

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS: THE CASE OF TIBET



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RELIGIOUS REPRESSION

Tibetan Buddhism, introduced to Tibet in the late 6th Century, has not only become the dominant religion of the Tibetan people but also a fundamental part of Tibetan identity. After the Chinese invasion in 1949, CCP has made curious attempts to define Tibetan Buddhism as an outside influence while at the same time maintaining that the Tibetan populace is part of the Chinese nation. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has been framed as a separatist and an ally of foreign forces who are attempting to “split” the country. Since then, China continues to intimidate, arrest and sentence an increasing number of Tibetans, both monastic and lay communities for asserting their religious freedom and expressing their faith towards His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The state department has identified the spiritual leader as an enemy following the 1994 Third Forum on Tibet and has since stepped up their vilification of him, including bans on possessing his pictures and worshipping him. The “patriotic reeducation” campaign launched in the following years subjected monks and nuns to coercive sessions during which they are required to denounce His Holiness the Dalai Lama among others. The majority of political prisoners in Tibet have always been Tibetan monks and nuns.

The Cultural Revolution in Tibet from 1966-76 laid bare the Communist Party’s attack on Tibetan identity when they reportedly destroyed 97 percent of monasteries and nunneries and reduced the population of monastics by 93 percent, amongst the list of its other incursions. China’s notable destruction of Larung Gar and Yachen Gar, two of the largest Buddhist Academies, in 2016 and 2019 respectively, demonstrate its intentions to understate the importance of Tibetan Buddhism. In mid-July 2018, Chinese authorities in Kham Sershul forced Tibetan monks below the age of 16 out of their monasteries and instead, were ordered to join government-run schools. As many as 200 young monks were removed from Dza

Sersul Monastery, Dzachuka on 10 July 2018 according to news reports.¹

In December 2021, a renewed attack on Tibetan Buddhism, in many ways akin to the Cultural-Revolution obliteration, unfolded in Drakgo, in the traditional province of Kham, where three tall religious statues were razed to the ground and other religious structures such as prayer wheels and prayer flags were torn down. Residents were accordingly arrested for sharing the news of China's growing disrespect for the Tibetan Buddhist's faith.

The Case of Larung Gar: Demolition and Eviction at World's Largest Buddhist Academy



Larung Gar Buddhist Centre

Larung Gar, one of the largest Buddhist study centers in the world, has faced wide-scale demolitions under the directions of the Chinese authorities. Beginning in 2001, the institute faced severe threats of destruction and expulsion of monks, nuns and lay practitioners. In June 2016 the Chinese authorities ordered Larung Gar to slice its population of estimated 10,000 monks, nuns and lay practitioners by half and the demolitions were subsequently carried

¹ <https://tibet.net/young-tibetan-monks-forced-to-leave-monastery-to-join-chinese-schools/>

out in the following month. This led to the forced removal of at least 4,800 residents and dismantling of homes to a similar extent. Residents were neither consulted about the demolition plan prior to the government order, nor did they receive any legal remedy or corresponding compensation. The evicted monks and nuns were forced to sign a document undertaking that they will not return to Larung Gar and that they will not join any other monastic institutes in their hometowns.

Video footage surfaced showing monks and nuns being shoved into buses and trucks to send them back to their hometowns. Nuns were seen weeping in grief and some losing consciousness at the sight of forced separation from their friends. The evictees were forced to undergo ‘patriotic education’ exercises inside prison camps. They are forced to be barred from practicing Buddhism and to renounce their cultural identity. In other videos, Tibetan nuns dressed in military uniform are forced to sing “Chinese and Tibetans are Children of One Mother.” Another video shows Tibetan nuns performing on stage to Chinese pop songs. This is not only a violation of their monastic vows but also the highest level of humiliation a nun can face.

Saddened by the demolition of the institution, three Tibetan nuns—Rigzin Dolma, Tsering Dolma and Semgha, committed suicide and left notes referring to the institution’s demolitions and government “harassment.” Currently, Larung Gar remains closed for new enrollments following the orders of the Chinese authorities.

In February 2021, BBC published a report which unveiled cases of horrific rape culture being practiced on Uyghur and other Turkic women by the Chinese authorities inside the so-called transformation through education camps. Not long after that, series of testimonies

of torture and sexual abuse of women in Tibetan jails were published by the Taiwan Times. The report exposed the vicious assaults: harsh beatings, starvations, molestation, and electric shocks etc., on the Tibetan nuns and women in these camps by the Chinese guards and officials.

Expulsion Drive Resumed at Yachen Gar Buddhist Academy

Around May 2019, the Chinese authorities in Tibet's Karze region resumed mass eviction of Tibetan nuns from the Yachen Gar Tibetan Buddhist center. According to reliable sources, close to 3,600 nuns, monks and lay practitioners have been forced out of Yachen Gar. Residents who had come from areas outside Sichuan Province have been mainly targeted. A Tibetan living in the area reported to Radio Free Asia that most of the monks and nuns evicted were from Jomda (Ch: Jiangda) and Palbar (Ch: Bianba) Counties, in the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), and they had been sent back for "political re-education". Many of the detainees at Jomda were taken to Chamdo due to overflowing numbers at the Jomda County detention center.

Disturbing reports of torture and forceful confinement of the evicted residents including the beatings of the evicted nuns who were confined in Jomda County have emanated from Tibet. The nuns were subjected to the so-called patriotic re-education camp where they were forced to wear military uniforms instead of their Buddhist robes. Images obtained via social media revealed expelled nuns being transported in buses while others were forcefully stopped from accompanying the evicted nuns to the buses. No concrete dwellings were known to have been destroyed at that time but authorities are reportedly keeping a tight watch over the center with "around 600 Chinese officials now permanently stationed at Yachen Gar".

The Chinese Communist Party has closed off the site and detained former residents in order to curb the information from getting out of the area. But the satellite images collected by a UK-based organization, Free Tibet, are clear and undeniable. Free Tibet published a series of satellite pictures of Yachen Gar through the years. The mass demolition is clear from the images taken on 3 April 2018 and one of the 24 August 2019. The west bank of the river running through Yachen Gar was once a largely populated community (as in 2013 image), compared to the latest one (24 August 2019) which reveals just bare ground.

In 2019, an anonymous source reported to Radio Free Asia that a Tibetan nun, evicted from Yachen Gar, has committed suicide in an internment camp because of the unbearable hardships.² The unknown nun was reportedly from Jomda County. According to the source, the nun was defiant of the political reeducation sessions and has always protested against the Chinese officials, who has developed a hostile attitude towards her.

Administration of Monasteries

The Communist government-controlled Democratic Management Committee (DMCs) has taken over the administrative role of abbots, traditional heads of monasteries. Human Rights Watch has reported that the Chinese authorities have established Monastery Management Committees in 1787 monasteries since November 2011. The committee is composed of state-approved ‘patriotic’ monks and nuns, party cadres and government officials, in some cases ‘trusted’ Tibetan officials. It is given the responsibility of administering monasteries and imposing rules and regulation through ‘patriotic education.’

The United Front Work Department, hailed by Xi Jinping as the “magic weapon” to realize the great rejuvenation of the Chinese

² <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/nun-02142020172455.html>

nation, is at the core of control of the Tibetan monastic community. The UFWD was reorganized in 2018 to achieve the CCP's objective to Sinicize all religions and bring them tightly under the party's control.

