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**\*\*PHOTO OPPORTUNITY**

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## **March 10<sup>th</sup> – Worldwide Protests for Tibetan Freedom**

### ***Protest in Downtown San Francisco targets the Chinese Government's continued repression in Tibet and international silence around China's human rights record***

*San Francisco, CA* - Hundreds of Tibetans and their supporters will march and demonstrate in Berkeley and San Francisco to commemorate the 46th Anniversary of Tibetan National Uprising Day on Thursday, March 10, 2005 (protest location/schedule on next page) in solidarity with demonstrations around the world. Other than India, the Bay Area is one of the major centers of Tibetan refugees who fled their country after the Chinese invasion.

In a year marked by news of “China’s boom” – its emergence as one the world’s largest economic consumers and exporters – the reality of the Chinese government’s human rights record has been totally eclipsed. Tibetans, religious minorities like the Falun Gong, and the Chinese people themselves continue to be at the mercy of what is essentially – despite the current economic growth – a totalitarian state.

An estimated 80,000 Tibetans were killed by the armies of the People's Republic of China in 1959 following the March 10th Tibetan National Uprising. Forty-six years later, Tibet continues to be under the brutal rule of Chinese armed forces, hundreds of political prisoners continue to languish in detention for expressing the simple belief that they should be allowed to openly practice their religion, and many Tibetan people still suffer from a lack of basic access to health care, education, and employment despite the Chinese government’s claims of “modernization.”

"The Tibetan people all over the world remember this day as blackest chapter in our history," explained Topden Tsering of the San Francisco Regional Tibetan Youth Congress. "This day not only reminds Tibetans of the brutal invasion and occupation of Tibet, but also of the continuing amnesia in the international media regarding the Beijing regime. The message this sends to the millions of people suffering under this government is that the international community will only intervene in situations where business interests and profits are not threatened."

The events will begin with a Tibetan flag raising ceremony at Berkeley's City Hall, attended by the Mayor of Berkeley, Tom Bates. Later, demonstrators, including Congressional Representatives, and human rights activists will gather at the intersection of Powell and Market streets in San Francisco at 11:00am. The protest will arrive at San Francisco's City Hall

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12:30pm, followed by a march to the Chinese Consulate in San Francisco at Geary and Laguna streets.

"The Bay Area, with its sizable Tibetan population and its long tradition of respect for human rights, is an ideal place to commemorate Tibetan uprising day." remarked Chris McKenna of Tibet Justice Center. "While the Bush administration focuses on countries like Iraq which had minimal political, economic, and military power before the U.S.-led war, they continue to ignore the fact that the ruling elite in China are every bit as brutal and repressive as the old regime in Iraq, and significantly more powerful," he added.

"One goal of our current work is to get Tibetan and Chinese people to see themselves as part of the same struggle" said Giovanni Vassallo, President of the Bay Area Friends of Tibet. "We want to demonstrate to the Chinese community that pressure for a more democratic China is in the interest of everyone. We call upon the Bay Area Chinese community not to ignore the plight of the Tibetan people."

China invaded Tibet in 1949 and occupied the country in 1959, forcing the Dalai Lama and 130,000 of his followers into exile in India. By the end of Cultural Revolution in 1977, over one million Tibetans had died as a direct or indirect result of Chinese government's occupation of Tibet. China has rejected negotiations with the Dalai Lama until he acknowledges that the region is a part of China and that Taiwan is a Chinese province. The Dalai Lama already formalized his renouncement of independence for Tibet in a speech to the European Parliament in 1988 and recently stated that it was up to the people of Taiwan to determine their own future.

"We have unflinching faith in our leader, His Holiness the Dalai Lama," said Tashi Sangyal, President of the Tibetan Association of Northern California. "We know that if the Chinese government would sit down to sincerely negotiate a satisfactory solution with His Holiness or His representatives today, there would be millions of happier Tibetans tomorrow."

**Schedule of March 10<sup>th</sup> commemoration:**

- **9:00:** Berkeley flag raising at Berkeley City Hall, 2180 Milvia Street (between Center and Allston).
- **11:00:** Gathering in San Francisco at Powell and Market to prepare for march.
- **12:00:** Arrive at San Francisco City Hall for noon rally.
- **2:00:** Arrive at Chinese Consulate on Laguna & Geary Blvd.
- **2:00-3:30:** Protest in front of Chinese Consulate

**Organizers & Sponsors: Bay Area Friends of Tibet \* Tibet Justice Center \* Tibetan Association of Northern California \* Tibetan Youth Congress \* Committee of 100 for Tibet \* Students for a Free Tibet \* Tibetan Nuns Project**