



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Press Release

Amsterdam, January 12th, 2023

Swedish EU Presidency urged to play active role in resolving Tibet-China conflict

On the occasion of the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, which started on Jan. 1, the International Campaign for Tibet and the Swedish Tibet Committee have called on the Swedish government to promote a new EU policy on China and on the Sino-Tibetan conflict.

In a [briefing paper](#) released today, the two organizations provide an assessment of the political and human rights situation in Tibet and propose five concrete recommendations on ways the EU could contribute to overcoming and resolving the decades-long conflict in Tibet.

The war in Ukraine, which started almost a year ago, has forced the EU to redefine its foreign policy vis-à-vis an authoritarian regime that has adopted an aggressive foreign policy, is trying to reshape the international order and is attempting to increase its zone of influence and control over territories belonging to other countries. It showed Europeans and the EU why safeguarding international law and promoting democracy, the rule of law, freedom and human rights deserve to be foreign policy priorities above short-term economic gain.

Sweden takes over the EU Presidency from the Czech Republic, where a high-level conference on Tibet was organized in the Parliament last year as part of the official agenda of its Presidency. Entitled “What can the Czech Republic and the European Union do to address the crisis in Tibet?” the event—which [highlighted](#) the need to reassess the policy of the EU and its member states on the legal status of Tibet, particularly in light of the war in Ukraine and China’s disregard of international norms—was an encouraging step upon which Sweden should build.

ICT EU Policy Director Vincent Metten said: “*Sweden has always insisted on the importance to base its work on the country’s and the EU’s interests and values in dealings with China. The Swedish Presidency Council of the EU therefore represents an opportunity to promote a strong and united position of the European Union to advance human rights in China and Tibet and propose some concrete actions to move this issue forward.*”

Intensified security and assimilation policies

The Swedish EU Presidency follows the 20th Party Congress of the Chinese Communist Party held in October 2022, which deflated the little optimism that some had for political liberalization, as it regressed all the major political reforms in China in the post-Mao period. Xi Jinping begins his third term in office with a firm grip on power, and while no new policy guidelines were introduced during the Congress, it is clear that China’s security and assimilation policies will [intensify and accelerate](#) during his indefinite tenure, with further negative impacts on the rights and lives of Tibetans living under China’s rule.

In the latest self-immolation protest against Chinese rule in Tibet, an 81-year-old Tibetan named Taphun [set himself on fire](#) in the early morning on March 27, 2022. After two years without any known self-immolations in Tibet, Taphun was the second person confirmed to have self-immolated last year in protest against the Chinese government, after Tsewang Norbu, a 25-year-old Tibetan singer, adopted [the same form of protest](#) in Lhasa on Feb. 25, 2022. Since 2009, 159 Tibetans have committed self-immolation in Tibet and China.

In this context, it is crucial that Sweden promotes a strong and united position of the European Union to advance human rights in China and Tibet during the six months of its EU Presidency, and the International Campaign for Tibet and the Swedish Tibet Committee would like to make the five following recommendations in this regard.

Five action points

ICT and the Swedish Tibet Committee call on the Swedish EU Presidency to:

- Promote an EU position on Tibet that is in line with its international legal status and international law
- Extend EU sanctions against Chinese individuals and entities responsible for human rights violations in Tibet; raise human rights issues and individual cases with the Chinese government
- Adopt an EU public statement opposing Chinese government interferences in the succession of the Dalai Lama
- Play an active role in the resolution of the Sino-Tibetan conflict by appointing an EU Special Coordinator for Tibet
- Promote opening the Tibetan Plateau for scientific research and international collaboration

[Read ICT's briefing paper.](#)

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