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Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
“The Crisis in Tibet: Finding a Path to Peace”
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Chairman Boxer and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the events in the Tibetan areas of China, and on the prospects for “peace.”

My experience on the Tibetan plateau dates to the mid-1980s, and I have visited many of the areas, towns, and monasteries where today’s protests and crackdown are unfolding. I witnessed at close range the events of 1989 that led to martial law in Lhasa. I know that Tibetans are facing very serious consequences.

The cascade of Tibetan protests began in Lhasa on March 10, 2008, then, by the end of March, had swept across much of the ethnic Tibetan area of China. Except for periods of armed conflict between Tibetan and Chinese armed forces and periods of politically-driven social chaos, no Chinese government has been confronted by an upsurge of Tibetan discontent as widely dispersed, sustained, and popular since the Chinese Communist Party established the People’s Republic of China in 1949. Chinese public security forces, principally the People’s Armed Police (PAP), moved swiftly to establish lockdowns in each protest site.

As of today, the situation in Tibetan protest areas is as grim as it is fluid, and will negatively impact tens of thousands of Tibetans. Chinese security forces and government authorities are sealing off protest areas, cutting communications networks and confiscating communications equipment (including mobile phones and computers). As a result, the flow of information from protest areas is much less now than it was weeks ago. Unconfirmed reports tell of severe abuse and maltreatment to detainees—beating, inadequate food and water, and severe

overcrowding. Authorities reportedly have transferred substantial numbers of detainees away from their areas of residence, often to locations unknown to their families. Very little information is available about the legal process facing thousands of detained Tibetans. Aggressive reimplementation of political indoctrination campaigns is following swiftly in the wake of crushed protests. Reports are emerging of anger at the new campaigns by monks who refuse to comply with demands to condemn the Dalai Lama. A second wave of detentions is taking shape. Authorities compel ordinary Tibetans to assemble publicly, denounce the Dalai Lama, and state that he was behind the protest and riot activity.

A number of issues led to and result from this crisis.

- **Two key factors distinguish the current protests from the March 1959 Lhasa uprising and the March 1989 protests and rioting that led to martial law in Lhasa.** First, the 2008 protests have spread far beyond Lhasa and the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), and into Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures (TAPs) in Qinghai, Gansu, and Sichuan provinces. Second, the protestors have continued to persevere even as Chinese security forces established and tightened lockdowns.
- **The total of officially acknowledged detentions is rising steeply**—but the official figures reflect only the fraction of protests and resultant detentions that Chinese officials wish for observers to see. The actual numbers are far higher. Officials have released no information about the actions of security forces against Tibetan protestors in more than 40 of the counties where peaceful protests reportedly took place.
- **The Chinese leadership chose to blame the Dalai Lama for the protests and for the resulting pre-Olympics news reporting critical of China.** At the same time, they chose not to acknowledge Tibetan dissatisfaction with policies that have not delivered the rights and freedoms nominally protected under China’s Constitution and legal system. Are there Tibetans in exile who set out to encourage protest activity in the run-up to the Olympics? Yes there are, but Chinese officials have provided no evidence that links the Dalai Lama directly to such objectives and activities.
- **Chinese officials also blame the Dalai Lama for Tibetan violence during rioting in Lhasa and in other locations.** They do so by seeking to hold him accountable for the views of individuals and groups in what Chinese authorities call “the Dalai clique.” Are

there Tibetans in exile who acknowledge interest in a violent struggle for Tibetan independence, and who have encouraged destructive action in China during the pre-Olympic period? Yes there are, but the Dalai Lama's actions and public statements, and his consistently pacifist counsel to Tibetans—wherever they live—place him at odds with violent intentions and actions.

