

NEB Statement on Tibet

20 March 2008

Just as the Burmese monks took to the streets in protest last September, so we now see hundreds of Buddhist monks and ordinary citizens take to the streets of Lhasa in protest against the Chinese occupation of Tibet, and the destruction of their culture. They have been met with violence and the monasteries in Lhasa have been closed and surrounded by troops for the last three days. Yet the monks are undeterred, and continue to protest in Tibet's cities wherever possible.

The UK Network of Engaged Buddhists, in solidarity with the people of Tibet our brothers and sisters in the Dharma, condemn the Chinese government's suppression of peaceful demonstrations, the closing of monasteries, and the broad imposition of martial law. The violent response by Chinese security forces only adds fuel to fires they lit many years ago.

The world has stood by whilst decades of Chinese occupation has systematically attempted to destroy indigenous Tibetan culture until, as the International Campaign for Tibet says "In Tibet's cities and fertile valleys, particularly in eastern Tibet, Chinese outnumber Tibetans by two and sometimes three to one."

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has appealed "to the Chinese leadership to stop using force and address the long-simmering resentment of the Tibetan people through dialogue with the Tibetan people...I also urge my fellow Tibetans not to resort to violence."

We join with the Dalai Lama in his appeal and condemn the violent repression of natural and proper protest of China's longstanding repression of Tibet. We ask all friends of Tibet - people and governments - to do the same. We call on the government of the People's Republic of China to release all Tibetans held on political charges. Finally we encourage the brave and patient people of Tibet to stay strong, and to uphold the Buddha's teachings of nonviolence.

As UK citizens we also congratulate Prime Minister Gordon Brown for his agreement to meet with His Holiness the Dalai Lama when he visits the United Kingdom. We urge him to also do everything in his power to stop repression and to achieve discussions with the Dalai Lama as leader of the Tibetan people.

Ken Jones, President

on behalf of the UK Network of Engaged Buddhists