

# Submission to the Conservative Party Human Rights Commission

## “Human rights situation in Tibet: 2013-2016”

Submitted by Tibet Society, 18 April 2016

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

**Definitions of Tibet and China:** Tibet to the Chinese government is the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). Tibet to Tibetans comprises three regions - U'Tsang (now the TAR), Amdo and Kham, which are now incorporated into the Chinese provinces of Sichuan, Qinghai, Gansu and Yunnan. In this report 'Tibet' refers to the TAR and Tibetan regions in Chinese provinces. In addition, 'China' refers to the People's Republic of China.

**Dialogue between China and Tibetan representatives:** Formal dialogue between the Dalai Lama's representatives and Chinese government officials has stalled since the ninth round of talks in January 2010, the longest interval since such contacts resumed in 2002.

**Living conditions:** Prior to 2008, conditions for Tibetans living in Tibetan regions outside the TAR were generally more relaxed than for those living in the TAR. Since 2008, when protests spread across the Tibetan plateau calling for an end to China's oppressive policies, many regions have come under severe security crackdowns, with restrictions on freedoms of expression, religion, movement and assembly. The climate within the TAR has remained one likened to that of a military occupation.

**Freedom and human rights:** Tibet was ranked as the second worst place for freedom and human rights in 2015 by US-based NGO Freedom House. Only Syria had a worse ranking on overall freedom than Tibet, whilst countries with notoriously poor human rights records, such as North Korea, Somalia and Saudi Arabia, fared better.<sup>1</sup>

In its report for 2014/15, Amnesty International noted that Tibetans in Tibet “face discrimination and restrictions on their rights to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, expression, association and peaceful assembly.”<sup>2</sup>

**Political prisoners:** There are over 640 known political prisoners in Tibet.<sup>3</sup> Due to the lack of transparency by the Chinese government, the true number of Tibetans in custody on political charges is likely to be considerably higher. Many more are missing, assumed to have been detained or arbitrarily arrested. Tibetans charged with political crimes are often tried in secret, not allowed independent legal representation and evidence against them is often extracted by torture.

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<sup>1</sup> Freedom House: <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/freedom-world-2016>

<sup>2</sup> Amnesty International: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/china/report-2013/#section-29-8>

<sup>3</sup> As of 1 September 2015, the US Congressional Executive Committee on China recorded 646 political prisoners in Tibet: <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2015&dliid=252757>

In November 2015, during a UN review process and despite being presented with evidence to the contrary, the Chinese government claimed it had “no cases of political prisoners” in Tibet, denied the existence of torture in prisons and detention centres and refuted allegations of unfair or cruel treatment of prisoners from ethnic minorities.<sup>4</sup>

• *Note: In the following pages examples are given to illustrate specific issues and human rights abuses. In most areas there are many further known cases, and even these, given Chinese government restrictions on reporting and information sharing in Tibet, are likely to be just the ‘tip of the iceberg’.*

## 2. REPRESSION OF CIVIL SOCIETY

Since the invasion of Tibet in 1950, the Chinese government has conducted an overt policy of repression of Tibetan society. Tibetans are denied meaningful representation in the governance and development of their own land and are denied rights to protect their own culture, language, religion, and environment. A constant military presence and armed responses to peaceful protests are just two measures contributing to a climate of fear inside Tibet.

Chinese President Xi Jinping has not only continued the policy of repression but has called for further measures to ‘control’ the Tibetan population. At the same time, the Chinese government is attempting to produce an image to the outside world of a “harmonious and stable” Tibet.

China’s new laws on national security (passed on 1 July 2015), counter-terrorism (passed on 27 December 2015) and foreign NGO management (still in draft form), are further steps in President Xi’s efforts to legitimise its repression of civil society and the systemic deprivation of the rights to freedom of assembly, association and expression. At the same time, China continues to fail to uphold the rule of law, which is supposedly guaranteed to all citizens in its constitution.

In Tibet, the implications of the new laws are likely to be extreme. An already repressed society will probably see even further crackdowns with increased surveillance, harassment, criminalisation and imprisonment under the guise of “anti-separatism”.

The Chinese government’s recent crackdown on human rights lawyers is making it virtually impossible for Tibetans to receive independent counsel. Even prior to the crackdown, human rights lawyers working on Tibetan cases faced major obstacles such as bias of the judiciary, a general lack of due process and difficulty in gaining access to clients in detention.

