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China Sentences a Tibetan Activist for 15 Years in Prison

On 24 June 2010, a Chinese higher Court sentenced a Tibetan environmentalist and a model philanthropist to a 15 year prison term on charges of grave robbing and dealing in looted antiquities, according to information received by the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD). He had been detained by Chinese authorities on 3 January 2010 and has since been held in detention.

Chinese authorities are exercising extremely tight controls over Tibetan intellectuals—an echo of the massive security crackdown following rioting in the capital, Lhasa, in 2008.

Charges against Karma Samdrup were instigated after he voiced support for his two brothers who were detained for accusing local officials in eastern Tibet of poaching endangered species. The revived charges stem from an incident in 1998 involving the purchase of allegedly looted artifacts, for which Karma was briefly detained but never charged. The charges were not pursued until this year.

Karma Samdrup was sentenced to a 15 year prison term with deprivation of political rights for five years and fined 10, 000 yuan (\$1,500) after a three-day trial which lasted until

midnight on 24 June, lawyer Pu Zhiqian told The Associated Press.



Karma Samdrup (photo:High Peak Pure Earth)

“I want to appeal, I have to appeal,” Karma Samdrup’s wife, Zhenga Cuomao, (Dolkar Tso) quoted him as saying after the verdict was handed down at the court in remote Yanqi county in the Xinjiang region adjoining Tibet.

Pu complained of irregularities in the trial, including witnesses who testified against Karma Samdrup that defense attorneys did not recognize.

Karma Samdrup’s wife and lawyers have accused police of torturing him in custody. In his statement to the



Chime Namgyal (picture: Woesser)

court, he said that during months of interrogation, officers beat him, deprived him of sleep for days and drugged him with a substance that made his eyes and ears bleed, said the source.

Dolkar Tso (Chinese: Zhenga Cuomao) said “I cannot recognize him anymore. I can only recognize his voice.” He used to be so tall, so strong.... Now he looks so fragile.”

Karma Samdrup was recognized as the philanthropist of the year in 2006 by the Chinese state, the dedications for which was broadcast in CCTV. He also received several awards from abroad for his achievements and conservation activities. Pu said that the allegations stem from purchases that Karma Samdup made of carpets, wooden artifacts and other antiques at a shop in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang. He added that Karma Samdrup bought the items because he was interested in them as a collector, but did not know that they had been plundered from graves in the region.

Karma Samdrup’s younger brother, Chime Namgyal, is reportedly serving a 21-month sentence in a labor camp on the vague charge of harming national security. His older brother, Rinchen Samdrup, was scheduled to be tried on a similar charge on the appointed day, but that date has been postponed.

(Portion of this article are credited to NY Times)

Chinese Authorities Enforce a Broader Crackdown on Tibetan Cultural Figures

Three Tibetans brothers were facing the problem of incarceration in Tibet because Chinese authorities accused them of doing illegal activities in the County; they were pillars of their community who steered clear of politics. Mr. Karma Samdrup had become a rich philanthropist and planned to donate part of his immense Tibetan art collection to a state run museum.

This month, however, Mr. Samdrup, 42, appeared frail and gaunt after six months in police custody on accusations of grave robbing and dealing in looted antiquities, a charge that had been originally dropped 12 years ago by the police.

According to his friends and relatives, Karma’s real crime was to save his brothers from labor camp and torture and their punishment for accusing a local police chief of hunting protected animals in a Tibetan nature preserve.

Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) considers that such prosecution of Mr. Samdrup and his brothers is part of a broader assault on prominent Tibetans around China—a campaign that has sent a chill through a community that once thought itself immune to the heavy hand of Beijing.

Karma Samdrup and his brothers’ cases might not have been noticed outside Tibet if it were not for the stature of Mr. Samdrup, a darling of the official media whose organization has won grants from Ford Motor,

Friends of the Earth and a foundation run by the film star Jet Li.



Richen Samdrup (Photo: Woesser blog)

Those who are following Mr. Samdrup’s predicament said the authorities were simply trying to silence him. “Even by Chinese legal standards, the prosecution’s case is thin at best,” said Nicholas Bequelin, a researcher at Human Rights Watch in Hong Kong. “Experience tells us the outcome has already been decided.”

The Chinese government has stepped up the targeting and imposed more restrictions and control on groups of artists, intellectuals, students, and business people since the spring 2008 protest in Lhasa which spread like wild fire into all regions of Tibet. Scores of intellectuals and cultural figures have been detained and sentenced to prison on charges of subverting state power or seeking to “split” Tibet from mainland China.

