



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on January 2, 2023

Americans Sanctioned by China Over Human Rights Issues in Tibet Say They Don't Care

Two American citizens who were sanctioned by China in a reprisal for U.S. sanctions imposed over rights abuses in Tibet have said that they do not care about the sanctions. Instead, both posited that the spotlight should remain on Beijing's treatment of ethnic minorities, according to reports by Radio Free Asia (RFA).

China's Foreign Ministry in December 2022 declared sanctions against American historian Miles Yu and Todd Stein, a deputy staff director in the U.S. Congressional-Executive Commission on China. Both are forbidden from traveling to China or communicating with anyone there.



Potala Palace in Lhasa, Tibet (atosan/iStock/Getty Images Plus)

The Congressional-Executive Commission on China is a bipartisan body comprising members of Congress that must prepare a yearly report about human rights and the rule of law in China. It has frequently detailed rights abuses in both Xinjiang and Tibet.

Xinhua News Agency, a news platform controlled by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), said that based on China's Anti-Foreign Sanctions Law, China imposed sanctions in direct retaliation to American sanctions imposed on two Chinese citizens earlier in December.

Stein, who has also worked as a lobbyist for the International Campaign for Tibet, responded that the sanctions did not bother him.

"This doesn't matter," Stein told RFA. "What matters is the thousands of prisoners of conscience jailed by Chinese authorities. Let's not divert attention from their human rights abuses."

Similarly, Yu, a historian who also acts as director of the China Center at the Hudson Institute, said he was unfazed by the sanctions from Beijing.

"The sanctions against me show that what I have been doing is right," Yu told RFA, elaborating that the sanctions "are not meaningful."

Yu added that the U.S. sanctioning of Chinese officials for their "actions against humanity and human rights is a very just thing to do, and also a very chic thing to do" and may have prompted Beijing to do the same.

"Now the Chinese government announced its sanctions against me, which sounds like [they're] copying to be chic," said Yu, who acted as adviser to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in the Trump administration.

On December 9, 2022, the United States declared an array of sanctions on foreign officials, including two Chinese officials in the Tibetan Autonomous Region. These two officials were former provincial party secretary Wu Yingjie and Tibetan Public Security Bureau chief Zhang Hongbo.



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The pair were charged with directing Beijing's program of "stability policies" in Tibet, which the U.S. Treasury Department accused had entailed "serious human rights abuse, including extrajudicial killings, physical abuse, arbitrary arrests, and mass detentions."

U.S. sanctions on two senior Chinese officials over supposed human rights abuses in Tibet were illegal and gravely undermined Sino-U.S. ties, the Chinese foreign ministry lambasted.

China dismisses allegations that it has used brutal policies to suppress ethnic dissent and restrict religious activities in the Himalayan region of Tibet.

Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin remarked that the steps were a serious interference in China's internal affairs and a breach of basic norms of international relations.

"We urge the US side to immediately withdraw the so-called sanctions," he told a regular briefing.

Wang also added that China would protect its rights and interests.

"The United States has no right to impose sanctions on other countries at every turn and is not qualified to play the world police," Wang said. He also lampooned remarks by Nicholas Burns, the U.S. ambassador to China, as being "full of lies and prejudice."

Burns had said the United States remained "deeply concerned" over what it saw as China's inability to adhere to its international commitment to safeguard rights assured by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in areas such as Hong Kong, Tibet, and Xinjiang.

"We urge the US side to stop using human rights issues to smear China, to stop using human rights issues to interfere in China's internal affairs and to undermine China's stability," Wang added.

Anti-sanctions measures against Yu and Stein materialized in December 2022, based on an order signed by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and publicized on a ministry social media account .

Moreover, China will freeze all Chinese assets of Yu and Stein, and ban any organization or individual within China from communicating with them. Both men and their family members are also prohibited from entering China.

In 2021, the United States nominated Under Secretary of State Uzra Zeya as special coordinator for Tibet, provoking a warning from China to remain out of its internal affairs.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Zeya, who is in charge of democracy and human rights, would spearhead U.S. efforts to protect the Chinese-ruled territory's religious, cultural, and linguistic heritage amid Beijing's human rights abuses.

"She will lead US efforts to preserve the religious, cultural, and linguistic heritage of Tibetans who are facing human rights abuses and challenges to their livelihoods and environment," Blinken declared in a tweet.

The International Campaign for Tibet advocacy group lauded Zeya's new role, and in an e-mailed statement its interim president Bhuchung Tsering encouraged Zeya to take the helm in canvassing for support from like-minded countries to form a common strategy for Tibet, as required by the Tibetan Policy and Support Act previously passed in the United States.

Beijing has repeatedly rejected any engagement with a U.S. coordinator on Tibet, and China's Washington embassy rebuked the move as "political manipulation."

The communist regime furiously accused the United States of trying to destabilize Tibet after the



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administration of former US president Donald Trump nominated Zeya's predecessor for the same role.

China took control of Tibet after its troops entered the region in 1950 in what the communist regime calls a "peaceful liberation." Tibet has since become one of the most controlled areas in China. Critics, led by the Dalai Lama, accuse Beijing's rule as equivalent to "cultural genocide".



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