In January 2016, the Chinese government extended indefinitely an intensive surveillance programme in the TAR. The scheme involves the monitoring and collecting information on the behaviour and movements of Tibetans in over 5,000 villages, with each village assigned at least four cadres who also conduct ‘political re-education’ sessions.<sup>5</sup>

Surveillance and security measures have also intensified in Tibetan regions of Gansu, Qinghai and Sichuan, with the expansion of military and police powers, backed by grassroots propaganda work and electronic surveillance to eliminate dissent and enforce compliance to government policies.<sup>6</sup>

### Statements by the Chinese government

• In August 2015, Chinese President Xi Jinping called for greater efforts to fight “anti-separatist” activities in Tibet. He also called for more campaigns in Tibetan regions to increase a sense of identity with “the motherland, Chinese nationality, Chinese culture, the CPC and socialism with Chinese characteristics.”<sup>7</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights: <http://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=16774&LangID=E>

<sup>5</sup> Human Rights Watch: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/01/18/china-no-end-tibet-surveillance-program>

<sup>6</sup> International Campaign for Tibet: <http://www.savetibet.org/tightening-of-an-invisible-net-new-security-measures-in-eastern-tibet-heighten-surveillance-control/>

<sup>7</sup> Xinhua: [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-08/25/c\\_134554681.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-08/25/c_134554681.htm)

- In August 2015, Cui Yuying, Deputy Minister of China's Propaganda Department said, "We should carry out sophisticated, systematic, free-flowing publicity campaigns that will create an image of a harmonious and stable Tibet within the country and abroad."<sup>8</sup>

### 3. FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Since the Tibetan uprising of 2008, which saw large-scale protests against Chinese rule across the Tibetan plateau, the Chinese government has sought to eradicate all forms of dissent in Tibet. Combined with a new emphasis on 'counter-terror' measures, Tibetans are now living in a dangerous political climate in which almost any expression of Tibetan identity or culture not directly sanctioned by the state, no matter how mild, can be characterised by the authorities as "splittist" or "ant-separatist" and therefore "criminal".<sup>9</sup>

Despite the intensified dangers, Tibetans are continuing to take bold steps in asserting their national identity and defending their culture, which include peaceful protests calling for freedom and the return of the Dalai Lama, expressions of Tibetan identity in the form of essays, poetry and songs, displays of Tibetan culture and non-state sanctioned teaching of the Tibetan language.

In 2015, Amnesty International stated in its annual human rights report, "The [Chinese] authorities continued to severely restrict the right to freedom of expression. Activists and human rights defenders risked harassment and arbitrary detention. Torture and other ill-treatment remained widespread and access to justice was elusive for many. Ethnic minorities including Tibetans... faced discrimination and increased security crackdown."<sup>10</sup>

#### Tibet's cultural resurgence

There has been a vibrant literary and cultural resurgence in Tibet since the Spring 2008 protests against government policy. Dozens of Tibetan intellectuals, artists, bloggers, writers and singers have faced persecution and imprisonment simply for expressing their views or promoting the Tibetan identity.

- On 15 April 2015, singer Gonpo Tenzin was sentenced to three and a half years in prison by a court in Driru county (TAR). Gonpo was arrested in Lhasa in November 2014 for his song "Where is the new year in Tibet", which encourages Tibetans to celebrate and preserve their language and culture. He was subjected to torture before his trial and denied access to legal aid.<sup>11</sup>
- On 17 February 2016, popular Tibetan blogger Druklo (pen-name Shokjang) was sentenced to three years' imprisonment by the Mahlo People's Court (Qinghai). He was charged with "inciting separatism" for writing articles critical of Chinese policies in Tibet, sharing allegedly sensitive news and having banned material on his phone. Druklo has appealed to the Higher People's Court to "look for the objective truth" in his case adding that he has "not written a word of separatism".<sup>12</sup>

#### Promotion of Tibetan language

The Chinese government asserts that learning and using the Tibetan language is "protected by law" but officials have closed non-government run programs and detained Tibetans who promote use of the language or protest against language restrictions.