- **China's policies toward Tibetans have been the root cause of the protests and riots.** There is no credible evidence to support Chinese government claims that the Dalai Lama (or "the Dalai clique") manipulated Tibetans into protesting and rioting. Communist Party power over China's legislative and regulatory process allows the government virtually unlimited ability to impose unpopular programs among Tibetans. The function and legitimacy of Tibetan Buddhism has been especially hard-hit since 2005.
- **Tibetan protestors, in their widespread calls for Tibetan independence, have provided an unprecedented referendum on China's autonomy system.** Weak implementation of the Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law is a principal factor preventing Tibetans from protecting their culture, language, and religion. The Chinese leadership's refusal to recognize the role of Chinese policy in driving Tibetan discontent, and their insistence on blaming the Dalai Lama, puts the leadership in an increasingly risky position.
- **Tibetans will not accept a Chinese-appointed replacement of the 14th Dalai Lama nor is there any reason to suppose that they will come to terms with Chinese policies.** To assert otherwise, as the Chinese do, is a gross miscalculation that could place local and regional security at heightened risk for decades to come. There can be no prospect for a durable resolution to the current crisis unless the Chinese government implements an ethnic autonomy system that respects the right of ethnic minorities to manage their own affairs, and engages the Dalai Lama in that process.

The surge of events began on the anniversary of the date in 1959 when the 14th Dalai Lama fled People's Liberation Army artillery shells and escaped into exile. When Tibetans learned of their loss, the result was the 1959 Lhasa Uprising. Forty-nine years later, 300 monks of Drepung Monastery attempted to walk to the center of Lhasa, the capital of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). Their protest march was the largest by orders of magnitude since

the current period of Tibetan dissent began in 1987. Security forces halted the monks and turned them back. Hundreds of Sera Monastery monks made a similar attempt the next day and were blocked by security forces. On March 14th a protest in Lhasa's Tibetan quarter turned into a riot that PAP let go unchecked for most of the day. The level of destruction and loss of life surpassed that of the March 1989 Lhasa riots, when President Hu Jintao served as the TAR Party Secretary, and authorities did not put a decisive end to the events until midnight of the third day, when the PLA marched into Lhasa and initiated 14 months of martial law.

The dispersal and persistence of protests even as PAP established and maintained lockdowns distinguishes the 2008 events from those of 1989 and 1959, and makes them more significant. By early April, unofficial sources reported Tibetan protests in more than 50 county-level administrative areas. Nearly two-thirds of the counties are located outside the TAR in Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures (TAPs) that the Chinese government established in Qinghai, Gansu, and Sichuan provinces. The scale of popular participation tests China's assertion that the protests are the result of instigation by "a small handful" of supporters of "the Dalai clique." Most protests and protestors were peaceful, according to unofficial accounts, but in some locations (Lhasa, Aba county in Sichuan, and several counties in Gannan TAP in Gansu) Tibetans attacked government offices, private businesses, and citizens. China's state-run media has focused exclusively on such incidents, broadly characterizing the protests as "riots" and the protestors as "rioters"—a troubling signal that authorities may seek to mask prosecution of peaceful protestors who exercised their basic human rights as justifiable state action against violent criminals. The Tibetan government-in-exile and some advocacy groups, on the other hand, have sometimes described as "peaceful protests" those events during which Tibetans caused property damage and personal injury.

The totals of officially acknowledged detainees are rising steeply, but international onlookers are glimpsing only the incidents and consequences that Chinese officials wish for them to see. In the nine counties where authorities have reported rioting on specific dates between March 14 and March 19, the protests resulted by early April in more than 20 fatalities caused by Tibetan rioters and more than 4,400 persons in police custody after they surrendered

voluntarily for participating in rioting or were detained by police for doing so. At least half of the 4,400 persons had been released by early April, according to official reports.

In more than 40 of the counties where such protests reportedly occurred, Chinese officials have provided no information about the actions of security forces against peaceful Tibetan protestors. Authorities took measures to prevent Tibetans from sharing information about the protests and their consequences including confiscating cell phones and computers in lockdown locations, turning off cellular transmission facilities, and interfering with Internet access, according to unofficial accounts. International journalists and foreign journalists have been barred from entering Tibetan areas. Based on fragmentary, unconfirmed reports, the protests have resulted in more than 140 deaths of Tibetan protestors and an *additional* number of Tibetans detained for peaceful protesting estimated to number in the thousands.

