

Dalai Lama turns 76 as he kicks off D.C. peace festival

by [Jack Jenkins](#)

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WASHINGTON (RNS) The Dalai Lama celebrated his 76th birthday in Washington on Wednesday (July 6) by speaking before throngs of well-wishers and kicking off an 11-day peace event in the U.S. capital.

Sporting traditional Tibetan Buddhist robes and a red visor, the exiled leader of Tibetan Buddhism addressed the large crowd assembled at a downtown arena. His speech, which was delivered partially in English and partially in the Tibetan language, covered a range of topics and referenced other peace-seeking leaders such as Martin Luther King Jr.

The Dalai Lama touched on a number of topics, including the role of morality in the home. He praised the virtues of providing for family but cautioned against "destructive" and "very bad" habits like gambling.

The Dalai Lama also discussed his recent decision to step down as the political leader of Tibet's government-in-exile, noting discomfort with his dual role as both spiritual leader and head of state.

"Religious and political institutions should be separate. I believe that," he said. "I myself combine these two. This is hypocrisy!"

The Dalai Lama's speech was the first of several planned appearances in Washington over the next week. The spiritual leader is overseeing the July 6-16 "Kalachakra for World Peace," a series of talks and lectures that will also include several Buddhist ceremonies.