According to reports of ICT, the UFWD in a faculty meeting in Ngari on 10 May 2020, emphasized that the monastic community should develop consciousness as a Chinese national meaning to shift their identity to be loyal to the one Chinese race. In 2020, the UFWD held various training and education programs for the representatives of the monastic community where it instructed the monastic community to adhere to "four standards" and to support the party and government.

The "four standards" policy required the monastic community to

1. Comply with the standard on political reliability, and strive to be advanced monks and nuns with a steady and distinctive stance.
2. Obey the standards on religion by creating harmony, and strive to be advanced monks and nuns for diligent study and strenuous training.
3. Follow the standards of moral integrity capable of obedience to the public, and strive to be advanced monks and nuns for law-abiding and noble morality.
4. Obey the standard that works at critical times, strive to be advanced monks and nuns for playing active roles.

Surveillance cameras and even police stations are located inside and close to monasteries and regular inspections to monitor signs of loyalty to His Holiness the Dalai Lama take place. Chinese authorities have evicted underage monks and forced them to enroll in Chinese government-run schools. On 21 and 22 October 2021, 30 monks from Jakyung monastery and 50 monks from Ditsa monastery in Bayan County (Ch: Hualong), Qinghai Province, were expelled and sent back to their respective homes during a police raid following

a move announced in a Religious Affairs Regulations.³ The drive exclusively targets younger monks and threatens their connection to Tibet's traditional religion and culture.

In November, a Tibetan Buddhist school run by Drakgo Monastery in Kham Karze, now incorporated into Sichuan Province, was forcefully demolished leaving hundreds of Tibetan students astray. Earlier on 31 July 2021, Kharmar Monastery in Gansu Province was forcibly closed down after the authorities said it has unlawfully given money to other monasteries which the local government perceives as an insult or disregard towards its own government. The incident led to eviction of its monks and nuns to their own homes.⁴

Patriotic Re-education

Patriotic re-education (or simply patriotic education) was initially launched in Tibet in 1996 as a part of Beijing's "Strike Hard" campaign against crime and corruption. The campaign has expanded and reached every part of Tibet region. The core message of the campaign preaches, "loyalty to the State is a prerequisite to be a good monk or nun". Under this campaign, a 'Work Team' (Tib: ledon rukhag), consisting both Chinese and trusted Tibetan officials, visit monasteries and nunneries and force the monks and nuns to denounce His Holiness the Dalai Lama and declare their allegiance toward the Communist Party leadership either via an examination, or by making them sign a pledge. Moreover, under the "Nine Must Haves" program, which is under the umbrella of a patriotic re-education campaign, all monasteries and nunneries must display the portrait of the Chinese communist leaders and the Chinese national flag. Any attempts to boycott patriotic re-education sessions or defy the demands of the Work Team may result in expulsion, arrest or

³ <https://tibet.net/around-80-tibetan-monks-forced-out-of-monasteries-in-tibets-tsongon-prefecture/>

⁴ <https://tibet.net/tibetan-monastery-in-gansu-forced-to-close-down-monks-and-nuns-ordered-to-disrobe/>

torture. Chinese authorities have beaten a Tibetan man named Tenzin Norsang to death in custody in 2019 after he refused to take part in one of the mass ‘political reeducation campaigns’ conducted before the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party rule.

At the Seventh Central Tibet Work Forum meeting, held in Beijing from 29 to 30 August, Xi Jinping announced Beijing’s plans to intensify its ‘patriotic re-education’ of Tibetan citizens. In the following months, authorities brought out the need for Tibetan Buddhists to study policies of the Seventh Central Tibet Work Forum. Monks of Tashi Lhunpo and Nyima Ling Monastery were seen attending seminars organized by management committees. Last September, monks and nuns at Larung Gar were instructed to study the policies of the Seventh Tibet Work Forum.

Interference in the Reincarnation System

In January 2007, the State Administration for Religious Affairs (SARA) issued a document called “Measures on the Management of the Reincarnation of Living Buddhas in Tibetan Buddhism,” also known as Order No. 5, asserting that state approval was required for reincarnations. The law required the monastic leaders to restrict from providing guidance regarding their future incarnation or consulting His Holiness the Dalai Lama for further information. These measures were reinforced in January 2016 by the State Administration of Religious Affairs when it issued a full online database of the official Rinpoches, identified by name, date of birth, monastery and with a picture and unique certificate number. China notably excluded His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Panchen Gedhun Choekyi Nyima from its list of authentic Rinpoches, on the non-religious grounds that he betrayed his homeland. The abduction of the 11th Panchen Lama and appointment of one of its own reflect the Chinese government’s disrespect for the age-old reincarnation tradition and suggest

probable interference on the reincarnation process of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama in the future.

A Human Rights Watch report in December 2021 dived into China's relentless effort in establishing a legal groundwork for its plan to capitalize on the reincarnation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama through persistent propaganda of its policies and regulations, in particular the "**Four Standards**", to transform monks into "politically reliable" ones. Raising particular concern about the regulation of reincarnation of Tibetan living Buddhas, five UN experts have noted in their communication dated 2 June 2020, that this "interfere[s][sic] and possibly undermines, in a discriminatory way, the religious traditions and practices of the Tibetan Buddhist minority." Quoting the concerns of the Tibetan Buddhists, the UN experts have noted that "furthermore, there is fear that the Chinese authority will identify and appoint the successor of the current (fourteenth) Dalai Lama against the Tibetan traditions and the wishes of Tibetan Buddhist communities."

On 23 August 2019, the Chinese government convened a training session in Lhasa, for about 100 Tibetan Buddhist monks from 73 monasteries in which they were instructed about the Chinese government's "management of the reincarnation system" and the history and rituals for the reincarnation approved by the Chinese Communist Party. The "training" was attended by important figures in the TAR including the Chinese-installed Panchen Lama, Gyaltzen Norbu or the Gya (Eng: Chinese) Panchen as many Tibetans address him.

Ban on Religious Activities

Chinese authorities have taken heightened measures to keep away Tibetans, including monks and nuns, from celebrating and performing religious ceremonies and activities in Tibet. Over the

years, the Chinese authorities have failed miserably in their attempts to coax the Tibetan people to hold the Party over Buddhism.

Around early August 2019, the Chinese Communist Party has issued a notice banning retired elderly Tibetans from performing the kora (a Tibetan Buddhist practice of circumambulating monasteries or sacred religious sites while reciting prayers) and other religious observances. Punishments would be imposed on those who were found performing Kora.

In their latest attempt to “sinicize” Tibetan Buddhism, Tibetans were barred from celebrating religious festivals such as Saga Dawa, Gaden Ngamchoe, and the Tibetan new year, Losar. In December 2020, during the Gaden Ngamchoe festival in Lhasa, an unusually large number of the police force were deployed putting fears in the hearts of the worshippers. In the run-up to the month of Saga Dawa, a holy month in the Tibetan calendar, Chinese authorities have put up notices bearing restrictions on the activities during the festival celebration.

