



**The Most Reverend Desmond M Tutu, O.M.S.G. D.D. F.K.C.
Anglican Archbishop Emeritus of Cape Town**

PO Box 1092, Milnerton, Cape Town 7435
Suite 44, Frazzitta Business Park, cnr Freedom Way & Koeberg Road, Milnerton 7441
Tel: (+27) 021 552 7524
Fax: (+27) 021 552 7529
E-mail: mpilo@iafrica.com

Today I join Free Tibet in celebrating the 75th birthday of my great friend Tenzin Gyatso, His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama of Tibet, the spiritual and political leader of Tibetans both inside Tibet and in exile.

My great sadness today is that in Tibet people face very grave consequences if they join me in celebrating the birthday of this extraordinary man who they hold so dear. Tibetans in Tibet cannot openly pray for his long life or burn incense to mark his birthday, as is traditional for Tibetan Buddhists; nor can they carry or display a photograph of their Dalai Lama without fear of punishment, including detention and even torture. Great efforts are taken in Tibet to minimise his influence: monks and nuns are forced to denounce the Dalai Lama or face a variety of measures from fines to expulsion from their monastery or nunnery.

All these restrictions are terrible violations of the universal right to freedom of religion and religious belief as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

My friend's lifelong commitment to compassion, tolerance and non-violence have earned him respect throughout the world, and in 1989 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his non-violent struggle for the liberation of Tibet. He has inspired not only me, but also people of all faiths from all corners of the globe, to live with compassion and grace even when faced with the most difficult circumstances.

While people across the world freely and publicly celebrate this most auspicious day, the 75th birthday of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, I join Free Tibet in asking the Chinese government to please, please stop preventing the veneration in Tibet of a man who is such an example to us all of compassion, tolerance and forgiveness. To the international community, I ask you today to please hold in your hearts and thoughts the many people in Tibet who are forced to celebrate His Holiness the Dalai Lama in secret. The people of Tibet may not be able to read my words today, but my wish is that they know that we stand in solidarity with them, petitioning on their behalf that they may be able openly and freely to celebrate this 75th birthday of their revered and beloved Dalai Lama.

Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu

*"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God - if there is this love among you,
then all will know that you are my disciples."*