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Dalai Lama Shows Support for Olympics, and Protests

By [MARTIN FACKLER](#)

TOKYO — The [Dalai Lama](#) said Thursday that he supported Beijing's hosting of the Summer Olympics, but he insisted that pro-[Tibet](#) demonstrators had the right to voice their opinions during the international torch relay as long as they refrained from violence.

During a brief stopover in Japan on his way to the United States, the Dalai Lama, the exiled Tibetan spiritual leader, told reporters no one should try to silence demonstrators who are protesting Chinese rule in Tibet. But he struck a conciliatory tone toward Beijing, apparently distancing himself from calls in the West for a boycott of the Olympic opening ceremony.

"We are not anti-Chinese," he said at a news conference at Tokyo's main international airport in Narita. "Right from the beginning, we supported the Olympic Games." Speaking of pro-Tibetan protesters, he said nobody "has the right to tell them to shut up."

He faulted Beijing for suppressing antigovernment unrest in Tibet last month, saying its use of violence was "an outdated method" that did not solve the underlying problems. That unrest, the most severe in the region in two decades, and the resulting Chinese crackdown have touched off sympathy protests around the world, with demonstrators demanding greater freedom in Tibet.

The demonstrations disrupted the journey of the Olympic torch, including its stops in London, Paris and most recently San Francisco. The protests have deeply angered Beijing, which had hoped to use the Olympics to burnish its image and to showcase China's emergence onto the world stage.

In a separate statement on Thursday, though, the Tibetan government in exile, based in India, said it did not support the disruption of the Olympic torch relay, an action that went beyond mere protest. Beijing has blamed the Dalai Lama for masterminding the recent unrest in Tibet.

On Thursday, the Dalai Lama said he was not behind the disturbances, calling the Chinese claims "a serious allegation."

"I really feel very sad the government demonizes me," he said. "I am just a human. I am not a demon."

He said the root of the problem was China's heavy-handed rule of Tibet, which he fled in 1959 after a failed uprising against Chinese control.

"Autonomy is just in name," he said, referring to China's position that it gives Tibetans a large measure of self-rule. "It is not sincerely implemented."

Thousands of Tibetan exiles protested in New Delhi on Thursday, carrying 154 fake dead bodies, in a symbolic funeral of the people they believe to have died in the uprising in Tibet.

The Tibetan government in exile said at least 154 people died in the protests and crackdown that followed in the Tibetan capital, Lhasa, last month. Chinese authorities say the death toll was 22.

More than 2000 protesters — young and old, men and women, monks, students and workers — took turns carrying the shrouded effigies on their shoulders, chanting anti-China slogans.

"This past one month is historic in the history of Tibetan freedom struggle," said Tenzin Tsundue, a writer and an advocate of Tibetan independence. "These protests have solidified the Tibetan community, in and outside Tibet, as never before. They are willing to sacrifice anything now." Mr. Tsundue is one of the 100 people who started a march to Tibet. The Indian police arrested the marchers and later released them.

After a month of protesting, the Tibetan exile groups are becoming louder, bigger and more innovative in their techniques, staging motorcycle and bicycle rallies and mock displays of Chinese atrocities, shaving their heads, lighting oil lamps in prayers for the dead and donating blood.

Samdhong Rinpoche, the prime minister of the Tibetan government in exile, said in a press conference at the protest that signals from Chinese authorities were mixed. "They might deploy more army and more repressive regime," he said.

Kiran Bedi, who was India's first female police officer, declined to take part in the torch relay through India later this month because of the strict security required now. "I cannot run in a caged manner," she said. "It is no more a freedom torch now."

Hari Kumar contributed reporting from New Delhi.

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