In July 2021, two Tibetans namely, Kunchok Tashi and Dzapo, both in their 40s were arrested for celebrating the birthday of His Holiness the Dalai Lama by sharing pictures and videos and encouraging others to recite prayers on social media. Moreover, around 20 or 30 Tibetans were suspected to have been arrested some time around the birthday of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Schools in Tibetan areas have instructed parents to order their children not to take part in any religious activities during winter break. They were threatened with unspecified punishments for not complying with the ban. In April 2021, school authorities in Sog County ordered Tibetan parents to shed all religious practices such as carrying rosaries, prayer wheels or other religious items, while in the school’s vicinity. The authorities have claimed that “schools are

places to cultivate and produce socialist scholars, instead of using them as a place to follow rituals and traditions”. These preposterous regulations substantiate the complete violation of Tibetan’s rights and insult to Tibetan religion and culture.

Furthermore, In June, Chinese authorities ordered the removal of Tibetan prayer flags from the mountains, monasteries, and villages in the Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Golog, eastern Tibet in what is called a part of an “environmental clean-up” drive.

Ironically, in its third Universal Periodic Review in November 2018 before the UN Human Rights Council, China proclaimed to have already implemented the recommendations of member states to guarantee and ensure freedom of religion and belief of Tibetans and other so-called minority groups. The reports of demolition of nearly half of Yachen Gar on the heels of the destruction of Larung Gar raises questions on the credibility of China’s claims of religious freedom in Tibet.

Demolitions in Drakgo

A series of recent crackdowns on Tibetans in Drakgo County in Karze (Ch. Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, in Tibet’s traditional Kham province, illustrates the dire conditions in which Tibetans are forced to live. Sources in Tibet report that Chinese officials in Drakgo ordered the demolition of Gaden Nangten school in October 2021. Officials’ claims that the school violates land-use laws are just a pretext to prevent Tibetan children from learning the Tibetan language, culture, and religion. The demolition of the school left at least 130 students astray and without a place to receive necessary education.⁵ Forced closure of schools also serve China’s campaign of coercing Tibetan children’s admission into Chinese government schools, where all the subjects are being primarily taught in Chinese.

⁵ <https://tibet.net/tibetan-buddhist-school-in-kham-drakgo-forcibly-demolished/>

In December 2021, China demolished a 99-foot-tall Buddha statue, tore down 45 huge prayer wheels erected near the monastery and burned prayer flags down. The bronze statue, constructed on 5 October 2015 to ward off natural disasters, was accused of having been constructed too high as going against the law, while the local residents were convinced that it was constructed legally with government's sanctions.⁶

On 22 and 23 December, local authorities took down another Buddha statue, a 30-foot-tall Maitreya statue, housed inside one of the temples in the vicinity of the Drakgo monastery.⁷ A source reported that the Chinese workers bulldozed the whole three-storey temple housing the statue of Jetsun Jampa Gonpo (Maitreya Buddha) after multiple attempts in the past. Following the destruction, security personnel searched phones and around a dozen Tibetan men and women, both monks and lay people, were arrested. Tibetan monks and lay Tibetans exchanged information and news regarding the destruction outside Tibet. Paga, the abbot of the monastery, Nyima, his assistant, Tenzin Nyima, Tashi Dorjee, Lhamo Yangkyab, a local sculptor, and Norpa Tsering Samdup were among those detained. Detainees were beaten inhumanely and tortured including not receiving proper food in prison. Many were forced to stand in the freezing cold without clothing.

Additionally, they are required to attend “Patriotic Education” sessions and taught to respect and love the party above all else. As a result of severe beatings, one of the Tibetans suffered serious injuries to his eyes.⁸ Tibetans are required to be mindful in every aspect of

6 <https://tibet.net/cultural-revolution-like-crackdown-china-demolished-a-sky-high-buddha-statue-and-45-huge-prayer-wheels-in-drakgo-tibet/>

7 <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/statue-01102022154444.html#:~:text=RFA%20has%20verified%20the%20destruction,targeting%20its%20religion%20and%20traditions.>

8 <https://tibet.net/around-a-dozen-tibetans-arbitrarily-detained-and-tortured-second-buddha-statue-dismantled-in-drakgo-crackdown/>

their lives, including their facial expression, which could be used against them as a ground for punishment and detention.

News emerged in late January this year of the arrest of two prominent Tibetan monks five months ago. The two monks, Tenzin Norbu and Wangchen Nyima of Nenang Monastery in Drakgo were arrested on 15 August 2021 and are currently being held in Tawu (Ch: Daofu) County prison in Karze (Ch: Ganzi). Then in late February, the Chinese government reportedly

demolished a three-storey-high statue of Guru Padmasambhava located in Drakgo's Chanang Monastery.⁹ While the reason for its destruction is not known, it perfectly fits the pattern of recent demolitions in the region as part of China's renewed crackdown.

Tearing down Buddhist statues and structures is a direct attack on the centuries-long traditions of Tibetans including putting up prayer flags to lift one's luck, erecting religious structures to ward off misfortunes and spinning prayer wheels to accumulate mantras for the well-being of others. Taking down Buddhist structures and statues is an attack on centuries-old Tibetan traditions, including raising prayer flags to bring luck, erecting religious structures to ward off misfortunes, and spinning prayer wheels to collect mantras for their well-being. According to a Tibetan source, the current crackdown in Drakgo is comparable to that of the Cultural Revolution. "These acts are acute attacks on Tibetan religion, language, and culture by the Chinese authorities," said the source. China needs to be practical in its adherence to international covenants and treaties. It must respect the fundamental rights of Tibetans, including their social, cultural, linguistic and religious rights, and not punish them. Chinese Communist Party must acknowledge the global outcry against its policies that undermine Tibetan rights and threaten to assimilate Tibetan identity into Chinese culture.

⁹ <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/statue-02282022155542.html>

ANNEXURE 1

ICT translation of the Code of Conduct for Communist Party Members in the Tibet Autonomous Region for Not Believing in Religion.

This is part of the study material being distributed to party members and cadres in the Tibet Autonomous Region from April 2021.

Code of Conduct for Communist Party Members in the Tibet Autonomous Region for Not Believing in Religion (for trial implementation)

In order to implement the requirements of strict party governance in all aspects, strengthen the party's political institutions, and strengthen the political discipline of communists not permitted to believe in religion, and in accordance with the "Constitution of the Communist Party of China," "Norms of Political Life Within the Party Under the New Situation," and "The Regulations on the Education and Management of Party Members of the Communist Party of China and the Regulations on Disciplinary Actions of the Communist Party of China" and other internal party regulations have formulated this code of conduct in accordance with the actual conditions of our region.

1. Strengthen theoretical arms, firm ideals and beliefs, adhere to Marxist materialism and atheism, firmly establish Marxist religious views, not forgetting the original aspiration, keep the mission in mind, be absolutely loyal to the party, strictly abide by party constitution, rules and discipline, not believe in religion, and not participate in religious activities, not spreading and promoting religion, do not provide support for the holding of religious activities or the construction of religious facilities unilaterally, and resolutely put an

end to not believing overtly, but doing so covertly; not believing in public, but doing so on arrival at home; not believe while in office, but doing so upon retirement.