Faced with a choice between blaming the protests on the Dalai Lama, or acknowledging acute Tibetan dissatisfaction with policies that do not deliver the rights and freedoms nominally protected under China's Constitution and legal system, the Chinese leadership blamed the Dalai Lama. Even as protests continued to pop-up in secured areas, the Party-state apparatus moved to restore “stability” by reasserting and strengthening the very policies that stoked Tibetan frustration in the first place. In the most ferocious attack on the Dalai Lama since China's era of economic reform began in 1978, TAR Party Secretary Zhang Qingli, a Hu Jintao protégé who like his mentor served the Communist Youth League and gained field experience in Gansu province, described the Dalai Lama as “an evil spirit with a human face and the heart of a beast.” Aggressive campaigns of “patriotic education” spread through counties where Tibetans had in previous days and weeks used protests to reject the tenets of Party-led indoctrination. Officials confronted monks, nuns, students, farmers, and nomads with demands to sign or thumbprint statements denouncing the Dalai Lama, accept as legitimate the Panchen Lama installed by the Chinese government in 1995 (instead of Gedun Choekyi Nyima, the boy whom the Dalai Lama recognized as the Panchen Lama), and agree that Tibet has been for centuries a part of China.

There are Tibetans in exile who set out to encourage protest activity by Tibetans in China in the run-up to the Olympics, but Chinese officials have provided no evidence that links the Dalai Lama directly to such objectives or activities. Nonetheless, the Chinese government holds the Dalai Lama personally responsible for statements and actions of Tibetan groups that he does not seek to control and that do not seek to be controlled by him, that do not support the Dalai Lama's policies, and that do not have previously-demonstrated capacity to exert significant influence on events in the Tibetan areas of China. China's Ministry of Public Security (MPS) presented in an April 2 Xinhua report "evidence" that "the Dalai clique"—and by extension the Dalai Lama—"masterminded" the March 14 riots in Lhasa, a charge that the government later expanded to include Tibetan rioting in other provinces on other dates. All of the alleged events that the MPS characterized as evidence applied to persons and groups that the report refers to collectively as "the Dalai clique." None of the alleged events that the MPS characterized as evidence showed a direct link to the Dalai Lama.

MPS "evidence" linking the Dalai Lama to the protests and riots focused principally on the Tibetan People's Uprising Movement (TPUM, www.tibetanuprising.org), an alliance formed in January 2008 of five India-based Tibetan groups, chief among them the Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC). TPUM's Web site states that the groups aim to "revive the spirit of the Tibetan national uprising of 1959" and to "seize the Olympic spotlight and shine it on China's shameful repression inside Tibet." The groups seek Tibetan independence and reject the Dalai Lama's Middle Way Approach to accept Tibetan "genuine autonomy" under Chinese sovereignty. TYC President Tsewang Rigzin told the Wall Street Journal on March 20 that he disagrees with the Dalai Lama's policy and observed, "I don't see people out on the streets protesting for a 'Middle Way.'"

There are also Tibetans in exile who acknowledge Tibetan interest in a violent struggle for Tibetan independence, and who have encouraged destructive action in China during the pre-Olympic period, but the Dalai Lama's long-standing policy of nonviolence, and his consistently pacifist counsel to Tibetans, place him at odds with any such intention. Then-TYC President Kalsang Phuntsok said in December 2005 that some TYC members are attracted to "violence-infested movements," such as those in the Middle East, that they see "achieving

results” (Reuters, December 29). In February 2007, former TYC President Lhasang Tsering told approximately 200 Tibetans attending a public forum in India that the Olympics provide an opportunity to sabotage public infrastructure in China during an Olympic count-down when Chinese officials “most need to be well-behaved.” Likening Tibetan activists to “mosquitoes who barge into bedrooms bringing in epidemics,” he told the attendees, “For a committed activist you don’t need CIA’s support to cut a telephone line in Beijing or throw an iron rod on the power cables in Shanghai. These kinds of sabotages can be done by any ordinary person, and can weaken the power from inside. Sometimes the whole city goes dark by one simple but technically correct act.” (<http://www.phayul.com/news/article.aspx?id=15653>). The Dalai Lama, on the other hand, has repeatedly urged Tibetans to refrain entirely from violence. On April 6, he called on Tibetans living in exile to “not engage in any action that could be even remotely interpreted as violent.”

