

**Press Release for March 10, 2011,
52nd commemoration of the Tibetan National Uprising**

**“A Question of Integrity”
1150 mayors fly the flag for Tibet!**

Number of participants as of March 9, 2011 (12 p.m.) – 1150 towns and cities

1150 cities, municipalities and counties all over Germany are raising the Tibetan flag on March 10 at town halls and public buildings and displaying it on their websites, including the regional capitals Bremen, Hanover, Magdeburg, Potsdam, Saarbruecken, Stuttgart and Wiesbaden. By doing so, they affirm on behalf of thousands of citizens the Tibetan people's right to self-determination and protest against the violations of human rights and the destruction of the Tibetan people's culture, religion and national identity. Every year since 1996, *Tibet Initiative Deutschland* (Tibet Support Group Germany) calls for this nationwide action.

The ever growing number of participants on one side clearly demonstrates that the issue of Tibet is still regarded as unresolved, on the other side it signals that Beijing's permanent assertions of everything in Tibet being at its best have lost their credibility. Beijing's Tibet policy has obviously failed. Three years after the protests of 2008 the region is still closed to journalists and representatives of international organisations. But a country which suppresses others is not a free country itself.

China's "Death Watching" – the assumption that once the Dalai Lama is gone the issue of Tibet will fade away – will not work out. The Chinese leadership should abandon its rigid attitude and finally consent to hold meaningful talks with the Tibetan side. After all, it would be to its own advantage. There is no guarantee at all that after 60 years of repression the Tibetan people, without the moderate influence of the Dalai Lama, would accept the alternative of autonomy. It seems that the Tibetan leader's willingness to compromise is seen as weakness.

Flying the Tibetan national flag under these circumstances is a commitment to global responsibility – also in politics. "If Germany's interests are defended at the Hindu Kush why should the rights of the Tibetans not be defended from within Germany?", said Monika Deimann, the campaign's coordinator. "It is imperative to perceive the Tibetan people as an acting subject in politics. It's overdue that our government talks directly to the Tibetan people. It should welcome the Dalai Lama as legitimate representative of his people and be willing to engage with representatives of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile. On March 20 a new Tibetan-Government-in Exile- will be democratically elected by the Tibetan diaspora. However important the dialogue with China might be, it's unacceptable to keep on talking with the occupiers about the occupied."

The flag campaign on March 10 is not a matter of human rights' violations or of foreign policy – it is a matter of justice and injustice. An injustice that the Tibetan people have endure for decades up to the present day and which we should not accept if we do not wish not to violate our own democratic values. This year, one of the participating mayors put it in a nutshell: "To fly the flag for Tibet is a question of integrity".

***Tibet Initiative Deutschland* thanks the heads of cities, municipalities and counties for supporting the Tibetan cause and for their commitment to the universality of democratic values.**

For the current list of participants 2011, messages of support as well as background information about March 10 and the flag-campaign please refer to **www.tibetflagge.net**. There is also a digital Tibetan Flag available for download.

Participants 2011(as per 7 March): Baden-Württemberg 175, Bavaria 188, Berlin 4, Brandenburg 27, Bremen 12, Hesse 157, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania 19, Lower Saxony 117, North Rhine-Westphalia 131, Rhineland-Palatinate 115, Saarland 33, Saxony 82, Saxony-Anhalt 56, Schleswig-Holstein 22, Thuringia 10.

In 1949/50 the sovereign Tibet was illegally and in violation of international law occupied by the People's Republic of China and in 1951 it was annexed. On March 10, 1959, Tibetans in Lhasa stood up against their Chinese occupiers. According to official Chinese figures 87.000 Tibetans lost their lives in the following crackdown. On March 17, 1959 the Dalai Lama fled into exile to India to evade the stranglehold of the Chinese.

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