Since spring the uprising in 2008, the Chinese communist government authorities have arrested or sentenced numerous Tibetan artists and singers including, Tashi Dhondup, a popular young singer, who was sent to a labor camp for 15 months for



Tashi Dhondup

performing songs from his album entitled “Torture without a Trace” which was released in October 2009 and promptly banned.

A prominent Tibetan writer Tragyal, 47, (pen name Shogdung), an editor at a state-run publishing house in Qinghai Province was arrested on 23 April and his whereabouts have been unclear since then. Chinese authorities seized Shogdung within days of him signing an open letter criticizing the Chinese authorities’ handling of the emergency response to the 14 April 2010, 7.1 magnitude earthquake that struck the Tibetan area of Kyegundu (Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture). However, it is widely believed that his arrest stems from his newest book entitled “The Line between Sky and Earth,” which describes Tibet as a “place of terror.”



Tagyal or Shogdung

Kunchok Tsephel, a government-employed environmentalist, was sentenced to 15 years in prison for “disclosing state secrets” after he was accused of writing about the spring uprising in Tibet on his website.



Kunchok Tsephel

Kunga Tseyang, pen name Gangnyi (gangs nyi: ‘Sun of the snow’) is a leading thinker, blogger, photographer and environmentalist activist of the intellectual “new generation” movement. A monk from the Labrang monastery, Kunga Tseyang traveled widely in Tibet and photographed the environmental degradation taking place on the Tibet plateau. He was arrested on 17 March 2009 and sentenced to five years in prison on 17 November 2009 by the higher court in Golog Amdo, Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province. He wrote an essay entitled ‘Who are the Real Splitists?’.



Kunga Tsayang

A well known Tibetan film maker Dhondup Wangchen, was detained in March 2008 after making a documentary film entitled “Leaving Fear Behind.” He interviewed Tibetans in Tibetan areas of Qinghai, who expressed their views on the Dalai Lama and the upcoming



Dhondup Wangchen

Beijing Olympic Games. He was sentenced to a six years prison term.

Karma Samdrup, a model philanthropist was arrested on 3 January 2010 and sentenced to 15 years in prison on 24 June 2010 on charges of grave robbing and dealing with antiquities. He is a noted philanthropist with much generosity who lavished money on numerous charitable causes.

Karma Samdrup encountered trouble when his two younger brothers, Rinchen Samdrup and Jigme Namgyal criticized a police official, who led a hunting party into a nature preserve. His brothers started their own environmental group, which tried to bring public attention towards illegal hunting of animals. His two brothers were jailed in August 2009.

According to the International Campaign for Tibet (‘ICT’), Chinese authorities have arrested or detained more than 50 Tibetan intellectuals and cultural figures, including poets, bloggers, songwriters, environmentalists, film makers, and artists. Fears are mounting that the Chinese authorities are targeting such people to suppress intellectual and artistic freedom.

TCHRD Commemorates 13th UN International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

The United Nations has designated 26 June as the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture and today marks the 13th anniversary of the day. Attaching importance to this anniversary, the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) commemorates the day to stand in solidarity with the victims of torture and recognize the pain and suffering of victims and survivors of torture throughout the world. The day reminds us that torture is a crime and provides us with an opportunity to stand united and voice our opinion against torture, a cruel violation of human rights and human dignity.

Adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1984, the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) entered into force on 26 June 1987. It was an important step in the much-needed process of globalizing human rights and acknowledging that torture, and all forms of inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, are absolutely and universally illegal and should not be condoned. There can be zero tolerance for torture. In 1997, the United Nations General Assembly decided to mark this historic date and designated 26 June each year as the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture. The Convention obliges States to make torture a crime and to prosecute and punish those guilty of it. It notes explicitly that neither higher orders nor exceptional circumstances can justify torture.

The People's Republic of China (PRC) signed and ratified the UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT) on 12 December 1986 and 4 October 1988 respectively. Yet, torture and ill-treatment continue to be endemic and a regular feature in the Chinese administered network of prisons and detention centres across the Tibetan plateau.

Torture, cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment appears to have become a central element of state agents' treatment of Tibetans perceived as being in opposition to the Communist regime and those attempting to exercise their rights to freedom of association, peaceful assembly and expression. Tibetans who voiced their support for the exiled Tibetan leader, the Dalai Lama or have divergent views to those of the Communist regime have been primary targets of torture, ill-treatment or other forms of human rights violations. Chinese Public Security Bureau (PSB) and People's Armed Police (PAP) are repeatedly using torture as a means of intimidating, investigating and extracting information or confessions from real or perceived offenders and detainees. Over the years, TCHRD has recorded numerous cases of Tibetans having died directly as a result of torture. The Centre has also documented cases of suspected extra-judicial killings at the hands of Chinese security forces, as well as many Tibetans having died shortly after being released from Chinese custody, during which they

were subjected to inhumane torture. The Centre is highly concerned about the well-being and safety of the prisoners of conscience and detainees involved in the recent spate of protests.