The Chinese government has not provided a convincing argument that the Dalai Lama (or “the Dalai clique”) manipulated Tibetans into protesting and rioting—instead, credible analysis supports the observation that China’s policies toward Tibetans resulted in such actions. Increasing Tibetan resentment against Chinese policies that impact diverse areas of Tibetan life—religious and economic, urban and pastoral—sheds light on why monks, townsfolk, and nomads risked participating in protests across a wide swath of the Tibetan plateau.

The function and legitimacy of Tibetan Buddhism—the core of Tibetan culture—has been especially hard-hit since 2005. New legal measures closely regulating monastic life in the TAR took effect in January 2007. Nationwide measures establishing state supervision of the centuries-old Tibetan tradition of identifying, seating, and educating boys whom Tibetans believe are reincarnations of Buddhist teachers took effect last September. The government can use such legal measures to remold Tibetan Buddhism to suit the state. The anti-Dalai Lama and patriotic education campaigns antagonize Tibetans in general, but they are especially harmful to Tibetans who regard the Dalai Lama, in his capacity as the spiritual leader of the Gelug tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, as their guide on the Buddhist path toward enlightenment. Zhang Qingli, since his arrival in the TAR in November 2005, has raised the Party’s attack against the Dalai Lama to a post-Cultural Revolution high.

The Qinghai-Tibet railway, a premier project of Great Western Development program, entered service in July 2006 and is reconfiguring the economic and employment outlook for Tibetans in Lhasa and nearby urban centers. Based on Congressional-Executive Commission on China analysis of fragmentary and sometimes contradictory official information, more than a half million railway passengers, most of whom are likely to be ethnic Han, may have traveled during to the TAR during the first 18 months of operation to seek work, trade, and business opportunities. The railway's impact could overwhelm Tibetans and sharply increase pressure on the Tibetan culture. Another state-run program to settle Tibetan nomads into compact communities is nearing completion throughout Tibetan areas, and has resulted in severe disruption to an important sector of the Tibetan culture and economy. Nomads have participated in the recent protests in substantial numbers, placing some counties on the protest map for the first time since 1987.

Communist Party control over China's legislative, governmental, and policymaking process, as well as contradictory provisions in Chinese laws and regulations, support the government's unrestricted ability to implement unpopular programs among Tibetans. A core failure of the legal framework is the weak implementation of China's Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law (REAL), the state's principal legal instrument for managing the affairs of ethnic minorities. The REAL declares in its Preamble that the practice of autonomy conveys the state's "full respect for and guarantee of ethnic minorities' right to administer their internal affairs." In practice, the right of Tibetans to protect their culture, language, and religion, and to manage policy implementation on issues such as economic development and the environment, is extremely circumscribed, if not negligible. Instead, the government prioritizes economic development programs that drive economic growth at a brisk rate, such as Great Western Development, but the Han population benefits disproportionately because much of the funding is channeled into infrastructure construction and urban development.

Tibetan protestors, in their widespread calls for Tibetan independence, have provided an unprecedented referendum on China's autonomy system. Did they speak for the Tibetan majority who kept silent (and safe)? In a society without a free press, and in which opposition to

Party policy can lead to imprisonment, no one can know for certain. By systematically failing to implement the REAL's core commitment to allow ethnic minorities to run their own internal affairs, the Party has demonstrated to Tibetans that their cultural outlook under the status quo is bleak. Ironically, the Party has undercut the Dalai Lama's campaign to persuade Tibetans to set aside the goal of independence and instead accept "genuine autonomy" under Chinese sovereignty. Many believe the Dalai Lama is the only person sufficiently influential among Tibetans to prove himself a decisive factor in working with the Chinese leadership to transform ethnic autonomy into an enduring success.

