsored by the Dalai Lama Center for Peace and Education.

• February 2007, the House of Common’s unanimously passed a motion to “urge the Government of the People’s Republic of China and representatives of Tibet’s government in exile, notwithstanding their differences on Tibet’s historical relationship with China, to continue their dialogue in a forward-looking manner that will lead to pragmatic solutions that respect the Chinese constitutional framework, the territorial integrity of China and fulfill the aspirations of the Tibetan people for a unified and genuinely autonomous Tibet.”

• From 28 October to 1 November 2007, the Dalai Lama visits Ottawa and Toronto. His visit includes an historic official meeting with Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper on Parliament Hill.
Invaded by China in 1949, Tibet has suffered the loss of life, freedoms and human rights under communist Chinese domination. In March 1959, an uprising against the Chinese occupation in Tibet was crushed and the Dalai Lama, Tibet’s temporal and spiritual leader, was forced to escape into exile in India, followed by 80,000 Tibetans. The Dalai Lama now heads the Tibet Government-in-Exile in India.

• More than one million Tibetans – a sixth of the population – have died as a result of the occupation.
• Tibetans are now a minority in their own country due to the continuous influx of Chinese immigrants.
• Tibetans are imprisoned and routinely tortured for religious practice and resistance to the occupation.
• More than 6,000 monasteries have been looted and demolished.
• The Tibetan plateau ecosystem, as well as wildlife and forests, have been devastated for Chinese profit.
• Tibet has been used as a site for production of nuclear weapons.

Tibet’s legal status

When Chinese troops first entered Tibet, it was generally accepted that Tibet met the conditions of statehood under international law; there was a people, a territory and a government that functioned in that territory, conducting its own domestic affairs free from any outside authority. Foreign relations were conducted exclusively by the Government of Tibet and countries with which Tibet had foreign relations are shown by official documents to have treated it as an independent state. Tibet maintained diplomatic, economic and cultural relations with countries such as Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Mongolia, China, British India, Russia and Japan.

Tibet’s independent foreign policy is perhaps most obviously demonstrated by the country’s neutrality during World War II. Despite strong pressure to allow passage of military supplies through Tibet, Tibet held fast to its neutrality, which the Allies were compelled to respect.
Tibet was a de facto independent State when, under duress, it signed the 17 Point Agreement in 1951, surrendering its independence to China. As the provisions of the agreement were subsequently violated by China, the Government of Tibet was entitled to repudiate the agreement, as it did in 1959. Tibetans are now a people under foreign subjugation, entitled under international law to the right to self-determination by which they freely determine their political status. The Tibetan people have not yet exercised this right, which requires a free and genuine expression of their will.

People, culture and religion

Even today, China sees Tibetan religion and culture as a threat to its authority. In 1994 and 2001, China called for an array of measures to wipe out the vestige of Tibetan religion. This includes the selection by Beijing of reincarnated Tibetan lamas (monks) including the Panchen Lama, the second highest religious figure in Tibetan Buddhism. The boy recognized by the Dalai Lama as the Panchen Lama has been missing, along with his family, since 1995.

Forced to denounce the Dalai Lama, Tibetans must pledge their allegiance to the Chinese government. Failure to do so can result in imprisonment or other forms of punishment. Possessing an image of the Dalai Lama is illegal in Tibet.

Under the guise of economic development, Beijing encourages the migration of Chinese to Tibet. As a result, the remaining six million Tibetans in Tibet are outnumbered by Chinese, who receive preferential treatment in education, jobs and private enterprises.

The occupation of Tibet has seen the Tibetan language surpassed by Chinese. Local government policy is making the language redundant. Tibet’s education system is geared to the needs of the Chinese, with Tibetans suffering from prohibitive and discriminatory fees and inadequate facilities in rural areas. The deprivation of education has forced 10,000 Tibetan children and youths to escape to India for better educational opportunities.
Universal human rights

In 1998, China signed two covenants in the International Bill of Rights, but it is still far from implementing these in China and Tibet. Collective rights abuses continue to challenge the Tibetan people and the future survival of their unique cultural identity. Today, in Tibet:

• Tibetans are subject to arbitrary arrest and detention. Any expression of opinion contrary to Chinese Communist Party ideology can result in arrest and long-term imprisonment.
• Those imprisoned are often denied legal representation and Chinese legal proceedings fail to meet international standards.
• There are Tibetan political prisoners below the age of 18.
• Disappearances, where a person is taken into custody and the details of his or her detention are not disclosed, continue to occur. More than 70% of Tibetans in the “TAR” (Tibet Autonomous Region) now live below the poverty line.

