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Member of the European Parliament

On the occasion of the 31st birthday of Gedhun Chokeyi Nyima, the 11th Panchen Lama of Tibet, which also marks the 25th anniversary of his disappearance

Gedhun Chokeyi Nyima was recognized as the reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Lama on 14 May 1995 by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Three days later, the Chinese government abducted him along with his parents. Since then, he has not been seen or heard in public, although it is believed he is still alive.

His enforced disappearance case was registered in 1995 with the UN Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearance. It is one of the oldest continuing cases of enforced disappearance in the world. And he is one of the world's longest-serving political prisoners and the youngest one at that.

Tibet continues to be rated as the second least free country in the world, after Syria. Tibetans say that it is easier to go to heaven than to get a passport from the Chinese government. Tibet has now been under iron-fist control of China of over six decades. The repressive nature of the rule is best exemplified by the case of the Panchen Lama.

Since recurring human rights abuses from China needs to be addressed, I urge the European Commission to call upon the Chinese government to finally ensure freedom of religion and belief in Tibet, by freeing Gedhun Chokeyi Nyima and his parents immediately without any conditions, together with all Tibetan political prisoners.

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