2. Strictly require yourself to adhere to party member standards, take the initiative to wear party member badges, not wear religious symbols such as beads, statues, not tattooing religious scriptures or religious signs on your body, and not placing religious signs on office premises or official vehicles , not participating in group religious study and religious chanting, not donating money and materials to monasteries, not going for religious ritual visits, pilgrimage, receiving ordination, making religious offerings, and not doing retreats. Not doing circumambulation of mountains and lakes. Not inviting monks and nuns and requesting them to perform divination for family members, perform prayers and provide names to children. Nor forwarding or liking religious audio, video, religious information and scriptures.

3. Categorically draw a clear line with the 14th Dalai and the Dalai clique, and clearly hoist the flag to eliminate the negative influence of the 14th Dalai and Dalai clique using religion. Not believing in rumors, spreading rumors, not using religion to interfere in the nation's affairs, social work, economic, cultural, and social undertakings. Not obstructing national construction projects by seeking recourse to "sacred mountains" and "divine lakes".

4. To send minor children to receive compulsory education in accordance with the law, rather than sending them to monasteries as monks and nuns. Not sending them to places of religious worship, schools or training institutions run by religious clerics to receive education and training.

5. Assiduously guide religious family members and relatives

to downplay their religious consciousness, advise them not to set up altars, place religious objects, hang religious pictures and photos of religious personalities at home. Make efforts as best as possible to make them not participate in religious activities or do so as little as possible. Incense-burning ceremonies must be conducted according to best practices to protect the environment. In case of customary activities such as weddings and funerals advance supplication has to be made to the party branch before inviting religious personnel to carry out religious activities. Family members and close relatives who go abroad to have an audience of the 14th Dalai or participate in various religious ceremonies and religious activities organized by the 14th Dalai and the Dalai clique should be promptly stopped, and if that does not work, then it should be reported to the party organization immediately.

6. Assiduously guide the religious public to treat religion rationally, consciously change customs, and reduce the negative influence of religion. Then, through pursuing a healthy and civilized lifestyle, and depending on hard work and perseverance, create a happy life.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL ASSIMILATION

Language rights are human rights and fundamental freedoms protected in a number of international conventions to which the PRC is legally bound to observe the responsibilities to protect the right to education. Indeed, China's own constitution guarantees the protection of citizen's right to an education in their native tongue. Article 10 of the 1984 Regional National Autonomy Law along with the PRC's Constitution and other national laws and statutes provide for areas where minority languages and Chinese should be used as well as citizens and officials who should learn both minority languages and Chinese. But all these commitments, provisions, and safeguards are contravened by policy formulated and implemented under the pretence of "ethnic unity" and development.. In early August 2021, Chinese authorities in Kham Karze ordered Gyalten Getza Tibetan school, recognised for its outstanding contributions to the society, to change the school's curriculum and medium of instruction into Chinese and take the school's examinations in the Chinese language.

In January 2021, the National People's Congress declared the use of minority languages "unconstitutional" further cementing the Chinese party-state's aggressive attempts to assimilate minority nationalities into a single Chinese national identity. The PRC's National Plan for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020) makes use of 'patriotic education' to 'fortify students' faith and confidence in the Party's leadership and the socialist system. A new law on ethnic unity required schools to incorporate state ideology in their curriculum and parents to encourage compulsory bilingual kindergartens to immerse Tibetan children in Chinese language and state propaganda from a very young age.¹⁰

¹⁰ <https://tchrd.org/china-enforces-compulsory-mandarin-chinese-learning-for-pre-school-children-in-tibet/>

The United Nations Committee on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights has questioned China how the “Bilingual Education Policy” in Tibet and East Turkestan guarantees equal respect and recognition for both the Chinese and the minority language, and the compulsory education of replacing ethnic minority languages including Uighur, Tibetan and Mongolian by Chinese as the medium of instruction in compulsory education is justified under the policy. Such a policy has resulted in parents refusing to send their children to school. The Committee highlighted reports that China has attempted to eradicate the culture, religion and language of Uighurs and Tibetans through massive destruction of sacred cultural and religious sites and bans on the practice of religious rituals and on the use of the Tibetan and Uighur languages in schools.

On 8 July 2021, Chinese authorities ordered the closure of Sengdruk Taktse middle school in Darlak County without an official reason, arresting one of its longest serving teachers, Rinchen Kyi, accusing her of “inciting separatism” for her peaceful protest. ¹¹While a handful of students got enrolled in Chinese government-run schools, many from distant areas are denied admission to schools and accommodation in the region. Imprisonment of language rights advocate, Tashi Wangchuk, substantiates China’s method of silencing voices against its flawed policy.

China’s Bilingual Education Policy

China’s “bilingual education” policy, introduced in 2010, order “promotion of both Tibetan and Chinese languages but allows individual schools to decide which language to prioritize as the teaching medium. However, in practice, there appears to be considerable pressure to shift to Chinese and Model 2. To survive and sustain any culture, the protection and promotion of its linguistic heritage are unquestionable. Official Chinese media reports confirmed that “increasingly schools, especially in urban

¹¹ <https://freetibet.org/latest/teacher-is-arrested-after-her-school-was-forcibly-closed/>

areas, are using Putonghua [standard Chinese] as the primary language of instruction, with Tibetan being used only in classes where the Tibetan language is the topic of the class, if it is taught at all.” In January 2019, Tibetan students in Nangchen were barred from attending informal Tibetan classes in local monasteries during winter break as Chinese authorities declared these sessions as “dangerous”. China’s oldest university for Tibetan students ended instruction in the Tibetan language. The Golog Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (TAP), government ordered primary schools to introduce primarily Chinese- medium instruction in the 2019-2020. Teaching in all schools in Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai is already conducted in Chinese. The Ministry of Education of the PRC announced in July 2021 that Mandarin will be taught to all preschool children to “build a sense of community for the Chinese nation” from an early age.

Human Rights Watch’s report released in March 2020 noted that the so-called “bilingual education” policy in TAR is a growing threat to the extinction of Tibetans and other ethnic minorities to study in their mother tongue. The report titled: China’s “Bilingual Education” Policy in Tibet, highlighted that the education policy in TAR is aiding China’s agenda in replacing Tibetan-medium of teaching with the Chinese language as the medium of instruction in primary schools in the region.¹²

Colonial Boarding Schools in Tibet

A groundbreaking report from Tibet Action Institute confirmed the Chinese government’s policy of brainwashing young Tibetan schoolchildren by separating them from their families and communities. Around 800,000-900,000 children aged 6-18, not including an unknown number of four and five-year olds, are being forced into a vast network of colonial boarding schools. One of the key critical

¹² <https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/03/04/chinas-bilingual-education-policy-tibet/tibetan-medium-schooling-under-threat>

factors of these boarding schools is the “intention to influence or even erase student’s cultural identity and indoctrinate them with beliefs (religious or ideological) of the colonial power or dominant group”.¹³

Shutdown of Schools and Ban on Private Classes

Schools that offer Tibetan language classes and lessons are particularly targeted as part of the campaign to eliminate the primary source of Tibetan language instruction in the country. In order to eliminate two of the most effective ways of retaining Tibetan language in the care of a new generation of Tibetan students, China has implemented the biased Bilingual Education Policy in Tibetan schools and enforced authoritative orders to close targeted schools. Often, schools are pressured to change their curriculum to promote Chinese usage, such as conducting exams in Mandarin and changing the language of instruction. In the absence of compliance, the school may be terminated or the teachers deemed responsible for decision stagnation may be expelled. China uses arbitrary arrests of teachers under fabricated charges as one of its means of preventing schools from running as they should.

