

Pressure China over Tibetan issue, urge Nobel laureates

Praising India for taking good care of Tibetan refugees, two Nobel peace laureates Thursday appealed to the international community to pressure China to grant religious and cultural freedom to Tibetans.

'Despite India's tightrope walk on the Tibetan issue, India must be commended for allowing Tibetan refugees and taking care of them,' Jody Williams, who won the Nobel Peace Prize jointly with the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL) in 1997, said here.

'The Dalai Lama has led his community and allowed them to develop peacefully,' she said.

'People of Tibet have right to religious equality and freedom. There is no political will on part of the Chinese government to deal with it,' said Mairead Corrigan, who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1976 along with Betty Williams for her advocacy of a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Northern Ireland.

The two, who met the Dalai Lama in Dharamsala Tuesday, criticised the violation of human rights of Tibetans in China and exhorted the international community to use their influence to pressure China.

The Dalai Lama has been living in the hill resort of Dharamsala in India for the past five decades along with his followers since he fled from Chinese persecution in 1959. India has allowed Tibetans to stay in India on condition that they do not indulge in political activities in the country.

Williams and Corrigan were speaking at the India International Centre at an interaction organised by the Foundation for Non-violent Alternatives in partnership with NDTV. The two invoked Mahatma Gandhi's methods of non-violent resistance to remind the world that only non-violence can lead to sustainable peace.

Williams criticised US President Barack Obama's decision to cancel a meeting with the Dalai Lama early this month reportedly under pressure from China. 'It was appalling. Human rights issues were ignored,' she said while cautioning against the perils of mixing economics with human rights issues.

Williams was also critical of the Nobel Peace Prize for Obama, saying it was premature. 'Let's see if he can rock the boat and walk the talk. It's about action, not words,' she said.

'Our role as Nobel laureates is to continue pressure to educate governments on errors of thinking, educating China about its responsibility and, above all, educating people and civil society about the welfare of Tibetans,' said Williams.

Williams expressed her concern and anguish over the plight of Tibetan refugees in Nepal. 'We are concerned about the situation of 20,000 refugees on Nepal, including 5,000 undocumented refugees. Under pressure from China, they have not been allowed to go home,' she said.

'We plan to send a letter to President Obama and members of the US Congress about the situation of the refugees,' she said.

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