Recently China issued new rules that make it clear that evidence with unclear origins, confession obtained through torture, and testimony acquired through torture and threats are invalid in criminal prosecutions and such evidence would be thrown out in death penalty cases that are under appeal. This is the first time that Beijing has explicitly stated that evidence obtained under torture or duress is illegal and inadmissible in court. The government issued two new sets of procedures—the first covers evidence in cases subject to the death penalty, and the second governs evidence obtained under duress in all criminal cases. However, recent cases illustrate that convictions in the Chinese court system are strongly dependent on confessions, motivating police forces to use torture. For instance, Karma Samdrup, a Tibetan environmentalist once praised and named philanthropist of the year in 2006 by state broadcaster CCTV, was sentenced to 15 years in prison, deprivation of political rights for five years and fined 10,000 yuan (\$1,500) on flimsy charges of grave robbing and dealing in looted antiquities. In his statement to the court, he said that during months of interrogation, officers beat him, deprived him of sleep for days on end, and drugged him with a substance that made his eyes and ears

bleed, all part of an effort to force him to sign a confession. His wife estimates he lost at least 40 pounds in police custody. This latest case highlights official rampant use of torture to extract confession despite the official pronouncement of a new regulation to invalidate such evidence. Such continued use of torture and ill-treatment in the conviction of suspects calls into question the efficacy of the new regulation.

The CAT requires states to make torture illegal and provide appropriate punishment for those who commit torture, however, in Tibet and in China torture takes place unabated amidst a political culture of impunity. The use of electric prod, pricking cigarettes on the body, beating, hand or thumb cuffs, feet manacles, aerial suspension, exposure to extreme temperature, long periods of solitary confinement, sleep deprivation, violent beating, forced labour and forced exercise drills are few of the commonly used techniques employed by the Chinese authorities from the time of arrest to the detention centre. As terrible as the physical wounds are, the psychological and emotional scars are usually the most devastating and the most difficult to repair. A subtle form of mental torture is being used on prisoners in Tibet. Some typical debilitating symptoms of psychological torture include: sleeplessness, headache, fatigue, chronic musculoskeletal pains, gastrointestinal problems, neurological disorders and sexual dysfunction. The long term psychological effects of torture may be manifested by symptoms such as post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, alcoholism and substance abuses. Disturbing cases of

suicides due to excessive mental humiliation and psychological trauma continue to surface.

TCHRD demands the government of the PRC to implement the recommendations made by the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture to eradicate torture and “to ensure torture survivors’ right to full reparation with special attention to medical and psychological needs.” The Centre also calls on the government of the PRC to take the necessary steps to sign without delay and thereafter effectively implement the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The Centre expresses its support for the universal prohibition against torture and ill-treatment and respect for human rights.

3 More Tibetan Monks Arrested in Jomda County

Three more monks of Wara Monastery, Thangpu Township, Jomda County (Ch: Jiangda xian) in Chamdo Prefecture, “Tibet Autonomous Region” (“TAR”) were arrested on 7 June 2010 under suspicion of leading and instigating protests in Jomda County in 2008 and 2009, according to reliable information received by the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD).

The County Public Security Bureau (PSB) summoned monks, Kelsang Dhargay; 32, Tashi Lhundup; 22 and Tashi Wangdue; 35 to the PSB head quarters for interrogation after review of their cases of protesting in 2008 and 2009. The three monks are confirmed to have been arrested after being

interrogated at the County headquarters.

In May last month, Chinese PSB arrested four monks, Thinley, 25, and Nangsey, 27, from their room whereas Soegon, 26, was arrested for sounding an alarm on the arrival of PSB into the monastery. Kelsang Gyurmey, 29, whom the PSB officials were looking for could not be traced in the monastery and was later arrested from his home. All the four monks were students of Buddhist philosophy at Wara Buddhist College that comes under Wara Monastery. The four monks are currently detained at Jomda County PSB Detention Centre.

On 16 May, the PSB officials came again to Wara Monastery and detained two senior monks: Sonam Gonpo a.k.a Soegon, 40, and Tagyal, 29. The two are known to have been arrested for their failure to “educate” the monks of the monastery under China’s “patriotic re-education” campaign launched at the beginning of April 2008. There is no information on where the two monks are currently held.