In early August 2021, Gyalten Getza school, an outstanding Tibetan school in Kham, was threatened into changing its medium of instruction into Chinese. The administration of the school were intimidated by stating that the school will face closure should they refuse to act in accordance with the order.¹⁴

In Darlak County, Chinese authorities closed Sengdruk Taktse Middle School on 8 July 2021.¹⁵ All students have been advised to enroll in other government-affiliated schools in the region after the private Tibetan school closed without giving any official reason for its closure.

13 https://s7712.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/2021_ColonialBoardingSchoolReport_Digital.pdf

14 <https://freetibet.org/latest/renowned-tibetan-school-ordered-to-teach-in-chinese-or-face-shutdown/>

15 <https://freetibet.org/latest/teacher-is-arrested-after-her-school-was-forcibly-closed/>

A confidential source in the area claimed that the closure of the school was politically motivated. The school offered Tibetan culture-based education to Tibetan students in the area and taught the Tibetan language.

Long imprisonment of language advocates such as Tashi Wangchuk represents China's retort against human rights advocates critical of its Communist regime. China reportedly disappeared Rinchen Kyi, a Tibetan school teacher, after she protested against the Chinese authorities for forcibly closing down Sengdruk Taktse School, one of the few remaining Tibetan-medium schools in Golog TAP.

Arrest and Sentence of Language Rights Advocates and Intellectuals

Case Studies:

1. Tashi Wangchuk: Tashi Wangchuk is a well-known Tibetan language rights advocate who was arbitrarily detained by Chinese authorities in January 2016, a few months after he appeared in a New York Times documentary about his concerns for Tibetan language and his efforts in reaching out to Chinese officials. He mainly talked about Tibetan language and culture preservation in the documentary released in November 2015.



Tashi Wangchuk is shown in an undated photo

He had made clear in his interviews with The New York Times that he was not an advocate of Tibetan ‘independence,’ and that he was concerned about the protection and preservation of Tibetan language and culture, and called for implementation of the rights and freedoms associated with the equal protection and promotion of Tibetan language and culture, as stipulated in the Chinese Constitution and the law on Regional National Autonomy. However, Tashi Wangchuk was charged with “inciting separatism,” and after a 4-hour closed-door trial, he was sentenced to 5 years imprisonment in May 2018.

On 23 August 2018, Tashi Wangchuk’s lawyer Liang Xiaojun tweeted that the Appeals Court dismissed his appeal against the sentencing. The arguments presented by Tashi Wangchuk and his defense lawyer were rejected and the Qinghai High Court upheld Tashi Wangchuk’s five-year sentence.

In January 2019, he was denied access to his lawyer despite his request to discuss filing a new appeal with his lawyer. In September 2019, he was again refused visitation by his lawyer Lin Qilei. Then in April 2020, the Chinese authorities, for the third time, stopped the lawyers from meeting Tashi Wangchuk as part of Covid-19 restrictions.

On 29 January 2020, Mr. Liang Xiaojun took to his official Twitter account to announce the release of his client after the 5-year prison term was completed but without any photographic evidence. Tashi Wangchuk has to serve a supplementary sentence of five years of “deprivation of political rights,” which begins from the day of his release.

Almost a year after his release, Tashi reportedly complained against the Chinese authorities to allow the use of Tibetan languages in

schools, government jobs, and other sectors of Tibetan public life. He was later summoned by the authorities and interrogated about “what gave him the responsibilities to advocate for the use of Tibetan language” on 17 January 2022. Tashi wrote on his Weibo account about how Chinese officials are just abusing their power to crack down on Tibetan language rights even though the constitution of the PRC fully guarantees those rights. With Chinese-only examinations in applying for government jobs, Tibetan students are compelled into belittling the Tibetan language and giving proper recognition to the Chinese language. He currently remains under heavy surveillance.¹⁶

Tibetan writers: Numerous writers have been arrested and sentenced to long prison terms over the years based on their writings deemed illegal by the Chinese authorities. Sentencing of Tibetan writers is an inconspicuous attack on the Tibetan language since they are amongst the people who make use of the language greatly in their writings. The familiarity and the relevance of Tibetan language is retained in these writings. Some of these writers who became the target of Chinese censorship are:

2. Gendun Lhundup: Rongwo Gendun Lhundrup, is a 46-year-old Tibetan writer, poet, teacher, editor, and a literature and social analyst, who writes under the pen name Lhamgok. He was officially arrested and detained on 2 December 2020 on unknown charges. He was then sentenced to four years’ fixed-term imprisonment and two years’ deprivation of political rights on 1 December 2021 by the Xining Intermediate People’s Court.¹⁷

Sources inside Tibet described Gendun as someone “who cares deeply for Tibetan culture and language and has worked tirelessly

¹⁶ <https://tchrd.org/tibetan-language-rights-advocate-tashi-wangchuk-interrogated-in-connection-with-weibo-posts-questioning-chinas-language-policy/>

¹⁷ <https://tibet.net/recent-convictions-confirm-chinas-continued-repression-of-tibetan-intellectuals-and-writers/>

for the cause of Tibet”. One of the exile reports noted that Gendun was arrested a few days after a workshop on Sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism in Rebgong county was organized. He reportedly asked the facilitator “... how does one sinicize Tibetan Buddhism?” which led to a verbal altercation between the two.

3. Go Sherab Gyatso: China arrested and sentenced Go Sherab Gyatso to 10 years in prison for peacefully expressing his views, which the Chinese authorities claimed is “inciting secession”.¹⁸ His trial took place behind closed curtains with no defense lawyer allowed. China’s response to the United Nations experts on 27 August 2021 failed to substantiate which action of Go Sherab Gyatso constituted any violation of laws. Sherab’s health has further crumbled due to a lack of basic necessities in prison, such as food and medical treatment, compounded by beatings. He is currently in a very ill state.¹⁹



Go Sherab Gyatso (left) and Lobsang Lhundup (right). Photo: Tibet Watch

4. Lobsang Lhundup: Also known as Dhi Lhaden, he was formally arrested and detained in June 2019 by Qingyang public security personnel following reports that he was found in possession of “banned teaching materials”. But his family members were

¹⁸ <https://tibet.net/arbitrarily-detained-tibetan-scholar-go-sherab-gyatso-covertly-sentenced-to-10-years/>

¹⁹ <https://tibet.net/wrongfully-imprisoned-tibetan-scholar-being-subjected-to-life-threatening-treatments/>

informed by the concerned authorities that the book he wrote in 2008, “Tungol Trimuk - The Art of Passive Resistance” was a revolt to the nation and a source of turbulence to the society, which resulted in him being sentenced to four years in prison.²⁰

After more than two years in prison, the Chinese authorities remain disinclined to allow his family to meet him in person. His well-known publications include ‘Tsesok Kyi Trunpe Kecha - Life and Death Testaments’ in Tibet (2011), ‘Tungol Trimtuk - The Art of Passive Resistance’, published in 2015 and later translated into English by TCHRD in India and ‘Dhokpe Tsom - Bundle of Doubts’ amongst many other books.