- On 10 April 2013, eight Tibetan students were jailed for their involvement in mass student protests against education policies which included the restriction of the use of the Tibetan language. A court in Chabcha county (Qinghai) found the students guilty of "causing harm to social stability" by "illegally holding a demonstration". Sangye Bum, Kunsang Bum, Choekyong

<sup>8</sup> Tibetan Centre for Human Rights & Democracy: <http://www.tchrd.org/new-crackdown-campaign-introduced-in-tibet-ahead-of-sensitive-anniversary-celebrations/>

<sup>9</sup> International Campaign for Tibet: <http://www.savetibet.org/the-teeth-of-the-storm-lack-of-freedom-of-expression-and-cultural-resilience-in-tibet/>

<sup>10</sup> Amnesty International: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/china/report-2013#section-29-8>

<sup>11</sup> Central Tibetan Administration: <http://tibet.net/2015/05/tibetan-singer-sentenced-to-three-and-a-half-years-in-prison/>

<sup>12</sup> Tibet Society: <http://www.tibetsociety.com/content/view/591>

Kyap, Lhaten, Jampa Tsering, Wangyal Tsering and two unnamed Tibetans received sentences of between three and four years.<sup>13</sup>

- In January 2016, Radio Free Asia reported that many non-government Tibetan language classes and workshops in Pema county (Qinghai) had shut down or were being held in secret, due to tightened security measures which could result in the arrest of those involved with “illegal associations”.<sup>14</sup>
- On 27 January 2016, Tashi Wangchuk, an advocate of Tibetan language education, was detained by Chinese police in Yushu (Qinghai) and charged with “inciting separatism”. His detention came after the *New York Times* published an online documentary of Tashi travelling to Beijing to petition for the right to Tibetan language education in Tibet.<sup>15</sup>

### **Ban on Tibetan national flag and images of the Dalai Lama**

The Chinese government has banned the display and possession of the Tibetan national flag and images of the Dalai Lama. They are deemed “separatist activities” and are punishable with a prison sentence. Even storing digital images on a mobile phone is considered a crime.

- On 7 November 2014, two young monks were jailed after staging separate peaceful protests in Ngaba (Sichuan) earlier in the year, which involved the waving of hand-drawn versions of the Tibetan flag. They were charged with “separatist activities” and “plotting against the nation”. Lobsang Gyatso (20) was jailed for three years and Lobsang Tenpa (19) two years.<sup>16</sup>
- On 17 February 2016, Gomar Choephel, a 47-year old monk, was handed a two-year prison sentence for sharing a photo of the Dalai Lama via social media. He was sentenced by the Intermediate Court in Malho (Qinghai) after being held without trial for seven months.<sup>17</sup>

### **Environmental protests**

Environmental exploitation in Tibet is a significant trigger for Tibetan protest. There is little or no consultation with local communities before environmental exploitation begins. Mining, damming of rivers and land-grabbing are common themes for protest.

- In May 2013, Tibetans in Driru county (TAR) began to protest against mining operations on a local sacred mountain. The authorities responded with a large-scale ‘patriotic re-education’ campaign, leading to further protests and culminating in mass arrests and the shooting of protesters. At least 60 people were injured. Two of those arrested died in custody, Kunchok Drokpa and Ngawang Janyang, reportedly from torture. Harsh prison sentences were meted out, including to Choechap who received a 13-year sentence and Dorjee Daktal who was handed an 11-year sentence.<sup>18</sup>
- In August 2014, reports emerged that six Tibetans had been jailed for alleged roles in protests over mining operations in Phenpo Lhundup county (TAR). Choeying Wooser, Kunga, Ngawang Yeshe, Pema Gyalpo, Pema Gyaltsen and Penpa were charged with involvement in “splittist activities” and received sentences of between eight and 12 years. It is feared they did not receive due process.<sup>19</sup>

### **Solo protestors**

Individual peaceful protests have become more common in Tibet since the Chinese government introduced legislation in December 2012 criminalising self-immolations and allowed local authorities to collectively punish those related or associated with self-immolators.