In March this year, the authorities in Jomda County arrested 2 Tibetan monks who were accused of setting ablaze a government vehicle on the night of March 10, 2010, the 51st Tibetan national uprising day.

On 3 April 2008, monks of Wara Monastery in Jomda County confronted and challenged the “work team” from carrying out a “patriotic re-education” campaign by saying “even at the cost of our lives we will never defame and denounce our religious leader, the Dalai Lama.” According to sources, many of the Wara Monastery’s monks were in the forefront during the 2008 protests in Jomda County when they were blocked by the People’s Armed Police (PAP) from advancing towards the main county market to proceed with their protest.

China Bans Religious Practice in Tibetan Schools in TAR

Following the crackdown on the 2008 uprising in Tibet, Chinese local authorities in Tibetan Autonomous Region (“TAR”) banned religious practices in all Tibetan schools run by the government, according to reliable information received by the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD).

The Chinese government in “TAR” has banned religious practice in Tibetan schools of primary, middle and higher through implementation of patriotic re-education campaigns and other activities following the 2008 uprising in Tibet. On 24 April 2008, Chinese authorities organized a number of activities in the schools, including re-education campaigns in “TAR” to bring about feelings of nationalism towards communist ideology and its government.

According to the campaign, the students are not allowed to keep any religious materials on the school compound, including dormitories, classrooms, and even in their pockets. The students are frisked by the school disciplinarians during the morning assembly and are banned from visiting any monastery and temple. Those students found to break the rules under the patriotic re-education campaign are being expelled from the school without any explanation.

Slogans of the campaign include: “separatism and riots are obstacles,” “development and stability leads to the people’s prosperity,” “against separatists,” “maintain stability,” and “promote development,” according to

a former student of Lhasa middle school, who recently arrived at Nepal Tibetan Reception Centre.



Patriotic re-education campaign in action at School

The Chinese work team held meetings with staff at schools within “TAR” to implement the patriotic re-education campaign through various competitions—some between classes and some with other schools. The organizers awarded big prizes for the winners.

According to reliable reports, school staff punishes those students who do not take part in the competition and they are fined money and forced to clean the school compound. The school administrators screened documentary films of old age Tibetans and modern developing Tibetans to the students and also held elocution and debate among the students on patriotic re-education topics.

Students are forced to denounce the Dalai Lama by signing a document against splittism.

Ninety percent of students have expressed disdain towards this massive patriotic re-education drive in “TAR” schools, according to source.

A Tibetan Writer Freed from Detention Centre

Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) has received confirmed information that China has released a Tibetan student of National Minorities’ University of Lanzhou after a long month in detention on 8 May 2010.

According to sources, Druklo (pen name – Shokjang) was released from detention after being tortured by the police. His physical state is very poor and it is not possible for him to resume his usual intellectual capacity to write. Druklo was subjected to deprivation of sleep and long sessions of interrogation in the Detention Centre

The local authorities forced him to accept that he had connections with the Tibetan Youth Congress (TYC), the largest pro-independence group in the Tibetan exile Tibetan Community. The Chinese consistently accused TYC of being a “terrorist” group during the long and harsh interrogation session. He was also accused of having connections with Shingsa Rinpoche, a Tibetan Lama at Sera monastery in south India, who runs a Tibetan language website-www.wokar.net which published articles written by Tibetan writers from inside Tibet. But Shokjang rejected all the accusations.

Druklo was arrested along with Tashi Rabten on 6 April, 2010; around 16 Public Security Bureau officials arrived in the university hostel and ransacked students’ room and confiscated mobile phones, laptop computer and books. He is also co-editor of the banned literary magazine the Shar Dugri (Eastern Snow Mountain).

Three Tibetan Writers Severely Beaten by Chinese Police

Three Tibetan writers are receiving hospital treatment after being severely beaten and detained while dining at a restaurant in Chengdu, according to reports received by the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD). The three Tibetan writers were identified as Goyun, Thuram Gedun Sangpo, both from Kham and members of the Tibetan Pen Association and editors of the annual magazine *Tibet and Puryal kyi Namshey* (Soul of Ancient Kings), and their friend Sertha Sherab, a freelancer.

According to sources, around 11:30PM (Beijing Standard Time) on 5 June 2010, three police vehicles carrying a group of plainclothes officers suddenly stopped in front of the restaurant where the three men were dining in a section of Chengu primarily inhabited by Tibetans. The civil dress officers entered the restaurant and arrested Goyun, Thuram Gedun Sangpo, and Sertha Sherab. The three were reportedly threatened and sprayed with a gas which rendered them unconscious. They were detained, brought to a detention centre, and reportedly beaten and tortured during interrogation by the Chinese police.

