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HUMAN RIGHTS

update

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Former political prisoner testifies torture and maltreatment in Drapchi Prison

Ngawang Tsultrim, a former political prisoner who served six years in Drapchi Prison arrived in exile in May 2005. Ngawang was arrested in 1994 when he and three other monks staged a protest at the Barkhor market in Lhasa. Ngawang testified to TCHRD of the gross torture inflicted on him and the other monks from the day they were picked up from the Barkhor market.

Ngawang recounts, "Around the noon on 14 May 1994, I along with three other monks planned a pro-independence protest. The other monks were Jampa Tsultrim, lay name Yeshe Tsundue, born in Gyatsoshod Village, Kacho Township, Phenpo Lhundup County, Buchung Lobsang Kunkhen, lay name Buchung, born in Chamgyod Village, Kacho Township, Phenpo Lhundup County,

and Tsering Tashi, born in Gatoed Village, Kacho Township, Phenpo Lhundup County. The four of us demonstrated for a few minutes in the crowded Barkhor market when a team of officers from Lhasa PSB and Anti-riot police dressed in civil clothes arrested and shoved us into a vehicle. We were taken to Gutsa Detention Centre where we were lined up in front of an officer with a hammer in his hand. Without uttering a word, two officers caught our arms and the officer hit us on the knee and the joints all over the body with the hammer. We collapsed on the ground unable to stand the excruciating pain. Each of us was then held by our feet by two officers and dragged towards the cells like a corpse. We were locked up in separate cells."

"The next day at nine in the
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Monk arrested for pasting pro-independence pamphlet on government building

Chung Tsering, a monk from Pangsa Monastery has been arrested in the end of April 2005. He was alleged of pasting a pamphlet calling for "freedom in Tibet" on the gate of the government office of Tashigang Township, Meldrogungkar County, Lhasa Municipality. The local Public Security Bureau ("PSB") officials arrested Chung and he is in detention at Lhasa City PSB Detention Centre.

In April 2005, a pro-independence posting was found on the gate of the Tashigang Township government office. The officials reported the

incident to the County PSB and began investigations to identify the "culprit". The monks residing in Pangsa Monastery became the primary suspects. Searches were also carried out in the neighbouring Mentsa Village. While in Pangsa Monastery, the PSB officers carried out extensive investigations by questioning each monk in the monastery. At the time, Chung Tsering, who was out of station at Kongpo Gedchik Village became the primary target. A team of PSB officers was dispatched to the village to arrest

him. In the end of April 2005, Chung was arrested in the village and led to Lhasa City Detention Centre where he continues to be detained.

Chung Tsering hails from Mentsa Village, Tashigang Township, Meldrogungkar County, Lhasa Municipality, "TAR". He was a monk in the Pangsa Monastery. Many monks in the past have been arrested from the monastery due to political incidents and served various imprisonment terms on charges of political activities. ♦

Hoisting of Tibetan national flag lands monks for eleven years behind bars

The Kardze Intermediate People's Court sentenced Lobsang Khedrup, 22, and Gyalpo, 26, to eleven years' imprisonment term in April 2004 for hoisting a banned Tibetan national flag, according to confirmed information received by the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy. (TCHRD)

The Tibetans were arrested from their homes over different period of time. While Gyalpo was arrested in January 2004, Lobsang was arrested a month later in February 2004. In the aftermath of the arrest, the family members of the arrestees tried in vain to locate their whereabouts and it was only recently that they came to know about their imprisonment in a prison in Dartsedo County, Kardze Tibet Autonomous Prefecture ("TAP"), Sichuan Province.

The monks were charged with hoisting a banned Tibetan national flag on a radio tower in Kardze County in 2003. Following investigations into the matter, Gyalpo and Lobsang were alleged to have hoisted the flag and were subsequently arrested from their homes.

Lobsang Khedrup, 22, hails from Dado Township, Kardze County, Kardze "TAP", Sichuan whereas Gyalpo, 26, belongs to Shungteng Township in Kardze County.