In the last couple of years, dozens of Tibetans have undertaken solo peaceful protests, often by walking down a main street and shouting slogans calling for Tibetan freedom and unity. Almost

<sup>13</sup> Tibet Society: <http://www.tibetsociety.com/content/view/388>

<sup>14</sup> Radio Free Asia: <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/controls-01202016160851.html>

<sup>15</sup> The New York Times: <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/31/world/asia/china-tibet-tashi-wangchuk.html>

<sup>16</sup> Tibet Society: <http://www.tibetsociety.com/content/view/511>

<sup>17</sup> Radio Free Asia: <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/photos-02222016163847.html>

<sup>18</sup> Tibet Watch: [http://www.tibetwatch.org/uploads/2/4/3/4/24348968/environmental\\_protests\\_on\\_the\\_tibetan\\_plateau.pdf](http://www.tibetwatch.org/uploads/2/4/3/4/24348968/environmental_protests_on_the_tibetan_plateau.pdf)

<sup>19</sup> Tibet Society: <http://www.tibetsociety.com/content/view/492>

all have called for the return of the Dalai Lama to Tibet, with some carrying portraits of their spiritual leader. The protests usually only last for several minutes before police or security personnel apprehend the individual concerned.<sup>20</sup>

- On 9 September 2015, Jampel Gyatso, a 21-year old monk from Kirti monastery, walked the streets of Ngaba town (Sichuan) holding aloft a photo of the Dalai Lama and calling for freedom in Tibet. He was quickly detained by Chinese police. His current whereabouts and condition are not known.<sup>21</sup>

- In late 2015, two teenage monks from Kirti monastery in Ngaba (Sichuan) were jailed for undertaking separate peaceful protests in March 2015. Gendun Phuntsok (18) was sentenced to four years' imprisonment at a trial in late October and Lobsang Kalsang (19) received a three-year sentence in early November. Both monks had protested on the main street in Ngaba, carrying portraits of the Dalai Lama and calling for "freedom in Tibet".<sup>22</sup>

- On 1 March 2016, Mangga, a 33-year old mother, was arrested following a solo protest, in Meuruma (Sichuan). Mangga carried a portrait of the Dalai Lama during her protest. Her whereabouts and condition are unknown.<sup>23</sup>

### China's violent response to peaceful protests

- On 6 July 2013, at least ten Tibetans were seriously injured, when Chinese armed police beat, used tear gas and opened fire on a gathering of about 100 people who were peacefully celebrating the Dalai Lama's birthday with a picnic and prayer service in Tawu (Sichuan).<sup>24</sup>

- In September 2013, Tibetans in Driru (TAR) refused government orders to fly Chinese flags from their homes leading to arrests, clashes with police and a major security crackdown. Protests spread across the region with security forces responding by shooting into the crowds, using tear gas and beating protestors. There were four (unconfirmed) deaths and dozens of injuries. Hundreds of Tibetans were detained and subject to 'political re-education'.<sup>25</sup>

- On 12 August 2014, Tibetans took to the streets in Loshu (Sichuan) to protest against the arbitrary arrest of a village leader. Chinese police violently suppressed the demonstration using live ammunition and tear gas. At least ten Tibetans were seriously injured and many, possibly hundreds, were detained. The authorities denied medical treatment to those injured. Six Tibetans died, four succumbing to their injuries and two committing suicide as a result of the detentions.<sup>26</sup>

- On 13 July 2015, Chinese police fired upon Tibetans protesting the death in prison of revered Buddhist leader Tenzin Delek Rinpoche. A crowd of about 1,000 Tibetans had gathered in Nyagchuka county (Sichuan) to demand the authorities release his body. At least 23 people were hospitalised.<sup>27</sup>

## 4. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Since 2008, when protests broke out across Tibet, the Chinese government has strengthened efforts to impose an information blackout across Tibet, with the authorities exercising a high degree of scrutiny and censorship on the flow of information throughout the region. Communication blackouts are commonplace, especially during sensitive 'political' anniversaries and following protests or 'political' incidents.

<sup>20</sup> Tibet Society: <http://www.tibetsociety.com/content/view/562/#adruk>

<sup>21</sup> Radio Free Asia: <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/young-tibetan-monk-detained-for-solo-protest-in-ngaba-09092015114942.html>

<sup>22</sup> Tibet Society: <http://www.tibetsociety.com/content/view/582>

<sup>23</sup> Tibetan Centre for Human Rights & Democracy: <http://www.tchrd.org/tibetan-mother-secretly-detained-after-staging-peaceful-solo-protest-amid-increased-repression-and-internet-blockade/>

<sup>24</sup> BBC: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-23236996>

<sup>25</sup> Tibet Society: <http://www.tibetsociety.com/content/view/449>

<sup>26</sup> Tibet Society: <http://www.tibetsociety.com/content/view/496>

<sup>27</sup> The Independent: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/chinese-police-opened-fire-beat-protesters-and-used-tear-gas-on-tibetan-activists-in-southwest-china-10387449.html>

Punishment for low-level information sharing in Tibet is amongst the most severe in the world. Harsh prison sentences are handed out for “separatist” online activities such as possession of digital images of the Tibetan flag or sharing information about protests via email or instant messaging. Random checks of mobile phones and other personal devices have become routine throughout Tibet.

