

## Dalai Lama Condemns Myanmar Crackdown

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By GAVIN RABINOWITZ

AMRITSAR, India — The Dalai Lama said Tuesday he supported the recent pro-democracy demonstrations in Myanmar and condemned the crackdown on the Buddhist monks who led them, saying it reminded him of China's oppression of Tibetans.

Myanmar's military rulers crushed a series of pro-democracy protests in September, killing at least 15 people according to information authorities gave the U.N., and detaining nearly 3,000 protesters. Monks were at the forefront of the movement. Diplomats and dissidents say the death toll was much higher.

"When I saw pictures of people beating monks I was immediately reminded of inside Tibet, in our own case, where just a few days ago monks were beaten by Chinese forces," the Dalai Lama said.

"I am fully committed and I have full support and sympathy for the demonstrators," the Tibetan spiritual leader told reporters on the sidelines of the Elijah Interfaith Summit of world religious leaders in the northern Indian city of Amritsar.

The meeting, which brought together prominent Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, Sikh and Jewish leaders, focused on using religion to spread peace and resolve conflict.

The Dalai Lama urged the military junta in Myanmar — a staunchly Buddhist country — to heed the Buddha's teachings.

"They should be Buddhists. Please act according to Buddha's message of compassion," he said.

The military has ruled Myanmar, also known as Burma, since 1962, crushing periodic rounds of dissent. It held elections in 1990 but refused to hand over power to the democratically elected government.

The Dalai Lama has been leading a campaign for autonomy and religious freedom for Tibet, which China has ruled since its Communist-led forces invaded Tibet in 1951.

The 72-year-old Dalai Lama, winner of the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize, has been based in the Indian hill town of Dharamsala since he fled Tibet in the face of advancing Chinese soldiers in 1959.



Spiritual and political head of Tibet, the Dalai Lama, center poses for photographs after meeting various religious leaders in Amritsar, India, Tuesday, Nov. 27, 2007. The Dalai Lama said Tuesday the Tibetan people will hold a referendum before he dies to decide whether a new system of leadership is needed for the Himalayan people. (AP Photo/Aman Sharma)