

*Tibet — Anniversary of Uprising Against Chinese Occupation
Adjournment Debate Statement – 18th March 2009*

HON GIZ WATSON (North Metropolitan) [9.53 pm]: I want to take a few minutes of the house's time to acknowledge another significant date that is being commemorated today, and that is the fiftieth anniversary of the uprising in Tibet against the Chinese occupation. It is a very significant date for Tibetans all around the world. Members might be interested to know that Perth has a community of Tibetans who spent the last week and a half walking from Bunbury to Perth to raise awareness of the continuing struggle of the Tibetan community to have its human rights recognised by the Chinese authorities.

Today that small group of people came to Parliament House to gather here before walking down to the Chinese embassy to attempt to deliver a letter to the Chinese ambassador. I have to report that the doors were shut and the embassy staff was not letting anybody in.

I think it is significant for all Western Australians to know that Western Australia has a group of Tibetan refugees who have started new lives here. They are quite a small group, but they are very committed to each other and to Western Australia.

In recent times they established the Tibet Action Group of Western Australia to raise awareness in the Western Australian community of the plight of their friends and families who still remain in Tibet.

It is a worrying sign that in the past few weeks leading up to this particularly significant commemoration of this uprising—the uprising that saw the Dalai Lama leave Tibet because of threats to him directly—in Tibetan communities both within Tibet and elsewhere in China where there are significant numbers of Tibetan people, the Chinese have sent in significant numbers of troops and have placed enormous restrictions on foreign tourists and foreign journalists. This is a very ominous sign because in the past 12 months more than 200 Tibetans have been killed and many thousands more have been put in prison.

It is beholden on us to acknowledge and support the bravery and dedication of Tibetans who continue to argue for the right to spiritual expression and cultural autonomy. It is beholden on us in all countries where we still have the right to free speech to speak out against the injustices that the Tibetan people are experiencing and to acknowledge their non-violent protest against the Chinese authorities.

With Western Australia's growing connection to China by way of the trade relationships that we have developed, we have a particular obligation to remind the Chinese authorities—the dispute is with the Chinese authorities, not the Chinese people—that the record of human rights abuses in Tibet is unacceptable, and to encourage them in every way we possibly can to think again about their treatment of not only Tibetan minorities but also quite a few other ethnic minorities within China.

As good friends and trading partners, it is beholden on us to take that message in all our communications with the Chinese. It is not simply about how much money we can make from each other; it is also about ensuring that we all live together in a better world. With those thoughts, I ask people in this place to remember that the people of Tibet need our support and our voices to ensure that the international

spotlight is still kept on the injustices that are being perpetrated on the Tibetan people.

Giz Watson
Greens Senator
Western Australia