In recent years, Kardze region has become the focal point of repression by the Chinese authorities. This is substantiated by the fact that most of the arrests, detentions and other cases of human rights violations have been reported from this region. Numerous incidents of flag hoisting and pamphlets distribution were reported in the region.

The detention and conviction of Lobsang Khedrup and Gyalpo contravenes many provisions within China's Criminal Procedure Law. They were arbitrarily arrested and convicted without honouring them a

free and fair trial to defend their innocence in the court. Their family members were not informed about their arrest and detention for almost a year. The visiting rights of their kith and kin was also denied.

TCHRD considers the activities of Lobsang and Gyalpo as an exercise of their fundamental human rights of freedom of expression, opinion and thought. The Centre calls upon the Chinese authorities to release the two monks unconditionally. ♦

Kumbum Monastery monk arrested for alleged pro-independence postings

Jigme Dasang, a monk at Kumbum Monastery, was arrested in mid May 2005 allegedly for pro-independence postings in the monastery.

Pamphlets calling for "2008 Olympics not in China" and other postings criticizing the Chinese policies in Tibet were found pasted in the monastery assembly hall and at the entrance gate. Jigme was suspected to be behind the postings and Kumbum (*Ch: Huangzhong*) County PSB officials accordingly arrested him from the monastery in mid May 2005. He is detained in Kumbum County PSB Detention Centre.

"The PSB charged him of violating article 61 of 'Combating Separatists Activities', " according to a friend who was allowed to visit him.

Jigme Dasang, 22, originally hails from Tsolho Prefecture, Qinghai Province. He has been studying at the Kumbum Ngarig Ketseling for a few years. He has been selected as the best student in the monastery on several occasions. ♦

TCHRD commemorates 10 years of the Panchen Lama's disappearance

17 May 2005 marks the 10th year of the disappearance of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the 11th Panchen Lama of Tibet. For ten long years the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) has failed to provide information on the whereabouts of the 16-year-old Panchen Lama.

Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, went missing with his family since 17 May 1995 after the Dalai Lama, Tibet's spiritual leader, officially recognized him as the XIth Panchen Lama of Tibet. In his place, the PRC government appointed another child named Gyaltzen Norbu as the Panchen Lama but the majority of the Tibetans calls him the "fake" Panchen Lama. Despite repeated requests from the international community, independent observers have not been given access to Gedhun Choekyi Nyima to see if he is in good health and receiving a proper education. The continued detention or disappearance of the Panchen Lama for a decade contradicts PRC's obligation as a permanent member of the United Nations, and as a signatory member to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

To commemorate the day of disappearance, the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) invited five students each of 16 years' age from Tibetan schools, monasteries and nunneries for Essay Writing and a Letter Writing Competition. The students also signed their appeal on signature postcards and left hand impressions on a white cloth as part of TCHRD's signature campaign drive. Besides the release of the Panchen Lama's poster

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This is a regular section profiling political prisoners currently imprisoned in Tibet

Nine years term for distributing political leaflets and hoisting flag

Jampa Namgyal, 27, was born in Sershu Township, Kardze County, Kardze "TAP", Sichuan.

He attended elementary and middle school in the county. However, Jampa was expelled from the school when he got involved in an altercation with other students. After leaving school, he worked in the family field for few a years.

When Jampa reached eighteen years of age, he got admission in Kardze Monastery. After some years of rigorous studies, he was appointed as a Tibetan grammar teacher in the monastery.

While in the monastery, he was politically active, however, his uncle warned him not to engage in political activities which might lead to his arrest. Jampa, on the contrary didn't heed his uncle's word and dismissed it as an advice coming from a Communist Party member since both his father and uncle were party members. He further said that they were on a different path than him and asked them not to interfere in his affairs.

Later, he left the monastery to go to India. He returned to his home and after a short stay proceeded to Lhasa. But Jampa felt ill in Lhasa and had to return to his native hometown.

