

A leading Chinese internet company has been forced to make changes to its Crisis 2015 video game after intense social media criticism in Tibet of its use of real Tibetan Buddhist temples as settings for graphic violence and scantily dressed women. The game is deeply offensive to Tibetans, who suffer from religious persecution and believe their culture is held in contempt by China’s government and many Chinese people.

Players in the “first person shooter” game, made by NetEase for the Chinese market, adopt the role of combat-dressed soldiers who deploy shotguns, machine guns and other heavy weapons to kill other combatants. Game footage available online shows battles on temple grounds and images from the game show weapons pointed at religious murals, stupas (religious monuments) and the ornate exteriors of Tibetan temples. Another screenshot shows a scantily-dressed woman surrounded by heavily-armed military personnel inside a temple. Amongst the game’s locations is the Jokhang temple in Lhasa, considered by most Tibetans to be the most sacred religious building in Tibet.

Social media comments by Tibetans included:

“Tibetan temple culture has been vilified, Tibetan religious beliefs have been demonised - hoping that all my friends will move their fingers and take action! Report! Protest!”

And:

"In a temple, it is absolutely forbidden to kill, steal, engage in sexual misconduct, lie or drink alcohol. [ ... ] You [the game developers] have ... created online battlefield scenes inside Tibetan religious buildings... There is violence and fighting in this game which shows no respect for religious buildings and symbols of our spiritual beliefs.”

In a statement issued on the Chinese social media platform Weibo on Friday, 19 December, NetEase apologised for “hurting the feelings” of Tibetans and promised to be more “sensitive to culture and religion” in future (5). The company has removed a number of scenes featuring Tibetan religious imagery and religious places.

Free Tibet director Eleanor Byrne-Rosengren said: “Violence and destruction in their religious buildings during the Cultural Revolution is a painful memory for many Tibetans – disrespect and destruction of their culture is a deep grievance today. The short, sharp online campaign is a reminder of those sensitivities and of the willingness of Tibetans to defend their culture wherever they see it under attack. In the real world, Tibetan protests face real guns but this small victory is a sign that not everyone in China is as blind to Tibetan grievances as its government.”

Tibetan Buddhism rejects violence and temples traditionally offer protection to all sentient beings. More than 6,000 monasteries are estimated to have been destroyed since China invaded Tibet in 1950. During China’s Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and 70s, monastery buildings were blown up or destroyed using artillery. Religious institutions in Tibet are subject to

## Tibetan Netizens Win Battle Over “Sex and Violence” Game Set in Buddhist Temples

Free Tibet

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strict state monitoring and control.