The Chinese government refuses open media access to Tibet and Tibetan regions, which has been effectively closed to journalists since the protests in 2008. Only a few government-run media junkets have been allowed in recent years, which are carefully controlled in order to present a picture of harmony and stability. Journalists are only shown what the authorities wish them to see and Tibetans are produced for interview who will keep to the Party-line.

- Increased security and surveillance measures have meant only several overseas journalists have gained access to the region without official approval and managed to smuggle out footage.
  - In May 2013, France24 reporter Cyril Payen filmed in secret in Lhasa for seven days. He reported, Tibet is “already but a shadow of its former self” noting that Lhasa is “an Orwellian world of surveillance, like a city under occupation. There are thousands of military and police, CCTV cameras, patrols inspections, spot searches.”<sup>28</sup>
  - In December 2013, the BBC’s China correspondent, Damian Grammaticas, reported from inside Tibet on the situation facing Tibetans. He stated the grievances of Tibetans were not being addressed, adding, “Tibetans fear that they are being marginalised, their culture eroded, their voices silenced, while the rest of the world looks away.”<sup>29</sup>
  - In October 2015, BBC reporter John Sudworth went undercover to report from Kirti monastery in Ngaba (Sichuan) during the Chinese President’s State Visit to the UK. He reported “fear is so much in evidence” amongst Tibetans due to China’s tight security and harsh policies restricting the freedoms of expression and religion.<sup>30</sup>
- In April 2013, four Tibetans were sentenced for up to six years for sharing information and images of self-immolations on social media platforms. Chagthar, Choepa Gyal, Gonpo and Namkha Jam were found guilty of “inciting separatism” by the Intermediate People’s Court in Malho (Qinghai).<sup>31</sup>
- In May 2014, two Tibetans received harsh prison sentences after sharing information via an online messaging service about an anti-fur campaign endorsed by the Dalai Lama. Jamyang Wangtso and Namgyal Wangchuk were sentenced to seven and five years respectively by a court in Riwoche county (TAR).<sup>32</sup>

## 5. FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

As well as difficulty in obtaining passports and official papers to entitle travel outside Tibet, Tibetans are facing ever tighter controls over movement inside Tibet. Many Tibetans are being forcibly relocated and Tibetan nomads are being forced off their traditional lands and into urban housing.

- Since 2006, it is estimated over three million Tibetans have been involuntarily “re-housed” or relocated through Chinese government-ordered schemes. In the TAR, hundreds of thousands of nomadic herders have been relocated or settled in ‘New Socialist Villages’. These resettlement

<sup>28</sup> France24 report via Youtube: <https://youtu.be/yXRBnnOyn1w>

<sup>29</sup> BBC: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-25195006>

<sup>30</sup> BBC: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-china-34578324>

<sup>31</sup> Tibetan Centre for Human Rights & Democracy: <http://www.tchrd.org/2013/04/china-confirms-sentencing-four-tibetans-for-inciting-separatism/>

<sup>32</sup> Tibetan Centre for Human Rights & Democracy: <http://www.tchrd.org/2014/09/two-tibetans-receive-harsh-prison-sentences-for-online-anti-fur-campaign/>

programmes, which are continuing throughout Tibet, are leading to increased poverty, environmental degradation and social breakdown.<sup>33</sup>

- Checkpoints and roadblocks are regular features of Tibetan daily life, and form a part of a mass surveillance network across the Tibetan region. In 2014, it was reported that a government-run camera grid system, referred to as “Skynet”, may have a camera on every road in Tibet.<sup>34</sup>
- Local authorities often issue bans on movement of Tibetans both in and out of areas in response to protests or in the run-up to politically sensitive anniversaries. In March 2016, Tibetans residing outside the TAR region were banned from travelling to Lhasa for a month, presumably due to the 10 March anniversary of the 1959 Tibetan National Uprising.<sup>35</sup>

## 6. FREEDOM OF RELIGION

Despite the Chinese Communist Party being officially atheist, the government attempts to control Tibetan Buddhism by imposing harsh policies of religious repression in Tibet. These policies involve the arbitrary arrest of religious leaders, destruction of religious structures, closure of monasteries, intensive surveillance of monks and nuns, restrictions on religious practices in local communities and even the banning of reincarnation without government approval.

