

TESTIMONY OF  
RICHARD GERE  
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS  
INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET  
BEFORE THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EAST ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS  
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Madam Chairman, Senator Murkowski, other Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me here today to speak on the crisis in Tibet.

I am here as the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the International Campaign for Tibet, which advocates on behalf of the rights of Tibetans and a negotiated solution on the future of Tibet. I am also here to introduce and support my longtime friend and colleague, Lodi Gyaltsen Gyari, who serves as lead negotiator with the Chinese government in his role as Special Envoy of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Madam Chairman, it was only six months ago that we gathered here, across the street in the Capitol Rotunda, to witness a most-moving and remarkable historic event – the awarding of the Congressional Gold Medal to His Holiness the Dalai Lama. I was honored and humbled to watch as His Holiness received from the United States Congress its highest recognition for his lifelong devotion to peace, compassion, and non-violence, and for speaking the truth about the condition of his people.

Not only did the ceremony touch me spiritually, it made me deeply proud to be an American and to see the President and Members of Congress, of both parties, standing side by side with the Dalai Lama in unified support of his efforts on behalf of the Tibetan people. By becoming the first American President to appear publicly with His Holiness, President Bush sent a clear signal of his commitment to put the United States on the side of human rights and religious freedom, and to preserve the cultural and linguistic uniqueness of the Tibetan people.

On March 10, a vortex opened up over Tibet: the unleashing of countless layers of frustration and resentment. The unrest inside Tibet, which continues to this day, did not start because of the Beijing Olympics. It was not instigated by the Dalai Lama, no matter what the Chinese authorities have so offensively claimed.

The spontaneous demonstrations and unrest were the direct result of nearly six decades of brutal repression and calculated efforts to control religious practice and attack the very foundations of the Tibetan religious, cultural, and ethnic identity.

The Cultural Revolution is still alive and well inside Tibet.

Since Buddhism took hold in Tibet 1,300 years ago, Tibetans have worked single pointedly to rid themselves of anger, violence, and hatred turning these into the noble expressions of love, compassion, and forgiveness. This is their cultural legacy. But they have been left with so little opportunity and have experienced such brutality for so many years that they have reached the tipping point of despair and hopelessness.

Now the whole world is watching. At the Congressional Gold Medal ceremony, the President expressed his solidarity for the plight of the Tibetan people and embraced the Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and his cause of basic freedoms and human decency in Tibet. Yet, today, when Tibetans are in their greatest moment of need, we have heard only a passing comment from the President.

I was pleased to read the piece that Under Secretary Dobriansky had published in the paper on Monday. Following some previous very public fumbling of this issue, even from the President's top National Security advisor, (*Two Sundays ago on ABC's "This Week", National Security Advisor Steven Hadley commented on the crisis by erroneously mentioning "Nepal" seven times, never once uttering the word "Tibet".*<sup>1</sup>) I was

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<sup>1</sup> "This Week with George Stephanopolous, ABC, April 13, 2008

beginning to wonder how we can trust this Administration to do the right thing when they cannot even find Tibet on a map.

I still am waiting for the President to throw some weight behind this issue and become publicly engaged. We are looking for effective policies that yield results for those who are suffering now.

We are in a tug of war between freedom and repression, survival and extinction. The cycle will not end until we see a negotiated solution grounded in genuine harmony and trust between the Chinese and Tibetan peoples.

Let us not be fooled by the Communist Party's concept of a "harmonious society." We know now that this is a hollow slogan. Genuine peace and stability do not emerge from the barrel of a gun. Genuine harmony between people is based on the ability to speak the truth. This requires dialogue and goodwill, both of which – if we listen to the rhetoric coming out of Beijing -- are in short supply among the Chinese leadership.

We must avoid further alienating the Chinese people, who themselves have been victimized and are governed by the same leaders that are authorizing the crackdown in Tibet. It is desperately important that we ensure that our Chinese brothers and sisters have access to the truth, and we must hope and pray they will take advantage of the opportunity. Of course, we applaud the Chinese for their extraordinary economic success and sense of national achievement. At the same time, we must not fail to take pride in the principles that have made our own nation great, are enshrined in Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and hold in their realization the real promise of world peace. The United States and likeminded nations must do whatever we can to redirect Chinese ambition onto the path of democracy and human rights.