5. Thupten Lodoe (Sabuchey): Thupten Lodoe, a 34-year-old acclaimed Tibetan writer, was sentenced to four years and six months in prison by the Chinese government on the basis of trumped-up charges of “inciting separatism” around 14 June 2022. Over the last eight months, he has been incarcerated in an undisclosed location ever since his arrest last year.²¹



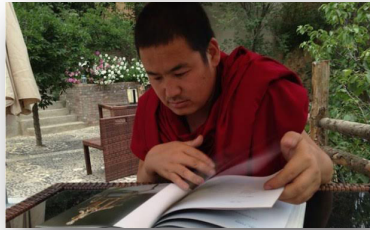
Thupten Lodoe alias Sabuchey is shown in the picture. Photo: RFA

It is not clear where he is being held and what condition he is in. According to a second report, his family is currently being threatened and warned by local authorities, and his children are not permitted to attend school.

20 <https://www.tibetwatch.org/news/2021/12/6/notable-tibetan-writer-imprisoned-for-four-years-after-a-secret-trial>

21 <https://tibet.net/recent-convictions-confirm-chinas-continued-repression-of-tibetan-intellectuals-and-writers/>

6. Rongwo Gangkar: Rongwo Gangkar, a Tibetan writer and scholar, has been detained by the Chinese government after being missing for more than a year since early 2021. As reported by Radio Free Asia (*RFA*), the 48-year-old writer was abruptly arrested by Chinese authorities in early 2021 and his current whereabouts and well-being are unknown. Following his arrest, the Chinese police allegedly took him into custody. Neither the charges against him nor the date of his trial has been revealed by the Chinese government.²²



Rongwo Gangkar is described as a renowned writer with a large number of publications to his credit. Originally from Rebgong (Ch: Tongren) County in the Malho (Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, he belongs to the Rongwo monastery. Among his popular works are “The Knot” and “An Interview with Gendun Choephel”.

7. Kunsang Gyaltzen: Tibetan youth Kunsang Gyaltzen, aged 27, is a writer and a research student at the Tibet University. In June 2020, he was arrested in Lhasa in the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region after he was accused of distributing books having “links with political matters”. No other information was available at the time such as his current well-being and whereabouts. It is also not known whether he was sentenced or not. Kunsang hails from Drokru Dewa of Gomang Township in Mangzong in Tsolho region.

8. Rinchen Kyi: After the Chinese authorities forcibly shut down the Sengdruk Taktse Middle School on 8 July, they also arrested Rinchen Kyi, one of its longest serving teachers, in Golog.

22

Ibid.

According to a report by Free Tibet, Rinchen Kyi was arrested on 1 August 2021 on charges of “inciting separatism” and was taken to Xining, capital city of Qinghai Province.

Rinchen Kyi was secretly brought home by police at 8 pm local time on 24 April following eight months of confinement incommunicado.²³



Rinchen Kyi is shown in the picture. Photo: Free Tibet

Guldrak and Yangrik: Two Tibetan students at Darlag County Middle School were detained on 24 August 2021 for opposing the introduction of Chinese medium education in all local schools starting in the fall. They were detained at the Darlag County detention center, and their current status and condition remain unknown. The two 19-year-olds took to WeChat, stating “It would be better to live as herders than to go to school.”²⁴



Handcuffed Guldrak and Yangrik are pictured with Chinese officials. Photo: RFA

23 <https://freetibet.org/latest/rinchen-kyi-released-after-eight-months-in-detention/>
24 <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/students-08272021182339.html>

**ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCE OF THE 11TH
PANCHEN LAMA**



*Tenzin Gedun Yeshe Thinley Phuntsok Pal Sangpo: The 11th
Panchen Lama*

Tibet's 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, is one of the longest standing cases of enforced disappearance in the world. For 27 years, China disappeared Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his family from the view of the public and imposed false statements in response to the demands made by the international audiences regarding the Panchen Lama.

On 14 May 1995, His Holiness the Dalai Lama recognized Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, aged 6, as the next Panchen Lama in accordance with the traditional Tibetan religious traditions. But on 17 May 1995, the Chinese authorities abducted the 11th Panchen Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, along with his parents and Jadrel Rinpoche, making him one of the world's youngest prisoners of conscience. Since then, his whereabouts remain unknown. Then on 11 November 1995, the Chinese government announced Gyaltsen Norbu, the son

of two Communist Party members, as the 11th Panchen Lama. He was formally enthroned at Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in December 1995.

The so-called urn ceremony orchestrated by the Chinese government in the selection of reincarnated lamas is not only against the Tibetan traditional religious traditions but was also rigged by the Chinese authorities to ensure that a Communist Party members' son was thereby selected to be installed as 11th Panchen Lama.

On 8 April 2011, the United Nations' Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances publicly stated that Gedhun Choekyi Nyima disappeared in 1995 when he was only six years old. The Chinese authorities have "admitted to taking him away. They have continually refused to divulge any information about him or his whereabouts, making his case an enforced disappearance". It has been over 27 years since the enforced disappearance and the case is still pending at the United Nation Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (WGEID). In September 2019, during the 119th session of the WGEID, China stated that Gedhun Choekyi Nyima has "went to university" and "has currently found a job." However, the UN working group expresses China's response as "insufficient" and thus stated the case "will remain under consideration."

On 22 September 2020, at the 45th UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), when asked about the case of the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the Chinese representative claimed that "Gedhun Nyima is not an incarnation of Panchen Lama but rather an ordinary Chinese citizen. Now he enjoys good health leading a normal and happy life".

TORTURE AND DEATH IN PRISON

Prisons in Tibet under the administration of the Chinese government are notorious for the way Tibetan prisoners are treated. The walls of the prison cells bear witness to various forms of punishments and torture inflicted on the prisoners. The tortures often cripple the prisoners while others perish under the severity and extremity of these beatings. Physical torments alone does not constitute the whole picture of prison atrocities. Prisoners are often subjected to a rigorous routine of “political reeducation” sessions, a calculated brainwashing of Tibetans into honoring the rule of the Chinese Communist Party and putting the Party above all else. Such campaigns often pave way for further extremes as Tibetans would not abide by these. While the “political reeducation” sessions might seem beneficial and appealing, for Tibetans, these are about gradually losing their identity through slow debasement of Tibetan language, culture and religion. And for those who are imprisoned for advocating for protecting their identity, the so-called political reeducation sessions are bitter pills to swallow.

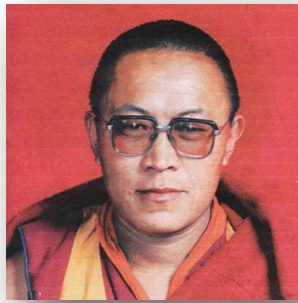
The Chinese government has an atrocious track record of using severe torture on prisoners while in detention and denying them medical care, causing health problems and exacerbating existing health conditions. As a result, many Tibetan political prisoners have been released from prison in poor health or on medical parole, with some becoming permanently crippled for life and others struggling to survive before ultimately succumbing to their injuries.