Government officials have been placed in almost every monastery in the TAR to ensure compliance with policies and to undertake ‘political re-education’ sessions. Security personnel are stationed in monasteries which are considered restive.

Influential Tibetan monks and lamas have been singled out for persecution as a means of silencing them. Many have been interrogated, beaten and placed under strict surveillance. Others have been imprisoned on false charges. Many monks in the TAR, expelled from their monasteries following the Spring 2008 uprising, have still not returned, and others have been prevented from joining new monasteries.

The Chinese government continues its ongoing vilification of the Dalai Lama, including accusing him of seeking to “split the motherland” by calling for Tibetan independence (which he has repeatedly denied) and of instigating the wave of self-immolations which began in 2009.

- Gedhun Choeki Nyima, the Panchen Lama, remains missing following his abduction in 1995 by the Chinese authorities at the age of six. The Chinese government refuses to provide any evidence of his whereabouts or well-being and continues to parade its own appointed candidate, Gyaltzen Norbu, despite his rejection by Tibetans.<sup>36</sup>
- In June 2014, authorities in Driru (TAR) issued official directives banning residents from propagating videos and songs praising the Dalai Lama, sharing speeches made by the Dalai Lama and attending religious festivals or teachings led by the Dalai Lama in India.
- In April 2015, TAR Party Secretary Chen Quanguo, announced an intensification of scrutiny into the activities of Tibetan monks and nuns. He said new measures would be introduced to ensure monks and nuns “understand the party and government’s policies and social progress” and to enable them to “educate themselves in patriotism”. Previously in 2013, Chen vowed to wipe out the Dalai Lama’s voice in Tibet, declaring he would “not be seen or heard” in the region.<sup>37</sup>
- At the end of September 2015, the Chinese authorities in Driru county (TAR) expelled 106 nuns for failing to condemn the Dalai Lama as part of a ‘patriotic re-education’ campaign and not having proper documentation. Several residential quarters were also demolished.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Human Rights Watch: <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/06/27/china-end-involuntary-rehousing-relocation-tibetans>

<sup>34</sup> Freedom House: [https://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FOTN\\_2014\\_Full\\_Report\\_compressedv2\\_0.pdf](https://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FOTN_2014_Full_Report_compressedv2_0.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> Radio Free Asia: <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/travel-03242016144448.html>

<sup>36</sup> Tibet Society: <http://www.tibetsociety.com/content/view/53>

<sup>37</sup> The Guardian: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/apr/08/china-to-test-tibetan-monks-and-nuns-for-patriotism>

<sup>38</sup> Radio Free Asia: <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/chinese-authorities-expel-nuns-from-jada-convent-in-tibet-11102015164634.html>

- In November 2015, TAR Party Secretary, Chen Quanguo, announced that government officials who “pretend not to be religious but indeed are” would be rooted out. The drive is an extension of Xi Jinping’s anti-corruption drive and is aimed at seeking out local officials who are secret supporters of the Dalai Lama.<sup>39</sup>
- In July 2015, Khenpo Kartse was sentenced to two and a half years in prison during a secret trial in Chamdo (TAR). A prominent religious leader actively involved in promoting and protecting Tibetan language, culture and religion, Khenpo was arrested in December 2013 and charged with “endangering state security”. Due process was not carried out, with his lawyer forced to withdraw from the case. There are concerns for Khenpo’s health with reports of ill-treatment.<sup>40</sup>

## 7. SELF-IMMOLATIONS

Since 2009, 143 Tibetans in Tibet have set themselves on fire to call for freedom and the return of the Dalai Lama to Tibet - one of the biggest waves of ‘self-immolation as political protest’ of the contemporary era. (There has also been one self-immolation by a Tibetan in Beijing in 2012, and seven self-immolations by Tibetans living in exile.)<sup>41</sup>

The act of self-immolation reflects the desperation of Tibetans inside Tibet; with the implacable crackdown by the Chinese authorities and the lack of platforms or processes to make their voices heard. The majority of Tibetans who have set fire to themselves in Tibet have communicated a wish for the Dalai Lama to return to Tibet. Many of the self-immolators are known to have shouted slogans during their protests. As well as calling for the Dalai Lama to be allowed to return to Tibet, other calls have included freedom for Tibet, for human rights to be respected, for religious freedom, for unity amongst Tibetans and, in some instances, for independence.