The environment

The illegal occupation of Tibet has been devastating for its environment and that of neighbouring countries. Today, in Tibet:

• China’s economic development plans have seen over 46% of Tibet’s forests indiscriminately destroyed.
• Deforestation has led to increased soil erosion and siltation of rivers, creating major floods and landslides.
• Trophy hunting of endangered species is not monitored. As a result, there are at least 81 endangered species in Tibet.
• Unregulated extraction of minerals such as borax, chromium, copper, gold, and uranium in Tibet is increasing rapidly.
• Tibet has hosted at least 500,000 Chinese troops and up to one quarter of China’s nuclear missile arsenal.
Number of exiled Tibetans

There are approximately 120,000 Tibetans living outside of Tibet: India 91,000; Nepal 15,000; Bhutan 1,600; Switzerland 2,000; Scandinavia 110; other European settlements 640; USA 5,000; Canada 3,000; Japan 60; Taiwan 1,000; Australia and New Zealand, 220.

Head of State

His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama

Tibetan Government-in-Exile (TGIE)

The Tibetan Government-in-Exile was established in April 1959 in Mussoorie, India as the continuation of the independent Government of Tibet. In May 1960, the TGIE was moved to Dharamsala in northwest India. The Tibetan people, both in and outside of Tibet, recognize the TGIE as their sole and legitimate government. It is democratic, with popularly elected members of Parliament and Prime Minister (Kalon Tripa). The Assembly of Tibetan People’s Deputies has 46 members, 43 of whom are elected directly by the exiled population.

Cabinet

The Kashag (Cabinet) is the executive body of the TGIE. Its chair, Kalon Tripa, is elected directly by the exiled population for a term of five years. Under the Kashag are the main departments of Education, Finance, Religion and Culture, Home, Information and International Relations, Security, and Health.

Foreign missions

New Delhi, Kathmandu, New York, London, Paris, Geneva, Budapest, Moscow, Canberra, Tokyo, Pretoria, Taipei and Brussels
Major NGOs

Tibetan Youth Congress www.tibetanyouthcongress.org
Tibetan Women’s Association www.tibetanwomen.org
Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy www.tchrd.org
Rangzen Alliance www.rangzen.net
Gu-chu-sum Movement www.guchusum.org

Tibetans in Canada

Between 1971 and 1972, Canada admitted 228 Tibetan refugees under the Tibetan Refugee Program, with settlement programs in Quebec, Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia. There are now roughly 3,000 Tibetan-Canadians, with the majority (about 2,000) living in the Greater Toronto Area and smaller communities in Quebec, Alberta and British Columbia. All of the Tibetan communities in Canada have established active community and cultural associations.
In 1951, one year after Chinese troops first entered Central Tibet, a delegation of Tibetan officials was sent to Beijing in an effort to negotiate a solution to the conflict. There, they were forced, under threat of full-scale invasion, to sign the Seventeen-Point Agreement. The agreement outlined the terms through which Tibet was to cede control over its external affairs to China. Under international law, agreements between states are considered to be null and void if they are the result of coercion or threat. Within days, the Tibetan government in Lhasa withdrew from the terms and conditions of the Seventeen-Point Agreement.

Although Beijing authorities have never recognized the Tibetan government’s withdrawal from the Agreement and continue to insist that it remains in effect, they have at the same time systematically violated all its provisions. Between 1951 and 1959, the number of Chinese troops in Tibet increased steadily and Chinese officials took over control by force. In March 1959, the situation erupted into full-scale revolt.

After establishing his Government-in-Exile, he began a long and tireless effort to initiate dialogue with Beijing in order to end the conflict and suffering in his homeland.

The Autonomy Solution: China’s System of “Regional Ethnic Autonomy” in Theory

Under China’s “Regional Ethnic Autonomy” framework, autonomy status is granted to ethnic “minorities” living in compact communities. Features of this status are outlined in the Constitution, and the Law on Regional Ethnic autonomy which constitute primary sources of autonomy rights in China. Autonomous status exists not only in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), but also in large areas of neighbouring provinces on the Tibetan Plateau including Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu, and Yunnan.

Shortcomings of the Regional Autonomy System

Regional ethnic autonomy has proven to be aspirational in nature. Autonomous areas are subordinate to the central government, must seek approval for passage of regulations, and are obliged to place the interests of the state above their own. Implementation of autonomy in Tibet has been hobbled by inadequate government funds, neglect or corruption at the local level, and racial discrimination directed at Tibetans. Even when
Tibetans are in positions of nominal authority, they are often shadowed by more senior Chinese officials. The racial divide is especially apparent in the powerful Chinese Communist Party which oversees all local bureaucracies.

