

# Protesters accuse Dalai Lama of religious intolerance during his visit to New York

*This week, hundreds of Tibetans, Americans, and others from the International Shugden Community will stage loud protests outside the Dalai Lama's events in NYC*

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, July 8, 2015 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The ISC protesters are asking for religious intolerance towards their Buddhist community in New York and around the world to end. They will be chanting loudly and holding signs and banners saying "False Dalai Lama, stop lying!" and "Give religious freedom!"



Similar protest against the Dalai Lama

have been recently staged around the world (1). Earlier this week, the BBC asked the Dalai Lama about the International Shugden Community Protests directly in their interview with him on Newsnight, also including the question "Can you explain your position on Shugden Buddhism and why they feel outlawed by you and your teachings," (2).

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*Len Foley, International Shugden Community spokesperson*

Protests: Thursday, July 9 and Friday July 10, 8am - 4pm  
At The Javits Center, 11th Ave between 35th and 36th, NYC

According to the protesters, the Dalai Lama instigated a campaign of persecution amongst Tibetans in exile around the world, including those living in New York City, whereby they are forced to abandon their generations-old prayers to the Buddhist Deity Dorje Shugden or face serious discrimination and ostracism from within their own communities. In some places this includes being refused entry to stores, restaurants and even medical facilities, on

account of their religious faith. This was exposed by Al Jazeera in 2009 (3) and covered by US media, including Public Radio International's The World in 2014 (4).

“The Dalai Lama is first and foremost a politician. He may talk compassion and tolerance to the public, but in his own backyard he's created an atmosphere of religious intolerance and hatred,” said Len Foley, spokesperson of the International Shugden Community (ISC), the group organizing the

protests. The ISC is an umbrella organization that represents over four million Shugden Buddhists worldwide.

The protesters claim that in 2008 hundreds of Tibetan exiles living in NYC were asked to assemble at a community center in Queens. Each member of the community was then asked one by one to stand underneath a picture of the Dalai Lama, and publicly sign an oath swearing that they would abandon their faith of Shugden Buddhism and not give material or spiritual assistance to anyone who maintains their Shugden faith or who even still chooses to associate with people of Shugden faith.

The ISC assert that since then those who refused to abandon their faith, or who continue to associate with those of Shugden faith, have experienced ostracism and harassment, including threats against their person and their businesses boycotted. There will be over 100 Tibetan Americans present at the protest available to verify this discrimination and to give their personal stories.

“This type of religious intolerance and persecution is not acceptable in America, nor should it be acceptable anywhere in this modern world,” said Foley. “We are asking for this intolerance against Shugden Buddhists to end. All people should be free to practice their faith in peace.”

Sonam Lama, a Tibetan American attending the demonstrations commented “This 'humble Buddhist monk' as he likes to call himself makes vast sums of money out of Buddha's teachings, sports Gucci loafers and Rolex watches and stays in five star hotels, whilst applying ruthless religious intolerance towards his own people who live in poverty, hardship and fear.”

The ISC state that they are not funded by nor have any links with China, nor are they sectarian or violent in any way, and that these are cheap accusations sometimes used by the Dalai Lama's people to distract attention from the important issues of intolerance, segregation, and persecution. As Pitts commented, “This type of slander is a smokescreen and another reason we say ‘Dalai Lama, stop lying.’”

(1) Associated Press, June 29, 2015. ‘Dalai Lama faces protest as he opens UK Buddhist Center’ <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/987f28ca815340aeb09e6912a58a8283/dalai-lama-faces-protest-he-opens-uk-buddhist-center>

(2) BBC Newsnight, July 3, 2015. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b061bh17>

(3) Al Jazeera, ‘The Devil Within’ <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rqa2DeOIEQM> .

<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/peopleandpower/2008/09/200893014344405483.html> (script).

(4) Bell, Matthew. PRI's The World, October 31, 2014. ‘Breakaway Buddhists take aim at the Dalai Lama.’ <http://www.pri.org/stories/2014-10-31/breakaway-buddhists-take-aim-dalai-lama>

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