On recovering from the illness, Jampa went to the market riding his motorcycle. He attached a Tibetan national flag at the back of his

motorcycle and took a round of the market. Political leaflets calling for freedom in Tibet were scattered at all the crowded places and also pasted all over the market.

Knowing about his impending arrest in the following days, he took off towards a minimally populated nomadic area where he got a job as a labourer in a road-making project. After a few days at work, Kardze County PSB officials arrived at the spot and arrested him. He was led to Dartsedo County PSB Detention Centre where he was put through repeated interrogation sessions and torture.

In 2002, Kardze Intermediate People's Court sentenced Jampa Namgyal to nine years' imprisonment term on charges of "endangering state security" through anti-government propaganda. He was then taken to Maowan Prison Maowan Qiang Autonomous County in Ngaba "TAP", Sichuan, to serve the term.

Jampa Namgyal is imprisoned in Unit 7 of Maowan Prison which is popularly known as Aba Prison. His health is said to be in bad conditions due to unsanitary conditions and malnutrition in the prison. He is expected to be released in 2010 upon the completion of his term. ♦



Aba Prison located in Maowan Qiang Autonomous County, Ngaba "TAP", Sichuan

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on the day, TCHRD also displayed paintings done by students on the Panchen Lama and distributed the Centre's reports on general human rights violations and on the Panchen Lama. The case of the Panchen Lama has been put on the Urgent Action Alert at websites of both TCHRD and the U.S. Chapter of Amnesty International.

The participating schools and monasteries in the Essay and Letter Writing Competition were the Upper TCV School, Lower TCV School, Gopalpur School, Chauntra Sambhota School, Namgyal Monastery, Nechung Monastery, Kirti Monastery, Dolma Ling Nunnery and Thekchen Choeling Nunnery. The theme of the essay will be "My dreams and my aspiration" and "My World". The letters addressed to Geneva-based UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, dealt with the case of the Panchen Lama. All the essays, letters and the cloth and postcards with signatures will be sent to the Committee on the Rights of the Child before their meeting in September 2005.

TCHRD remains gravely concerned about the whereabouts and well being of the Panchen Lama. Being one of the higher religious figures in the Tibetan Buddhism, it is imperative that the Panchen Lama receives religious education and training deserving of his religious standing. TCHRD urges the international community to maintain pressure on the PRC government to allow the Committee on the Rights of the Child to meet the Panchen Lama to verify his current situation. ♦

A young girl's tale of struggle in life

There is extreme poverty in Tibet's rural areas. Lack of education and opportunity renders the Tibetans to live an extremely hard life. Tsekyid, 17, a young Tibetan girl from Draga Village, Saldo Township, Nedong County, Lhoka Prefecture, "TAR", arrived in exile in May 2005. She gave an account of poor livelihood in her native village and the struggle in her young life.

Tsekyid recounts, "We are very poor farmers with eight members in the family. I am the youngest in our family. We lead an extremely hard life as we are many in the family and very little to eat. The small land that we have does not yield good crop and there are times when we have to cut a meal in a day so that we do not starve."

"At nine years of age, I attended the local government elementary school. However, my parents pulled me out of the school after three years for they cannot afford the fees. The annual fee was 520 Yuan and there were a lot of other miscellaneous money collections like 10 or 15 Yuan during school ceremonies and five Yuan towards classroom furniture maintenance etc."

"After dropping out of school, I lived at my aunt's home for two years looking after her two babies. She instead provided me food and shelter. Since I needed money to support my family, I moved out of her home to look for a job in Lhasa. I asked a relative living in Lhasa to look for a job. He told me that it's very difficult to get a job in Lhasa since I wasn't schooled properly. I stayed with my uncle for some months. He was also poor and gets around 400 Yuan a month delivering newspapers in the mornings."

"I was desperate to get a job and some girls from my village invited me to join prostitution. There are lots of young girls like me from poor families in remote villages who work in brothels to earn a living and support their family. However, I made up my

mind not to do such a job."

