

Religious repression in Tibet has further intensified with new regulations.

The Chinese government has ordered citizens of Tibet to worship in front of pictures of Xi Jinping and the Communist Party leadership in shrines inside their homes, instead of religious figures like the Dalai Lama, according to information provided by Free Tibet's research partner Tibet Watch.

Tibetans who are dependent on government subsidies or are on the poverty alleviation programme have been told their aid would stop if they fail to replace the images of holy Lamas that traditionally hang in their homes.

The order comes following a 9 to 13 January meeting of the People's Congress of the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), the body through which the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) rules western and southern Tibet.

Photographs, which some have called propaganda, of Tibetan families smiling in their homes in front of shrines to communist party leaders have been put on official state media websites as part of the policy drive.

Cultural genocide

The session of the People's Congress saw Che Dalha, Party Chairman of the TAR, announce that Tibet had successfully reduced activities by "hostile forces" in the country. The statement is thought to be a reference to the Dalai Lama and the Buddhist exile community.

The Chinese authorities perceive any expression of Tibetan faith and traditional identity as resistance against their rule and the dominance of the Han.

Pressure from the Chinese government on Tibetans to replace religious images with Party leaders has intensified over the past year.

There has been a notable increase in pressure on Tibetans living in the countryside; in October and November 2018, during a flood in Tibet's rural Drichu County, Tibetan residents were reportedly told by authorities to save portraits of Chinese leaders and the Chinese flag over their own possessions.

Monks and nuns are required to profess faith to the CCP and are being closely monitored by a committee formed of Chinese officials, reports have claimed.

In the Tibetan township of Domar, last year, the CCP ordered pictures of the Dalai Lama to be replaced with Chinese officials in all but two of the main monasteries.

Chinese Order Tibetans to Worship Xi Jinping and Party Leaders

Free Tibet

The local Communist Party's 'WeChat' page announced details of the order, claiming it would "promote stability and protect the community's welfare."