There are at least 50 known cases of torture-related deaths of Tibetans inside Tibet since the 2008 nationwide uprising against the Chinese rule. Nevertheless, given the Chinese government’s high restrictions on information flowing from inside Tibet, the actual figure would probably be much higher.

Case Studies of Tibetans passing away due to prison tortures

1. Tenzin Delek Rinpoche

Tenzin Delek Rinpoche (65), a highly respected Tibetan spiritual leader and one of the most prominent Tibetan political prisoners died under suspicious circumstances on 12 July 2015 while being incarcerated in a Chinese prison in Tibet. Tibetans, global leaders and lawmakers have urged for an “international investigation” into his death.²⁵



Tenzin Delek Rinpoche

Tenzin Delek Rinpoche was arbitrarily arrested from his monastery in April 2002, under trumped-up charges of being involved in a bomb blast in Chengdu. In 2002, he was sentenced to life imprisonment and denied access to a fair trial.

As a spiritual leader, Tenzin Delek’s influence extended far beyond. But it was his consistent advocacy for Tibetan culture and Tibet’s environment that posed a serious threat to China’s legitimacy in Tibet. In addition to being a spiritual leader, he was an environmental advocate, social activist, and visionary. He spoke against slapdash logging and mining projects and established homes for the elderly and schools for orphans.

25 <https://tibet.net/tenzin-delek-rinpoche-dies-in-chinese-prison/>

Tenzin Delek's innocence was reinforced when in 2004, Human Rights Watch stated that the legal proceedings against Tenzin Delek Rinpoche had been "procedurally flawed" and he had been charged to "curb his efforts to foster Tibetan Buddhism and his work to develop Tibetan social and cultural institutions."

Tibetans in Tenzin Delek's home county of Lighthang, in eastern Tibet have fearlessly made steadfast efforts to secure his release. In 2009, 40,000 Tibetans risking arrests and even death, signed with red ink thumb impression, a petition calling for his release. Months before his death, Tibetans across the globe marked the 13th year of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche's imprisonment and demanded that he be released on medical grounds. His family members in Tibet sought medical parole in accordance with Chinese law, particularly the Prison Law of People's Republic of China that provides for a 'commutation from punishment and release on parole'. This effort gained considerable support from the international community, including the U.S. Congressman Jim McGovern who called on the US State Department to make his release on medical parole a priority. Tibetans were hopeful but this again was short-lived.

While demanding the release of his body, many local Tibetans sustained injuries from gunshot wounds. His sister Dolkar Lhamo made a five-point appeal letter to the Chinese authorities citing a provision in its law that allows families to plead against cremations of prisoners. Lhamo also raised her suspicion that her brother's death may not have been natural.

Within a matter of days, the authorities secretly cremated his body in a remote high-security prison facility with the attendance of his family members, who noticed the deceased had black lips and nails — heightening their suspicion surrounding his death.

After his followers were handed over the ashes by prison authorities,

the police confiscated the ashes from them at a hotel in Lunding at gunpoint and threatened to throw it in a nearby river. A few days later, his sister and niece went missing. His niece Nyima Lhamo later escaped to India and has testified before various International Committees about the period before and after the suspicious death of Tulku Tenzin Delek Rinpoche.

Rinpoche's death points to China's gross violation of the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It also reflects on China's violation of the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners adopted by the First UN Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders stipulating, "sick prisoners who require specialist treatment shall be transferred to specialized institutions or to civil hospitals."

2. Tenzin Nyima (Tamey)



Tenzin Nyima is shown in the pictures

Tenzin Nyima, a 19-year-old Tibetan monk, arrested and detained for peacefully staging a protest calling for Tibet's independence outside a local government office, passed away on 19 January 2021 from torture wounds sustained in prison. When he was brought to hospital for treatment, the doctor was unable to treat him. He was reportedly paralyzed, comatose and gravely ill as the result of constant beatings

in the hands of Chinese officials. So he was admitted to several other hospitals but was discharged without receiving proper remedy. Few days later, he succumbed to his injuries at his home.²⁶

Tenzin Nyima was initially detained along with three other monks Kunsal (20), Soetra and Tsultrim (both around 18) two days after hundreds of hand-written leaflets calling for Tibet's independence were found scattered outside a local government office on 7 November 2019. On 21 November, Yonten and Choegyial, two other young men from Dza Wonpo were detained after staging a similar protest and posting related videos on WeChat. Choegyial's younger brother Nyimey was detained on 18 November 2019 for expressing his solidarity with the 7 November protest by fellow monks from Dza Wonpo Gaden Shedrup Monastery, an online post criticizing Chinese policies in the region.

According to our source, the trials of Tenzin Nyima and six other Tibetans took place at the Intermediate People's Court in Sershul on 10 and 12 November. The Chinese court sentenced the monks Choephel (also called Kunsal), 20, to four years; Soetra (also called Woesser) to three years; and Tsultrim, 16, to one year. Tenzin Nyima (Tamey) was charged with the same offense, but the court did not announce his sentence because of his medical condition. Nyimey, a 22-year-old monk was handed the longest prison term of 5 years for his social media posts on the Dza Wonpo arrests. Tsultrim, who was under 15 years old at the time of protest, a minor, was still tried and sentenced contrary to Chinese and international laws. Choegyial and Yonten were sentenced to four years in prison each on charges of "incitement to split the country".

²⁶ <https://tibet.net/young-tibetan-monk-dies-from-beatings-in-chinese-custody-six-others-sentenced-in-dza-wonpo-tibet/>

3. **Lhamo**

Lhamo, 36, was reportedly detained in June, 2020 by the Chinese authorities for sending money to family members or other Tibetans in India. Two days later, her cousin, Tenzin Tharpa, was also detained on the same charges. During her detention, she was tortured so severely that she was unrecognizable, with bruises all over body, to her family members.²⁷

In August, her family members admitted her to hospital but she passed away two days later.



Lhamo is shown in the picture

4. **Kunchok Jinpa**

Kunchok Jinpa, a Tibetan tour guide, was arrested and detained by the Chinese authorities on 8 November 2013. He was involved in peaceful protests against China's compulsory flag-flying campaign. He was handed a 21-year prison term for "leaking state secrets by sharing information to foreign media on protests in his region".²⁸

During imprisonment, the torture and ill treatment made him paralyzed and inflicted brain hemorrhage upon his admission to hospital in November 2020. Due to the critical injuries, his family members and the hospital couldn't save him as he passed away on 6 February 2021.

27 <https://tibet.net/tibetan-woman-tortured-to-death-in-chinese-custody-cousin-detained-for-sending-money-abroad/>

28 <https://tibet.net/a-tibetan-tour-guide-dies-from-prison-injuries-in-driru-tibet/>



Kunchok Jinpa in an undated photo. Photo: Human Rights Watch

5. Five Former Political prisoners passed away due to prolonged injuries sustained in prison



In the picture, from the clockwise direction Samdup, Tashi Phuntsok, Tsering Bhakdo and Choekyi.