"One day a lady came over to my uncle's home and she told me of a job in a small paper factory run by a Chinese couple. Both of us joined the paper factory. I got a monthly salary of 300 Yuan and the lady got 500 Yuan as she had previously worked in another paper factory. The daily work includes making book covers, binding books etc. After a few months at work, the owner doesn't give us our salaries. Instead the owner gave me 50 Yuan and 100 Yuan for the lady as monthly pocket money. We asked for our salary but the owner said they are short of money and we will be paid later. The owner duped us to work for nothing so we left the job."

"Luckily a few days later, a friend informed me of a job at a western lady's home who does voluntary work at the Tibet University. She hired me as her domestic helper and I was paid 500 Yuan monthly. She was a very good person. There wasn't much work apart from washing clothes and cleaning the home. She also fed me whatever she eats. Moreover, she sent me to a school to learn English. The school was being run by western volunteer teachers. I attended the school until I came into exile."

Tsekyid arrived at the Tibetan Refugee Reception Centre in Kathmandu, Nepal, on 10 May 2005. She wants to join a school in India run by the Tibetan-Government-in-Exile. Tsekyid dreams of setting up a school in her native village in the future so that other children do not go through what she has been through in her childhood. ♦

Farmers lose land for railway project

The controversial Golmud-Lhasa railway line has caused major setbacks to the Tibetans. Villages and towns that fall on the the proposed railway route has led to eviction of many Tibetans from their ancestral landholdings. A Tibetan girl, Tashi Dolker, from Khangsar Village, Dechen Township, Toelung Dechen County, Lhasa Municipality, "TAR", who arrived in exile in May 2005 described to TCHRD the eviction of Tibetans to clear land for the project.

Tashi describes, "The railway line has devastating effects on the lives of Tibetans in Toelung Dechen County. Since the main railway station will be built in Toelung Dechen County, it has led to the eviction of many Tibetan farmers from their ancestral land in the last three years. Farmers account for about seventy percent of the total population and the confiscation of their land has led to enormous problems for the Tibetans."

"In the winter of 2004, the government officials issued a notice telling people to hand over their land to the government since the land belongs to the government and have been given to the residents temporarily. The officials also promised that for every Mu of land handed to the government, 15,000 Yuan will be paid as compensation to the family. However, the officials took a back turn when it came to the actual implementation. Some families had to hand over five or six mu of land to the government. We had to hand over three mu of land towards the railway project. Instead of the promised compensation of 15,000 Yuan, we were paid only 1200 Yuan for a mu of land."

"There are about 62 families in our village, out of which except for four families, the rest had to hand over their ancestral land for the project. Some other villages where land was confiscated are Norlug Village, Agar Village, Tashi Khangsar, Dechen

Village, Satsam Village, Mongar Village, Dromo Village, Marshang Village, Soshing Village, Ngodrong Village, Gebhu Village, Galung Village, Nangtse Village, Pomo Village, Kyomo Village, Nechung Village and Luchu Village. Families from two villages mentioned above were evicted to another land. One of them was Mongar Village which was located below Tashi Khangsar Village. Out of the 20 families in the village, lands of seven families were confiscated and they were shifted to a hill nearby. The families were given a paltry sum of money to rebuild their houses which should confine to the Chinese-style design approved by the government. The new houses were to be single level houses with three rooms only although their previous homes had been double level and spacious. To make matters worse, the affected families were to seek temporary shelter in their relatives' homes until the new houses are build."

"Yet in another village called Norlug Village which is nearby Tashi Khangsar Village, seven families out the 17 in the village were evicted and relocated to a nearby area. They were also given a small amount of money to rebuild their houses. Drinking water and sanitation are the core problems for them."

"The railway project has led to grave environmental degradation in our area. Last year during the spring,

Chinese workers planted detonators to remove a hill called *Lhating* to lay railway tracks. Since spring last year, they have been clearing the hill. The work is still going on. The workers were making a tunnel in a hill called *Rilungtoed* which lies between Norlug Village and Yangpachen Village. The mud from the hill is disposed in the river flowing nearby which is usually used by villagers as the source of their drinking water."