The Chinese government has responded to the self-immolations by strengthening the very policies and approaches that are the root cause of the acts, such as aggressive campaigns against loyalty to the Dalai Lama and an expansion of legal measures tightening state control over Tibetan religion and culture. In addition, a new criminal charge of “intentional homicide” was introduced in December 2012 to apply to self-immolators and those connected to the protest. The authorities also announced collective punishments for families, relatives or monasteries associated with those who have self-immolated.<sup>42</sup>

Local authorities have often denied families the right to a traditional funeral for self-immolators, by refusing to return the body. There are also numerous cases where prayer services have been banned and families ordered to lie about the cause of death.

- On 10 December 2013, Gendun Gyatso, a monk from Bora monastery in Labrang (Gansu), was sentenced to six years in prison on charges of “intentional homicide”. He was accused of preventing police from extinguishing the fire on a self-immolator. He was held in custody for over a year and denied the charges, claiming he was not guilty during his trial.<sup>43</sup>
- On 3 November 2014, eight Tibetans were jailed for their association to a self-immolation protest in Ngaba county (Sichuan) that took place in December 2013 whilst David Cameron was on an official visit to China. The Tibetans received sentences of up to five years, on suspected charges of “intentional homicide”. One of those sentenced, Dolma Tso, was arrested after offering to help police lift the self-immolator’s body into a vehicle. She was beaten and tortured whilst in detention and denied access to a lawyer.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>39</sup> The New York Times: <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/12/world/asia/communist-party-in-tibet-aims-to-punish-dalai-lama-followers.html>

<sup>40</sup> Tibet Society: <http://www.tibetsociety.com/content/view/452>

<sup>41</sup> Tibet Society: <http://www.tibetsociety.com/content/view/214>

<sup>42</sup> Phayul: <http://www.phayul.com/news/article.aspx?id=32615>

<sup>43</sup> Tibetan Centre for Human Rights & Democracy: <http://www.tchrd.org/2014/01/a-year-after-arrest-monk-sentenced-to-6-years-in-prison-over-self-immolation/>

<sup>44</sup> Tibet Society: <http://www.tibetsociety.com/content/view/510>

- On 18 April 2014, two monks, Tsonдру and Gendun Tsultrim were sentenced to three years each for leading prayers at a funeral service for a self-immolator in Yadzi county (Qinghai).<sup>45</sup>
- Following the self-immolation of Sangye Tso on 27 May 2015, police were deployed to her home to order family members not to discuss the protest and to only tell others she had died from natural causes. The family were denied a traditional funeral and subsequently two family members and three monks were arrested. The exact reason for their arrests and their current status are not known.<sup>46</sup>

## 8. TORTURE & DEATHS IN PRISON

In Tibet, detainees and prisoners are often subjected to physical punishments and torture as well as cruel, inhumane and degrading treatment. In recent years, the Chinese authorities have adopted a practice of early releases for prisoners who are in ill-health to ensure they do not die in prison.

In 2008, the UN Committee against Torture expressed deep concern about China's "routine and widespread use of torture" and, in its section on Tibet, "longstanding reports of torture, beatings, shackling and other abusive treatment, in particular of Tibetan monks and nuns, at the hands of public officials, public security and state security, as well as paramilitary and even unofficial personnel at the instigation or with the acquiescence or consent of public officials."<sup>47</sup>

- **Ngawang Jamphel**, a senior monk from Driru (TAR), died in custody on 17 December 2013, several weeks after his arrest. His family said his body showed clear signs that he had been beaten to death. The reason for the 45-year old's arrest is not clear. He was known for his provision of free religious and cultural teachings and for his skills in mediation in community disputes.<sup>48</sup>
- **Tenzin Choedak** died on 5 December 2014, aged 33, two days after being released from Chushur prison near Lhasa (TAR). He had served six years of a 15-year sentence on charges of being a ringleader of the Lhasa protests in March 2008. Local sources say Tenzin had suffered from torture and ill-treatment whilst in detention and had been hospitalised a number of times.<sup>49</sup>
- **Tenzin Delek Rinpoche**, a revered Tibetan monk, died on 12 July 2015 in prison in Chengdu (Sichuan). The Chinese authorities had denied numerous requests for medical parole, despite Rinpoche being in serious ill-health, believed to have brought about by torture and beatings whilst in detention. No official investigation has been held into his death. Tenzin Delek Rinpoche had served 13 years of a life sentence handed down at a trial lacking due process and at which the only evidence presented was extracted under torture.<sup>50</sup>
- **Trigyal**, who was serving a 13-year sentence for refusing orders to fly a Chinese flag from his home in Driru (TAR), died in prison in early 2016. The exact date of his death is not clear due to communication restrictions. His death is believed to have been due to injuries he sustained from torture whilst in detention.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>45</sup> Radio Free Asia: <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/prayers-06042013172552.html>