In the TAR, social and economic policy is largely set by central authorities, while other Tibetan areas are subordinate to non-autonomous provinces within which they exist. There is no explicit legal recourse available for violations of autonomy rights. Further, unimpeded migration by non-Tibetans undermines the viability of the entire autonomy framework.

Under China’s occupation, Tibetans have faced ongoing deprivation of rights including their right to self-determination. Meanwhile, their distinct cultural, linguistic, and religious identity is threatened by a deluge of Chinese migration and an array of assimilationist policies. Finding a durable safeguard to these threats are intimately linked with the efforts of Tibet’s exiled leader, the 14th Dalai Lama.

**Recent Moves Towards Negotiation**

Since the late 1980s, the Dalai Lama has specifically and repeatedly called for meaningful autonomy for Tibetans. In his 2006 annual statement in commemoration of the Tibetan National Uprising on March 10th, he said “I have stated time and again that I do not wish to seek Tibet’s separation from China, but that I will seek its future within the framework of the Chinese constitution.”

In September 2002, the Dalai Lama’s Special Envoy, Mr. Lodi Gyari, traveled to several locations in China and Tibet including Beijing and Lhasa with a four-member delegation. The primary objective of the visit was to “re-establish direct contact with the leadership in Beijing and to create a conducive atmosphere enabling direct face-to-face meetings on a regular basis in the future; and to explain His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s Middle Way Approach towards resolving the issue of Tibet.”


Talks have yet to produce agreements of substance, and Chinese political attacks on the
Dalai Lama persist.

Nonetheless, Beijing may also be posturing to maximize concessions before serious negotiations begin. Indeed Mr. Gyari has noted that the Chinese now acknowledge that unresolved questions exist: “In the past, they just [said]: ‘there is no issue of Tibet, Tibetans have been happy to be liberated.’” In a statement released after the 2006 meeting in China, he stated that, “our Chinese counterparts made clear their interest in continuing the present process and their firm belief that the obstacles can be overcome through more discussions and engagements.” Following the sixth and latest round of dialogue in June, Gyari stated, “Our dialogue process has reached a critical stage. We conveyed our serious concerns in the strongest possible manner on the overall Tibetan issue and made some concrete proposals for implementation if our dialogue process is to go forward.”

The Dalai Lama’s Current Position

In recent years the Dalai Lama has emphasized cultural, environmental, and religious protections over political and economic concerns. In a statement made March 10 2007, he said, “it is true that the Chinese constitution guarantees national regional autonomy to minority nationalities. The problem is that it is not implemented fully, and thus fails to serve its express purpose of preserving and protecting the distinct identity, culture and language of the minority nationalities.”

His current position reflects a renewed approach, addressing key Chinese concerns:

1. Demilitarization: He has said that Tibet’s demilitarization was not a demand but a goal to be aspired to.

2. Settlers: The removal of non-Tibetans has not been called for.

3. Borders: The rewriting of Tibet’s borders to extend it beyond the Tibet Autonomous Region (created in 1965) to Tibetan autonomous areas (as designated by China) in Sichuan, Yunnan, Gansu, and Qinghai provinces is no longer a demand. However, autonomy is still sought for all Tibetans. The Tibetans define Tibet as ethnographic Tibet, covering all Tibetan areas within the People’s Republic of China located on the Tibetan Plateau.
4. Historic independence: He has not conceded Tibet’s history of independence, but has emphasized the need to put aside differences in historical views. It is an unhelpful issue which should not prevent progress towards solutions.

Whatever its ultimate form, autonomy is endorsed by the Central Tibetan Administration (Tibetan Government-in-Exile) in Dharamsala, India, though it is not universally supported by Tibetans, many of whom remain committed to independence for Tibet.

China’s Tibet Policy is not Irreversible

According to a United States government report on the status of Tibet negotiations, released in April 2007, a lack of resolution to the issue “leads to greater tensions inside China and will be a stumbling block to fuller political and economic engagement with the United States and other nations.” On October 26, a European Commission statement said the “EU has consistently taken the view that establishing a direct dialogue between the Dalai Lama and the Chinese authorities was the only realistic way to find a peaceful and lasting solutions to the questions of Tibet.”

Certainly, redressing over 50 years of Chinese nation-building on Tibetan lands poses a considerable challenge. Yet the notion that China cannot be moved towards fundamental change over the issue is erroneous. In recent years China has conditioned its willingness to engage with the Dalai Lama on his recognition of both Tibet and Taiwan as inalienable parts of China, but leaders from Hu Yaobang, Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin, and now Hu Jintao have all intimated the possibility of compromise.