The Chinese leadership's refusal to recognize the role of Chinese policy in driving Tibetan discontent, and their insistence on blaming the Dalai Lama, places the leadership in an increasingly risky position. If the leadership were to take advantage of the Dalai Lama's offer to help lead Tibetans toward compromise, then hardliners would cast it as capitulation. In such circumstances, the leadership would recoil and back away from compromise in an attempt to preserve its power unchallenged. Instead, the Party has signaled that it may wait for the Dalai Lama to pass away, calculating perhaps that when the Dalai Lama's life comes to end, so will the issues that China associates with him. The Chinese government will use the legal measures that it has already issued to supervise the selection of a new Dalai Lama, and pressure Tibetans to express their acceptance of the matter. Eventually, the government may hope, Tibetans will leave the 14th Dalai Lama in the past.

If the leadership believes that Tibetans will accept a Chinese-appointed replacement of the 14th Dalai Lama and come to terms with Chinese policies, it could prove to be a miscalculation that places local and regional security at heightened risk for decades to come. As the impact of Chinese legal measures and policies continue to diminish the core elements of Tibetan culture—religion, language, and self-identity—the Dalai Lama installed by China will grow from boyhood, to maturity, and into old age. Many Tibetans may see in him a provocative symbol of Tibetan loss and humiliation, promoting deepening of Tibetan resentment. The recent protests, spread throughout a vast area beyond Lhasa, answered by a military-style response and intensification of the policies that fueled the eruption in the first place, may have already sewn the seeds for what someday could become the next generation of Tibetan protest.

The prospect for a mutually beneficial and durable outcome could decline from poor to virtually nonexistent unless the Chinese government resolves to fully implement the ethnic autonomy system, and to engage the Dalai Lama in that process. If Chinese and Tibetans—along with their friends, neighbors and partners—see in the current wave of Tibetan protests a daunting challenge, then each side should contemplate the potential outcome during a future scenario in which the 14th Dalai Lama may no longer be available to urge Tibetans to back away from violence. Will a future Chinese president be able to explain persuasively to China’s citizens why the leadership failed to meet with the Dalai Lama when they had the opportunity? The current Chinese leadership would do well to ask themselves the following question: will a future Chinese president believe that a persuasive explanation even exists?

Chairman Boxer, the staff of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China has prepared a list of concrete recommendations to address the current crisis. I would ask that this list be submitted for the record for the Committee’s consideration:

1. Commence direct talks between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama.;
2. Distinguish between peaceful protestors and rioters, honor the Chinese Constitution’s reference to the freedoms of speech and association, and do not treat peaceful protest as a crime;
3. Provide a detailed account of Tibetan protest activity in each location where such activity took place;
4. Provide details about each person detained or charged with a crime, including each person’s name, the charges (if any) against each person, the name and location of the prosecuting office (“procuratorate”) and court handling each case, and the name of each facility where a person is detained or imprisoned;
5. Allow access by diplomats and other international observers to the trials of people charged with protest-related crimes;
6. Allow international observers and journalists immediate and unfettered access to Tibetan areas of China;

7. Ensure that security officials fulfill their obligations under Articles 64(2) and 71(2) of China's Criminal Procedure Law to inform relatives and work places (monasteries in the case of monks) where detainees are being held;
8. Encourage and facilitate the filing of compensation suits under Chinese law in cases of alleged wrongful arrest, detention, punishment and other official abuses during the recent protests;
9. Permit international observers to monitor closely the implementation of China's new Regulation on Open Government Information, which comes into force on May 1, 2008, with special emphasis on implementation in Tibetan areas;
10. Strictly enforce the Regulations on Reporting Activities in China by Foreign Journalists During the Beijing Olympic Games and the Preparatory Period, with special emphasis on access to and in Tibetan areas of China.

The Congressional Executive Commission on China (CECC) invites Members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Members of Congress, and the global Internet public to visit the Commission's Web site (<http://www.cecc.gov>) for additional information and updates on the unfolding events in the Tibetan areas in China. Please visit the Commission's Political Prisoner Database via a link on the CECC home page or at <http://ppd.cecc.gov> for information about Tibetans and other Chinese citizens detained or imprisoned for exercising their human rights.

Thank you, Chairman Boxer and Members of the Committee.