<sup>46</sup> Tibet Society: <http://www.tibetsociety.com/content/view/545>

<sup>47</sup> International Campaign for Tibet: <http://www.savetibet.org/un-committee-against-torture-finds-deepened-climate-of-fear-in-tibet/>

<sup>48</sup> Tibetan Centre for Human Rights & Democracy: <http://www.tchrd.org/2013/12/diru-crackdown-senior-tibetan-buddhist-scholar-beaten-to-death-in-police-custody/>

<sup>49</sup> Tibetan Centre for Human Rights & Democracy: <http://www.tchrd.org/2014/12/former-tibetan-social-activist-serving-15-years-sentence-dead-after-less-than-6-years-in-prison-2/>

<sup>50</sup> Tibet Society: <http://www.tibetsociety.com/content/view/551>

<sup>51</sup> Radio Free Asia: <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/tibetan-man-who-refused-to-fly-chinese-flag-dies-02082016154201.html>

## 9. Recommendations

Recommendations for the UK government:

- **Meet the Dalai Lama and the Sikyong** (democratically elected leader of the Tibetan government in exile). The UK government should not allow China to dictate who it can and cannot meet. The UK government should also be prepared to back its own volitions. The current UK government calls on China to meet with the Dalai Lama and Tibetan representatives, yet refuses to meet them officially. (David Cameron met the Dalai Lama, under the previous coalition government, in private in May 2012.)
- **Remove “does not support Tibetan independence” from UK policy on Tibet.** This phrase serves no purpose other than to placate the Chinese government, given the policy already states the UK recognises China’s sovereignty over Tibet. The phrase also undermines Tibetans’ right to self-determination and freedom of expression, as guaranteed under international treaties and laws.
- **Consistently call for the rights and freedoms of Tibetans in Tibet to be respected.** At the very least, the UK government should be consistently calling on China to respect the Tibetan people’s human rights and to allow genuine autonomy for Tibet and Tibetan regions as guaranteed in the Chinese constitution.
- **Call on China to uphold its human rights obligations** as defined under international treaties and in its own constitution, including: upholding the rule of law; allowing the freedoms of expression, religion and movement; ending the systematic use of torture; and, releasing all political prisoners.
- **Make robust public statements** condemning China’s human rights abuses in Tibet and calling on China to end its repressive policies in Tibet, including its interference in religious matters, and to respect and protect Tibetan culture and language.
- **Work multilaterally with other countries** to urge China to resolve the grievances of the Tibetan people and find a peaceful solution to the current crisis in Tibet.
- **Call on China to allow visits to Tibet by international observers**, including UN Special Rapporteurs, and to open Tibet and Tibetan regions, in particular to foreign media.
- **Inform all ministers and senior civil servants** that have dealings with China on the situation in Tibet, in order that they can raise human rights and other concerns with their Chinese counterparts regularly and consistently.
- **Set benchmarks for the UK-China Human Rights Dialogues**, in order to ensure progress is made and to assess the effectiveness of the dialogues.
- **To update government advisory services on the situation in Tibet**, in particular guides for doing business in China, and to ensure the National Action Plan for Business and Human Rights is upheld by any company or agency doing business in Tibet.
- **Desist from using Chinese propaganda when discussing Tibet.** For example, the Minister of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Hugo Swire praised China for its investment in Tibet, during a parliamentary debate on 14 June 2015.<sup>52</sup> The Chinese government routinely uses rhetoric of poverty alleviation and economic development to justify its policies in Tibet, yet Tibet remains the poorest region in the People’s Republic of China and the Tibetan people have no say in the development of their own land.
- **To be open and transparent in its dealings with China.**

<sup>52</sup> Hansard: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201415/cmhansrd/cm141210/halltext/141210h0001.htm>