

TIBET

a nation in the spotlight

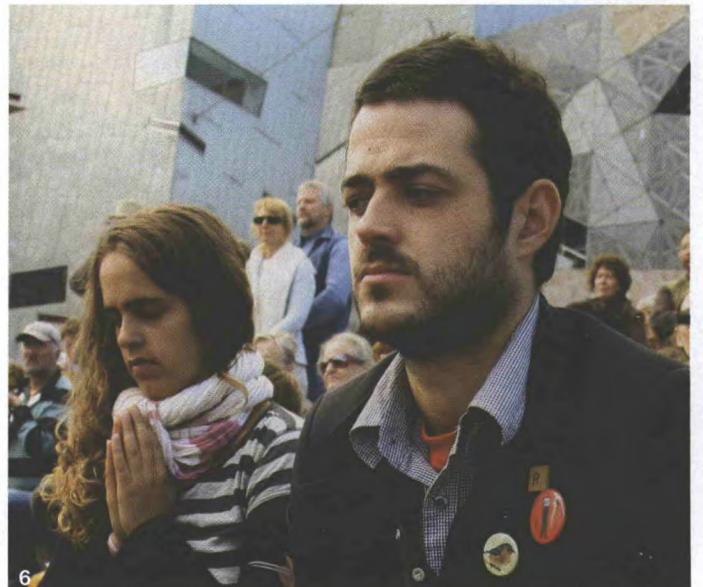


PHOTO: John Berthold

On March 10, 2008, what began as a peaceful protest against Beijing's hardhanded policies in Tibet ended in violence and with the deaths of both Tibetans and Chinese. The aftermath of this event has had devastating consequences for the region, and extended well-beyond into the international community. Beijing immediately launched an official crackdown, putting many Tibetans into prison, increasing military presence within Lhasa, and severely restricting international media access in what it purports is an attempt to stabilize the region. The Chinese response to the protests has caught the attention of the international community, and many are critical of China's action, arguing that it directly contradicted the basic principles of human rights. And now that the 2008 Olympic Games are looming on the horizon, China's human rights record, particularly as it relates to Tibet and her people, has been forced into the limelight.

Although some have responded by demonizing China's government and people, His Holiness the Dalai Lama and other notable Buddhist and non-Buddhist spiritual leaders have consistently argued for non-violence and understanding, citing the necessity for productive dialogue between Beijing and Tibet's government-in-exile. Dialogue, for His Holiness the Dalai Lama, is the only viable solution to the conflict between the two governments. By virtue of being non-violent and by providing a space for compromise, dialogue presents the opportunity for a solution that will benefit both parties, and thereby accords with the tenets of Buddhism. The Dalai Lama remains steadfast, radically committed to non-violent conflict resolution as the only way forward. It is one of the most stirring testaments of faith the world has ever known.

As Buddhists, how do we sound the drum of political action while remaining true to our religious principles? We can follow the advice of His Holiness and take the Middle Way, and do as Lama Zopa Rinpoche requests on Page 14: Recite the Golden Light Sutra. ☸



Prayer vigils and peaceful marches are being held around the world.

PHOTOS: Dharamsala (1 & 3) by Merilyn Jones; San Francisco (4) by Julia Hengst; and Melbourne (2, 5 & 6) by Lynn Miller.