Paradoxically, the present crisis can be seen as an opening to create a framework for the Chinese leadership themselves to initiate a meaningful, results-based dialogue with the Dalai Lama. Surely China's leaders, despite what they say, must realize that His

Holiness, with his unwavering commitment to peace, non-violence, and an autonomous Tibet within the structure of the PRC, is critical to the lasting stability of the region. For Tibetans and for the larger world, only the Dalai Lama can serve as a foundation of legitimacy for Chinese rule.

Key to moving forward is developing a better understanding of the internal political dynamics within the Chinese leadership concerning Tibet. Are there differences of opinion? Are there voices of sanity? One such light in the darkness is the recent resolution signed by over one hundred, very courageous Chinese intellectuals demanding a rethinking of China's Tibet policy and calling for an immediate end to the demonizing of Tibetans and I quote,

“We hold that we must eliminate animosity and bring about national reconciliation, not continue to increase divisions between nationalities. A country that wishes to avoid the partition of its territory must first avoid divisions among its nationalities. Therefore, we appeal to the leaders of our country to hold direct dialogue with the Dalai Lama. We hope that the Chinese and Tibetan people will do away with the misunderstandings between them, develop their interactions with each other, and achieve unity. Government departments as much as popular organizations and religious figures should make great efforts toward this goal.”

End quote.

This gives us tremendous wonder as to how and why, Chinese leaders continue to make such wrong-headed policy decisions that run so counter to their national goals. Are there Communist leaders brave enough to envision a positive resolution in Tibet that will enhance China internally and internationally as a nation of peace, prosperity, and genuine harmony?

The one-party system has created a political culture that does not allow for unwelcome news to move up the chain. Field reports of growing hopelessness, anger, and resentment

inside Tibet, in the cities, in the villages, among the nomads, have had little chance of making it to the desks of top officials.

So it's not hard to imagine that the extent of the uprisings, and the international reaction, have caught them way off guard. We know we are witnessing a complete breakdown of China's Tibet policy. I suspect that leaders in Beijing are coming to realize this too.

If we can learn more about the internal Chinese debate, we can identify opportunities for moving forward on a dialogue that benefits both China and Tibet as their interests are definitely not mutually exclusive.

President Hu Jintao is key to this. This is a defining moment that tests his leadership and offers him a distinct opportunity for greatness. He was Party Chief in the Tibetan Autonomous Region during the 1989 crackdown. His rise to power was propelled by the hard line approach he held at that time. Some have suggested that Hu, with this background, is well-positioned for a "Nixon goes to China" moment on the Tibet question. Let's hope that he has both the courage and the stature to heed the call. American leaders and other heads of state must urge him to seize the critical moment, and remind him of the great lost opportunity for China and its- *and* his- emerging legacy if he does not.

Now, more than ever, instead of blaming the Dalai Lama, Beijing must reflect on the failures of its strategy for Tibet. It is in its own long-term interest to recognize what has led to the current instability, and to engage for the first time with the genuine grievances of the Tibetan people and embrace the Dalai Lama as a partner in earnest dialogue. I urge Congress to vigorously promote policies toward this goal before it's too late.

Finally, I want to express deep appreciation for the political and programmatic support that the U.S. Congress has provided to the Tibetan people. This support – from humanitarian assistance to refugees to Voice of America and Radio Free Asia Tibetan language broadcasts has been crucial and has created a nation of people who still the

United States of America as a beacon of freedom in a sometimes very dark world. Of this support, the American people can be very proud.

Over the years, it has been my pleasure to get to know many Members of Congress and U.S. government officials who work to advance Tibetan issues. Some are long retired, like Senator Claiborne Pell, others like Senator Moynihan, are gone from us. Julia Taft, who held the position of Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues at the State Department has also recently passed away. Just days before her passing, the International Campaign for Tibet awarded Julia its Light of Truth Award for her significant contributions to the public understanding of Tibet and its people. I know Julia also had many friends in the Congress her supported and respected her work to promote the best humanitarian engagement possible by these United States with those less fortunate around the world.

Thank you.