

Tibetan premier to make first European tour

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Tibet's prime minister-in-exile, Lobsang Sangay, is to embark next week on his first European tour since he was elected in April, amid increasing alarm over a wave of nun and monk immolations.

Sangay, who was elected to the government-in-exile's new post as the Dalai Lama tries to ease out of his political role, is to visit seven European nations, Paris-based Tibet office spokesman Tsering Dhondup told AFP.

He is to meet lawmakers and senators, members of the Tibetan community living abroad and Tibet support groups during the tour that begins in Switzerland on November 21 and ends in Britain on December 2, Dhondup said.

The tour also takes in France, Germany, Sweden, Norway and Belgium.

Sangay, a 43-year-old Harvard scholar, took office in August, assuming the political leadership role relinquished by the 76-year-old Dalai Lama in May.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton last week voiced alarm over Beijing's treatment of Tibetans amid a wave of self-immolations by nuns and monks in ethnic Tibetan areas of China over what they see as Beijing's stifling rule.

During a US visit earlier this month, Sangay appealed for Washington "to prevail on the Chinese government to make them realise the tragedy unfolding in Tibet, that this kind of a hardline policy of the Chinese government is not working."

Activists say that at least five monks and two nuns have died and that Chinese police have at times responded by beating the aught protesters and their colleagues rather than providing assistance.

The Dalai Lama fled Tibet following a failed uprising against Chinese rule in 1959. He later founded the government in exile in Dharamshala after being offered refuge by India.