

Livorno: Hundreds of Buddhists protest Dalai Lama

LIVORNO, FLORENCE, ITALY, June 12, 2014 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Dalai Lama is in Italy on 14th & 15th June, but not everyone will be welcoming him. Visitors to the Modigliani Forum in Livorno on Saturday and Sunday will be met with the unusual sight of over 400 protesters - Tibetan and western monks and nuns in Buddhist robes and lay people young and old, waving placards and banners and loudly requesting the Dalai Lama to "Stop Lying!" and "Give Religious Freedom!"

Demonstration times & location:
Saturday 14th & Sunday 15th June,
09:00–16:00 - Modigliani Forum, Livorno



The protestors are from the International Shugden Community (ISC), a group of individual practitioners of the ancient Buddhist Deity Dorje Shugden. They claim that in 1996 the Dalai Lama banned the worship of their Deity, a tradition which they say goes back 350 years, and that this ban is causing suffering and persecution to millions of faithful Shugden Buddhists worldwide.

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Fabrizio Bernacchi

ISC spokesperson Fabrizio Bernacchi says, “Dorje Shugden is a well-loved Buddhist Protector Deity with about 4 million practitioners in Tibet, Mongolia, India, and across the western world. The Dalai Lama’s ban is causing persecution and discrimination on a massive scale throughout the Buddhist world. Because the source of this problem is the Dalai Lama himself, the ISC is asking him to change - to stop the persecution of Shugden people and to give religious freedom. Since 1996, demonstrations were organized by the Shugden

Supporters Community in India, then later by the Western Shugden Society, and now by the International Shugden Community.”

ISC cites a wealth of evidence for the suffering they say is being caused by the Dalai Lama’s “religious discrimination”. For example, in May this year in northern India, a Shugden monastery was forcibly taken over by Dalai Lama supporters. (http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/monks-allege-forcible-occupation-of-monastery-114052100950_1.html) ISC points to multiple interviews with Tibetans giving personal testimony of the ostracism and violence they face on a daily basis, with the Tibetan exiled community in India and elsewhere deeply divided over this issue.

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=78o-1s9hDos>) For more evidence of persecution see Al Jazeera's report: <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/peopleandpower/2008/09/200893014344405483.html>

In May his Central Tibetan Administration (CTA - the Tibetan government-in-exile) published a list on its website of 34 Tibetans who have taken part in protests against the Dalai Lama's ban, together with their photographs and personal information. (<http://tibet.net/2014/05/22/list-of-dolgyal-followers-who-protested-against-his-holiness-the-dalai-lama-in-us-and-europe/>) According to ISC, this is a clear incitement to persecution and violence against these innocent Tibetans.

This discrimination has now reached Italian soil. On June 9th, a group of primarily Italian Buddhist organizations, led by the Dalai Lama, issued a statement in support of his ban on the CTA's website. (<http://tibet.net/2014/06/09/statement-concerning-the-cult-of-dogyalshugden/>)

Now Italian Shugden practitioners are being publicly excluded from attending the Dalai Lama's Livorno event, whilst all other people, from atheists to Satanists, are welcome!

(<http://www.dalailama.it/it/programma/>)

ISC states that whenever anyone criticizes the Dalai Lama, instead of responding to the allegations or agreeing to dialogue, the CTA immediately accuses them of being funded by, or working for, the Chinese government. ISC spokesperson Fabrizio Bernacchi says: "We have no links to the Chinese government at all and have never received any funding from them - and neither the Dalai Lama, nor anyone else, has ever provided a single shred of evidence for this. Their claim is a complete lie - a smokescreen to distract attention from the truth: the Dalai Lama is persecuting people for their faith and is denying them the basic human right to freedom of religion."

In addition, the Dalai Lama and CTA say that Shugden people are sectarian and that the Dalai Lama's ban is in fact simply "advice", aimed at protecting Tibetan Buddhism from what they claim is the sectarian influence of this Deity's practice. Signore Bernacchi says: "Millions of Shugden people lived happily with other Buddhists and practitioners of other faiths for centuries until the Dalai Lama's ban, so it is complete nonsense to say that they are sectarian. This is just another smoke screen: with these protests, all we are asking for is the freedom to practice our religion in peace."

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