

Cross Party Group on Tibet - minutes

7th May 2014 – Holyrood CR4

Attendees: Linda Fabiani, Anne McTaggart, and 18 members of the public.

Apologies: Roderick Campbell, Alison McInnes, Annabelle Ewing, Kevin Stewart, Alison Johnstone, Elaine Smith.

Agenda

Minutes and matters arising from last meeting

Talk by Zorgyi of International Campaign for Tibet

AoB / DoNM

Minutes and Matters of Last Meeting.

Minutes of the previous two meetings were approved.

Talk by Zorgyi, a representative of the International Campaign for Tibet.

Zorgyi, who himself is a Tibetan refugee, discussed the current political situation of Tibet. During his talk, he emphasized points of increasing Chinese development, cultural suppression, and religious persecution. Zorgyi gave examples of each of these, such as Chinese efforts to expand its high-speed rail system from Lhasa to Xigaze in order to encourage ethnic Han migration. Zorgyi discussed the limiting of Tibetan as a medium of education beyond middle school and how, even if Tibetan students find a way to be educated in their native tongue, those who chose to be educated in Tibet have little-to-no employment opportunities after their education is completed. Zorgyi also commented on how Tibetans are being blocked from attending higher educational institutions outside of China, including in the United Kingdom. Even though there are over 78,000 Chinese students in the United Kingdom, there are only five non-exile Tibetan students. This is due to a Chinese policy of rejecting ethnic Tibetans' passports when they wish to pursue an education overseas. It was also noted that Tibetan workers are paid one-fifth the salary of Han workers doing the same jobs. Finally, Zorgyi discussed the increasing levels of religious persecution in Tibet, especially against members of the monasteries. Since the beginning of the Tibetan self immolations, over 130 Tibetans have committed this act of protest, many of them being monks. The People's Republic of China, in order to discourage such protests, has adopted a policy of collective punishment for the communities that the self-immolator has originated from. If the self-immolated is a monk, this means the closing down of the monastic school of his/her respective monastery and the limiting of the religious activities that the monasteries are permitted to practice.

Other Matters Arising

It was decided that the cross-party group should consider organizing an exhibition at the Scottish Parliament in order to raise awareness amongst MSPs of the situation in Tibet. The Secretary was to email Linda Fabiani in order to remind her.

Maureen Watt offered to look back at her member's debate on Tibet and follow up any issues with a letter to the Cab Sec for Culture and External Affairs, in particular the issue of Lhasa's UNESCO status.

Dr. Martin Mills brought to the members' attention a presentation that he was making to the cross-party group on China on the next Wednesday, the 14th of May and requested that an email be sent out asking members and supporters of the cross-party group to attend the meeting and for the next agenda to include discussion of a further briefing paper.

Specific actions

- Secretary to communicate with Linda Fabiani regarding exhibition stall booking
- Secretary to send an email out to the group and its supporters to inform them about Dr. Mills presentation to the Cross party group on China.
- Secretary to communicate with Maureen Watt about the post-debate follow up letter to the Cab Sec.

DoNM

A discussion was held on the date of the next meeting, which will be the 29th of October. The long interval being due to the forthcoming general election on Independence and the hectic schedules of MSPs immediately before and after the vote.

Next meeting is **29nd October 2014**.

Following meetings will be: 14th January 2015; 25th March 2015.