A grant of genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people with the Dalai Lama’s approval would establish a more substantial veneer of legitimacy to China’s claim to being a stable, multi-ethnic state. While the occupation army has long since evolved into a constabulary force, the cost of maintaining a police state on the Plateau is not without substantial cost to both its national image and financial resources. Finally, as civil society develops within China, a just solution will also forestall the development of widespread domestic criticism over the government’s Tibet policies that can be expected to eventually arise over time.
His Holiness the XIV Dalai Lama

His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, is the exiled temporal leader of Tibet and head of the world’s Tibetan Buddhists. He was born in 1935 to a farming family in a small hamlet located in Taktser, Amdo, northeastern Tibet (now part of Qinghai Province). Born Lhamo Dhondup, His Holiness was recognized at the age of two as the reincarnation of the 13th Dalai Lama, Thubten Gyatso. The Dalai Lamas are believed to be manifestations of Avalokiteshvara or Chenrezig, the Bodhisattva of Compassion and patron saint of Tibet. Bodhisattvas are enlightened beings who have postponed their own nirvana and chosen to take rebirth in order to serve humanity.

Leadership Responsibilities

In 1950 His Holiness was called upon to assume full political power after China’s invasion of Tibet. In 1954, he went to Beijing for peace talks with Mao Zedong and other Chinese leaders, including Deng Xiaoping and Chou Enlai. But finally, in 1959, with the brutal suppression of the Tibetan national uprising in Lhasa by Chinese troops, His Holiness was forced to escape into exile. Since then he has been living in Dharamsala, northern India, the seat of the Tibetan political administration in exile, the Central Tibetan Administration.

Democratisation Process

In 1990, reforms called for by His Holiness for greater democratization of the exile administration were put into place. Exile Tibetans on the Indian sub-continent and in more than 33 other countries elected 46 members to the expanded Eleventh Assembly of Tibetan People’s Deputies (Tibetan Parliament in Exile) on a one-person one-vote basis. The Assembly elected the new members of the cabinet (the Kashag).

In September 2001, a further major step in democratisation was taken when the Tibetan electorate directly elected the Kalon Tripa, the senior-most minister of the Cabinet. The Kalon Tripa in turn appointed his own cabinet who had to be approved by the Tibetan Assembly. In Tibet’s long history, this was the first time that the people elected the political leadership of Tibet.
Peace Initiatives and Calls for Autonomy, not Independence

In September 1987 His Holiness proposed the Five Point Peace Plan for Tibet in Washington, DC as the first step towards a peaceful solution to the worsening situation in Tibet. He envisaged that Tibet would become a sanctuary; a zone of peace at the heart of Asia, where all sentient beings can exist in harmony and the delicate environment can be preserved. The plan was meant as a basis for discussions with China’s government, but at its heart was an appeal for a high level of autonomy within the People’s Republic of China which has become known as the “Middle Path” approach.

In his 2006 annual statement in commemoration of the Tibetan National Uprising on March 10th, he said “I have stated time and again that I do not wish to seek Tibet’s separation from China, but that I will seek its future within the framework of the Chinese constitution.” In his 2007 March 10th statement, he said, “It is true that the Chinese constitution guarantees national regional autonomy to minority nationalities. The problem is that it is not implemented fully, and thus fails to serve its express purpose of preserving and protecting the distinct identity, culture and language of the minority nationalities.”

Whatever form an agreement ultimately takes, the Dalai Lama is the only leader capable of negotiating a credible and lasting solution with the Government of the People’s Republic of China over the future of Tibet. Tibetans inside Tibet continue to revere him despite decades of central government efforts to undermine his influence.

Universal Recognition

His Holiness the Dalai Lama is one of the great peacemakers of our time. In 1989 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his non-violent struggle for the liberation of Tibet. He has consistently advocated policies of non-violence, even in the face of extreme aggression. He also became the first Nobel Laureate to be recognized for his concern for global environmental problems.

His Holiness has traveled to more than 62 countries spanning six continents. He has met with presidents, prime ministers and crowned rulers of major nations. He has held dialogues with the heads of different religions and many well-known scientists.
In 2006 he was awarded honourary Canadian Citizenship, and on October 17 of that year he received the Congressional Gold Medal in Washington, DC following a high-profile tour of Europe where he was received by several heads of state.

His Holiness describes himself as “a simple Buddhist monk”.