"In other instances, lands from farmers have been confiscated last year in the name of making schools or shopping complexes. However, no construction has begun and the land which could actually be a source of livelihood for the farmers are rendered useless. To make matters worse, the food grains produced by the Tibetan farmers are of lower quality than those of the Chinese migrant farmers. Hence the farmers face hard times in selling their produce and often have to compromise on the price. Such is the fate of people in my native hometown."

The billion dollar Golmud-Lhasa railway line is projected to be completed in 2006. Tibetans who are already marginalized in their country will face greater difficulties once the railway becomes functional and brings in more Chinese migrants to an already sinicized Tibet. ♦



A Tibet Daily image showing survey work for the Lhasa train station

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morning, we were called for interrogation separately. An officer asked me questions while two others stood by the side hitting me when I didn't answer properly. "Why did you protest" and "who is behind this protest" were the questions that were asked to all of us. I told that there is no one asking me to protest and I did it on my own for the freedom of Tibet. The interrogators were enraged with my answer and they lifted up my robe from the back and started to lash me with their leather service belts. One officer took an iron ash tray lying on the table and knocked me on the head with it. When I regained conscious, they started to kick and punch me on the face. My co-protesters also met with the same fate."

"After suffering three months of torture while in detention, on 16 August 1994, Lhasa People's Intermediate Court passed the sentence on us. I was sentenced to six years' imprisonment term and deprivation of political rights for three years, whereas Buchung, Tsering Tashi and Yeshe Tsundue were each sentenced to five years' imprisonment term and deprivation of political rights for two years. We were taken to the notorious Drapchi Prison to serve our term. Upon reaching Drapchi Prison, I and Yeshe Tsundue were imprisoned in Unit 2 in the old block while Tsering Tashi was put in Unit 6 and Buchung was imprisoned in Unit 5 of the same block."

Prisoners protest in Drapchi Prison

"On 1 May 1998, around 400 prisoners were ordered to gather on the prison ground for a flag hoisting ceremony to commemorate the International Youth Day. However, the prisoners rose against the authorities and staged a pro-independence protest on the ground. Buchung took a prominent role during the protest. Fearing

massive unrest, the prison guards started to shoot on the prisoners indiscriminately. Several prisoners died in the shootout while many sustained injuries. Ngawang Dorjee, a prisoner got hit on the forehead and was later treated in the prison hospital. Due to improper medical surgery, he has a dent on his forehead which pains excruciatingly frequently. While another prisoner, Ngawang Sungrab, was hit on the waist due to which he limps nowadays. Since Buchung took a very active participation in the protest, his sentence was extended by three years totaling it to an eight year term."

Promotion of Chinese language in prison

"The prison officials promote Chinese language amongst the prisoners. The prisoners are required to speak Chinese while conversing with each other and with the guards. In case a prisoner speaks in the Tibetan language to a guard, the guard rebukes him in Chinese and stays indifferent. The officials say that Tibetan is redundant and that it is not spoken or recognized by anyone in the world."

Exercise drills in the prison

"The prisoners are made to perform exercise drills in two sets in the prisons. The daily routines are between 10-12 in the morning and 3.30-7 in the evening. Since the diet in the prison is malnourishing, many prisoners collapse during the exercise due to weakness. The guards kick or hit the prisoners with sticks who collapse or lag behind the others."

Bias in visiting rights

"The political prisoners are allowed a monthly five minutes visit from their family. They are not allowed to bring in any food or clothing inside the prison. Whereas the criminal prisoners have the privilege of a 15 minutes visiting duration and the food or clothing that their family brings are allowed inside the prison.

There is a grudge against the political prisoners by the prison officials."

Life after release from prison

"On 19 June 2000, I was released from Drapchi Prison upon completion of my term where as Tsering Tashi and Yeshe Tsundue had been released a year before on 19 February 1999. Buchung, however was released in 2002 since his term had been extended by three years following the prisoners protest in 1998."

