

Edinburgh protesters take to the streets

On Saturday a demonstration took place in the capital to draw attention to the plight of those living under the oppressive regime in Tibet.

A group of protesters marched through Edinburgh at the weekend demonstrating against China's rule over Tibet. Members of the University of Edinburgh Tibet Society were joined by other Free Tibet protesters, as well as several Tibetans living in Scotland on the 53rd anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising.

The demonstrators gathered on the Mound under the shadow of the National Gallery.

Before commencing the march, David Lloyd Hudson from the charity United Nations for a Free Tibet, spoke to the crowd. He said:- "It is the duty of every one of us living as free people as part of a democratic society to put a stop to tyrannical regimes which abuse the rights of individuals."





Amie Robertson, one of the members of the University of Edinburgh's Tibet Society said:- "This movement is not against Chinese citizens. It is a movement against the Chinese Communist Party, and we stand in solidarity with all people who are being oppressed by this party, not just Tibetans." Robertson also explained that members of the protest were standing in solidarity with Tibetans and that now is the time for governments to act. She continued:- "We are calling on our members of parliament to join the cross party group of Tibet and calling on our MSPs to put pressure on the UK government to take multilateral action for Tibet."

Alison Johnstone, Green Party MSP, also said a few words, comparing the sense of identity of Tibetans with that of Scots. She stated:- "After 300 years Scotland has a parliament again, and that is because it was an idea, a vision, a desire that refused to die, and I believe the idea of Tibet will also refuse to die."

Protesters made their way to the Chinese Consulate on Riversdale Crescent near Murrayfield, and laid pictures of Tibetans who had died through self-immolation and flowers at the gate. There was a small police presence but the march remained peaceful. After playing the Tibetan national anthem the crowd chanted "China, China, China, out, out, out!"

Samdup Tenzin, a 27 year-old International Law student at Edinburgh University believes that it is time for the

international community to take notice, and for world leaders to join together to solve the Tibet issue. Samdup's family fled Tibet during the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s. His aunt still lives in the country and he has not heard from her since 2008, when Tibetans staged a protest in defiance of the Chinese. He said that there were dangers for Tibetans taking part in today's march, as they are constantly watched by Chinese authorities, and any signs of protest can lead to reprisals for family members at home in Tibet. However, he remains optimistic that Tibet will one day be free. He said:- "The Tibetan spirit remains very strong. They have controlled us physically, but they haven't been able to control our minds."

The group of protesters say their protests, including marches and candlelit vigils, will continue if China continues what they believe is the serious oppression of Tibetans and a crackdown on their human rights. They believe the recent uprisings in the Arab Spring are a sign of hope for Tibet and that international pressure will lead to a regime change.

The protest was organised in conjunction with several other events across the world to mark the anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising on 10 March 1959, a rebellion which sent the Dalai Lama into exile. Tibet has been under Chinese rule since the 1950s and 1.2 million people are estimated to have died as a result of the Chinese government's presence in the country. Since 2009 20 Tibetans have committed acts of self-immolation in protest against what they believe are Chinese acts of oppression.

The most recent self-immolation was a week ago, committed by a mother of four children who set herself on fire in front of a police station in the Sichuan Province, China. There is a total media blackout in Tibet, and no independent observers are allowed in the country.