The Chinese police confiscated all their valuables—mobile phones, cameras, wallets, and identity cards. The police continuously beat them and threatened them with guns pointed at their foreheads, while asking question like “what is your current work and political participation?” Sources said that the

police beatings became more severe when the three writers asked what they had done wrong. All three were reportedly tortured with electronic equipment in order to extract confessions.

After failing to find any evidence of criminal activity, the Chinese authorities released the three Tibetan writers at 10:00AM (Beijing Standard Time) the next morning. Before their release, however, Goyun, Thuram Gedun Sangpo, and Sertha Sherab were warned about being subject to re-arrest at any time.

Tibetan Arrested in Pelyul County

Tashi Dorjee, 46-years-old, an educated Tibetan who was born in Pelyul County and was also a Chinese government civil servant, was detained in Pelyul County, Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (“TAP”), Sichuan Province in 2009 and he has been struggling for justice ever since. Chinese authorities refused to explain the allegations to his brother who lives in Chengdu, according to confirmed information received by the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD).

In 2006, Tashi was appointed Director of “Regional Tibetan Sports Association” (RTSA), which was established by the local Tibetans. The RTSA organizes different sport competitions among the villagers,

such as horse racing, running races, tug-off war, among others.

Tsering Norbu, younger brother of Tashi usually living in Chengdu, visited Tashi in the Detention Centre but Chinese authorities refused to allow a meeting and accepted his food and other things for him. Norbu asked the reason of his brother’s arrest but authorities said “you will come to know later as he was involved in political activities.”

His supporters are very concerned about his life in the Detention Centre and wanted to know the reason of his arrest. Local Tibetans suspected that the detainment stems from the flag of the RTSA, which he made the symbol of his organization. The flag is painted with two snow lions on a red cloth background.

Tashi is an educated Tibetan and government civil servant who helped out poor Tibetans in the villages and he also sponsored the Dokhor Sakya monastery which consists of more than two hundred monks. He was running a big shop at the village and sends all its profits to support the Dokhor Sakya monastery.

Chinese local authorities closed down the RTSA organization after Tashi was arbitrarily arrested and put in Chengdu Detention Centre, where he is still currently being held.

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The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) is an independent centre which aims to promote and protect human rights and a democratic polity for Tibet. It attempts to educate Tibetans on human rights principles and to work with other human rights and democracy groups as part of a worldwide movement towards these ends. TCHRD is registered under the Indian Societies Registration Act 21 of 1860 in 1996.

If you would like to subscribe to TCHRD's monthly Human Rights update or to order one of our publications, please send your name and postal details (including e-mail) to our office.

Partial list of TCHRD publications:

•The Next Generation: *The State of Education in Tibet Today* (1997) • Behind Bars: *Prison Conditions in Tibet* (1998) • Closing the Doors: *Religious Repression in Tibet* (1998) • *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (Tibetan Translation) (1998) • *Democracy: An Education Booklet* (1998) • Fearless Voices: *Accounts of Tibetan Former Political Prisoners* (1998) • *Human Rights: An Education Booklet* (1998) • *A Guide to Human Rights* (1999) • *A guide to Democracy* (1999) • *Tales of Terror: Torture in Tibet* (1999) • *Briefing paper for travellers to Tibet* (1999) • *Torture and Ill-Treatment in Tibet* (2000) • *Racial Discrimination in Tibet* (2000) • *Impoverishing Tibetans: China's flawed economic policy* (2000) • *Destruction of Serthar Institute : A Special Report (2002)* • *Dispossessed: Land and Housing Rights in Tibet* (2002) • *Strike hard Campaign: China's crackdown on political dissidence* (2004) • *State of education in Tibet: A human rights perspective* (2004) • *Kuxing: Torture in Tibet* (2005) • *Death Penalty in China* (2005) • *International Bill of Human Rights* (2005) • *TCHRD 1996-2006: A Decade of Human Rights Research* • *Railway and China's Development Strategy in Tibet: A Tale of Two Economies* • *Prisoners of Tibet* • *Annual Report : Human Rights Situation in Tibet* (1996 - 2008) • *Uprising in Tibetan 2008* • *Briefing paper for travellers to Tibet*

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Human Rights begin with you. Your concern and participation make a difference. Your support could instill faith and hope in those who have been stripped of their human dignity.

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Rs. 100/- for members within India
US\$ 20/- for student members outside India
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