"Upon release, I couldn't return to my monastery since the prison authorities had already asked for my expulsion although the monastery authorities would have given me permission to stay in the monastery. Hence I went to my home and stayed there till now. I am required to present myself in front of the Township authorities and once a month in front of the County authorities."

"Life after release is very difficult for political prisoners since they are not given a job by anyone and their movements restricted. They are bound by an invisible chain."

"So I fled from Tibet and reached the Tibetan Refugee Reception Centre in Kathmandu, Nepal, on 13 May 2005."

Though Ngawang Tsultrim is now free in exile, he remains skeptical about the fate of his friends who are still in the Chinese occupied Tibet.

Background information

Ngawang Tsultrim was born in 1975 in Kacho Village, Kacho Township, Phenpo Lhundup County, "TAR". He helped in the family fieldworks until he attained 14 years of age. He was then admitted to Gaden Monastery.

Jampa Tsultrim, lay name Yeshe Tsundue, hails from Gyatsoshod Village, Kacho Township, Phenpo Lhundup County, "TAR". Buchung Lobsang Kunkhen, lay name Buchung, was born in Chamgyod Village, Kacho Township, Phenpo Lhundup County, "TAR" and Tsering Tashi, hails from Gatoed Village, Kacho Township, Phenpo Lhundup County, "TAR". ♦



TCHRD ACTIVITIES

Bulletin

TCHRD tours Tibetan settlements in north-east India

The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) has been conducting workshops in different regions of India primarily for two audiences; the Tibetan college students and the working Tibetan sector mainly C.T.A staff, NGO workers and School teachers. However, Tibetans from various parts of India have repeatedly showed their interest in TCHRD workshops and have frequently requested visits by TCHRD to their respective settlements.

In view of such repeated requests, six staff from TCHRD toured the Tibetan settlements in three zones of India in teams of two for three weeks. Mr. Jampa and Mr. Tashi Choephel, both researchers at the Centre, toured the eastern most Tibetan settlements in India viz Bomdila, Tenzingang, Miao Choephelling, Tezu Dhargayling and Shillong. Mr. Tenzin Norgay and Mr. Dawa Tsering, both field officers at the Centre, toured the Tibetan settlements in West Bengal and Sikkim State. The settlements visited were Sonada, Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Ravangla and Gangtok. Whereas Mr. Ugyen Tsewang,

Information Officer, and Mr. Tsering Agloe, Researcher, visited the Tibetan settlements in Shimla, Dholanji, Puruwala, Sataun and Kamrau.

During the tour, resident Tibetans in the distant places were educated in the concept of human rights and democracy, and were also educated and urged to take a participatory role in the forthcoming election of the 14th Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies (ATPD) in September 2005 and the second direct election of the Kalon Tripa (Prime Minister of TGIE) next year.

The education talk series was a huge success in terms of outreach by TCHRD. Many Tibetans who live in far-flung areas from Dharamsala, the headquarter of the Tibetan-Government-in-Exile, are deprived of information due to their distant locations. The resident Tibetans in the various settlements scattered all across India showed tremendous enthusiasm in the public talks and had many questions which they verified from the TCHRD staff. ♦

Commemorating 10 years of the Panchen Lama's disappearance



17 May 2005 marked the tenth year since the Panchen Lama was abducted by the Chinese authorities. In commemoration of the day, TCHRD held an essay and letter writing competition among 16 years old Tibetan children from the schools in Dharamsala. The essay competition was held at the main temple.

The winners of the competition are as follows: English essay- Tenzin Yonten (Upper T.C.V School), English letter writing- Tenzin Zomkey (Upper T.C.V School), Tibetan essay and letter writing- Tsering Migmar (T.C.V Gopalpur)

The essays, letters, postcards and a petition clothe will be sent to the U.N Committee on the Rights of the Child to urge Prof. Doeke, the Chairperson of the Committee to demand answers from China regarding the child. ♦



Talk in progress at Tibetan Self Help Centre in Darjeeling



Residents of Tenzingang Settlement listen in deep interest