

## **Cross Party Group on Tibet - minutes** **22<sup>nd</sup> April 2013 – Holyrood CR4**

*Attendees:* Linda Fabiani, Anne McTaggart, Maureen Watt and 13 members of the public.

*Apologies:* Willie Rennie, Alison McInnes, Richard Baker, Rhoda Grant, Margaret Mitchell, Elaine Smith, Annabelle Ewing, and Edinburgh University Tibet Society who all have exams.

### **Agenda**

Welcome and matters arising from last meeting

Samantha May – self-immolations and human rights situation update

Tim Loughton MP – Tibet at Westminster

Actions

AoB

DoNM: 2 October 2013

### **Minutes and matters arising**

The convener and vice-convener co-signed letters to the President of the European Parliament Martin Schultz and the Prime Minister David Cameron drawing their attention to the petition collected by Grampian Tibet Society and Marco Biagi's motion S4M-055655 on 'Tibetan Independence Day'

### **Self-immolations and human rights situation update**

Samantha May of Aberdeen University provided an update on the on-going self-immolations in Tibet. Since the Group's last update in June 2012 when at least 40 known self-immolations had occurred in recent years 77 more people have died self-immolating in Tibet and in exile. The character of the self-immolations was noted including predominance in people connected with Nagba/Kirti monastery, a peak in occurrence coinciding with the new Chinese leadership in November, their connections to local circumstances and protests as well as maintaining a religious character despite a shift to the laity. A significant shift in the state response was also noted, namely the persecution of self-immolators' family/friends and accusations of 'intentional homicide'. Finally it was noted self-immolation is a China-wide phenomenon but Chinese observers have noticed the application of 'intentional homicide' laws are applied unevenly.

### **Tim Loughton MP – All Party Parliamentary Group on Tibet (Westminster)**

Tim Loughton kindly visited the CPG to talk about the work of the APPG and his experience as a long-standing supporter of Tibet. Tim shared his experience during the last visit of His Holiness the Dalai Lama when he was prevented from attending a meeting with the Tibetan religious leader. Tim has been active as part of the APPG in recent March 10<sup>th</sup> protests, in discussion with the Foreign Office and on developments planned for the Jokhang Temple area in Lhasa.

### **Actions**

Members' Debate on the Jokhang developments risking its UNESCO heritage status – **Maureen Watt** agreed to consider a members debate on this subject. The aim would be to

ask the Scottish Government to support the UK Govt planned submission to UNESCO on the issue. **Sam May and Martin Mills** agreed to provide a short written briefing on the subject in support. **Maureen Watt, Linda Fabiani and Iain Thom** to work on a motion for cross-party support.

NGOs have written to the Prime Minister urging him to continue to resist pressure from the Chinese government to apologise for meeting HHDL. The CPG agreed to write similarly. **Iain Thom** to draft for MSPs.

Tim Loughton passed on details of a potential summit in October with Tibetan Euro parliamentarians exploring a mentoring programme to enhance media profile. The CPG are keen to be involved and asked to be kept updated.

Dr. Martin Mills indicated he was willing to attend a future APPG to discuss self-immolations and indicated an updated briefing on self-immolations was possible for the next meeting. Any briefings should continue to be shared with the APPG.

**Iain Thom** to email APPG secretary re two issues above

#### **AoB**

- CPG member Linda Hendry attended a Tibet event in Berkley and brings back greetings to the CPG.
- Martin Mill sand Samantha May attended the last CPG China and highlighted opportunities where the two groups could work together, in particular sharing knowledge on the potential implications of self-immolations as a form of protest across China.
- China armed forces recently incurred into the Ladakh region. This region is recognised as extremely important to Tibetan cultural heritage and identity. This incursion has led to further concerns over instability in the region and Chinese Government intentions.

#### **DoNM**

Next meeting is **2<sup>nd</sup> October 2013**.