Thinley Choedhen (aka Samdrub) is a former political prisoner who was sentenced to 7 years in prison for peaceful protest. He passed away on 17 February 2020 after years of illness following release.²⁹ Tashi Phuntsok was a Tibetan environmental defender and an aide to Tulku Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, and was sentenced to 7 years in prison in early 2002. He passed away on 17 March 2020.³⁰

29 <https://tibet.net/former-tibetan-political-prisoner-samdub-passes-away-at-the-age-of-50-in-tibet/>

30 <https://tibet.net/tibetan-monk-aide-of-tulku-tenzin-delek-rinpoche-dies-at-60-after-prolonged-illness-imprisonment/>

On 7 May 2020, Choekyi passed away due to torture injuries sustained in prison.³¹ He was sentenced to 4 years of imprisonment in 2015 after he participated in a birthday celebration of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Tsering Bhakdo passed away on 26 April 2020. He was jailed for 8 years after he called for the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Tibet and asserted Tibet's independence.³² In another instance, Gendun Sherab, a former political prisoner, passed away on 18 April 2020 after sustaining life-threatening torture injuries and being denied access to medical treatment.³³

31 <https://tibet.net/tortured-and-refused-medical-treatment-tibetan-political-prisoner-choekyi-dies-in-tibet/>

32 <https://tibet.net/one-more-torture-survivor-former-political-prisoner-passes-away-in-tibet/>

33 <https://tibet.net/tibetan-monk-dies-after-two-years-of-ill-health-due-to-brutal-torture-in-chinese-prison/>

SELF-IMMOLATION PROTEST IN TIBET

“ ...since we do not have freedom to voice the truth about our condition, I had to sacrifice my life to be a witness of truth to the world in general and specifically to the Chinese government and people...” - Sonam Topgyal, male, 26-year-old, died after a self-immolation protest on 9 July 2015.

- 157 Tibetans have self-immolated in Tibet since 27 February 2009
- 131 men, 26 women
- 136 of the 157 are known to have died following their protests
- 26 of the Tibetans who self-immolated were 18 or under

On 27 February 2009, a young monk named Tapey in Ngaba, a town situated in Tibet's traditional Amdo province, set himself on fire to protest against China's rule over Tibet. He was the first-ever Tibetan inside Tibet to self-immolate. Since then, at least 157 Tibetans have self-immolated in Tibet. 136 of them succumbed to the injuries. The whereabouts and conditions of the surviving protestors remain unknown at large. While few self-immolators still remain in Chinese custody, others were released in critical conditions. For Tibetans, self-immolation, the act of setting oneself on fire, is the ultimate protest against the repressions of the Chinese Communist regime and an explicit call for improved human rights and political reform in Tibet.

While the nature of these protests may seem intense, they remain nonviolent and resolute. The fundamental causes of the self-immolation protest are rooted in the Chinese government's repressive policies to wipe out the very existence of Tibetan identity including culture, language and religion. While the protests have taken place in all three traditional provinces of the Tibetan Plateau, the messages left by the protestors were largely identical. All the self-immolators

have called for “freedom in Tibet” and “the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Tibet.” The call for freedom is a call for improved human rights conditions. The call for the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Tibet is also a political call given that the Dalai Lama (5th to the 14th) has headed the Tibetan political establishment for 380 years, making the Dalai Lama a symbolic representation of political reform in Tibet. For Tibetans, the fear of living without any basic human rights far exceeds enduring the pain of setting oneself on fire. For them, having courage to challenge Chinese occupation and safeguarding Tibetan religion, culture, language and environment remains a top-priority.

But the Chinese government’s response towards the string of Tibetan’s self-immolation has remained unsympathetic from the beginning. Instead of addressing the underlying grievances of Tibetans, the Chinese authorities have further heightened the restrictions in Tibetan areas. For the Chinese government, the self-immolation protests are “acts of terrorism” incited by the so-called Dalai Clique. These protests were labeled as a “serious threat to the harmony and stability of the society”. Hence, “in order to protect the fundamental interest of the masses”, the authorities have criminalized the protestor’s family, friends and relatives with arrests and long prison sentences. It has issued guidelines (in the Annexure) aimed at punishing family members and the relatives of the Tibetan self-immolators. The guidelines bar family members of self-immolators from traveling, applying for loans and licenses, employment opportunities, and governmental aid. Such criminalization of one’s family and near-ones has resulted in gradual decline of self-immolation protest over the years, but the human rights situation inside Tibet further worsened.

Till date, more than 50 Tibetans have been sentenced to imprisonment for varying prison terms under the alleged charge of having links with

self-immolation protests. China's prosecutions of Tibetans in response to the self-immolation protests only exacerbate the situation instead of addressing the legitimate grievance of Tibetan people in Tibet.

“The suffering of Tibetans without basic human rights is far worse than the

suffering that we endure when we set ourselves on fire...” - Sonam and Choepak Kyab,

(both died after self-immolation protest on 19 April 2012)

Until the beginning of this year, the last known reported case of self-immolation protest was of Yonten, who passed away after self-immolating in November 2019 in Ngaba county (incorporated into China's Sichuan Province). In the following years, no case of self-immolation was reported from inside Tibet. But given China's high censorship and surveillance policies in place, it is certainly wrong to conclude that no such protest ever took place. For instance, the self-immolation protest of Shurmo, a 26-year-old Tibetan, in 2015 only resurfaced in January 2021. Over five years, the Chinese government has conveniently hidden the news of the protest from reaching the world.

The recent astounding news of a self-immolation protest by a popular Tibetan singer, Tsewang Norbu, on 25 February 2022 in Lhasa shows the deteriorating human rights situation in Tibet and Tibetan people's grievances on Chinese policies. A month later, on 27 March 2022, an 81-year-old Tibetan man, Taphun, reportedly self-immolated in Ngaba county and passed away later that day. His protest took place in front of a Chinese police station indicating possible protest against the Chinese government's repressive policies in the region. Complete censorship of information put in place by Chinese authorities have made it difficult to obtain detailed information at the moment.

Shurmo's self-immolation in 2015

Shurmo, a 26-year-old Tibetan, had self-immolated in 2015 protesting against China's repressive policies in Tibet.³⁴ The self-immolation protest took place on 17 September, 2015 at around 1 pm local time near a bus station in Shagchukha village in Nagchu county, Nagchu prefecture in "Tibet Autonomous Region". Police arrested Shurmo immediately after his self-immolation protest and was taken to a hospital in Shagchukha but he passed away on the same day. Police then arrested three of his relatives and till date there is no information whether the three are still detained, sentenced or released.

There were many Tibetan eyewitnesses to Shurmo's self-immolation protest that day but due to the Chinese government's unspeakably heinous and excessively repressive policies in place in Tibet, this self-immolation incident broke out in Tibet only now, more than five years later. Shurmo belonged to Shagchukha village in Nagchu county. His picture is not available at this time.

Tenzin Yonten



Yonten, aged around 24, set himself ablaze in the center of town near Meruma at around 4 pm local time on 26 November 2019. He

³⁴ <https://tibet.net/2015-tibetan-self-immolation-protest-news-surfaces-more-than-5-years-later/>

is identified as the son of Sodhon (father) and Tsekho Kyi (mother), residents of Meruma's Unit 2.³⁵

Ngaba is a heavily-monitored Tibetan region with intense surveillance measures implemented regularly where police can reach a protest site within a few steps or minutes, stated our source. Details on whether Yonten's body was returned to his parents and the extent of restrictions following the protest was not known.

Over the years, the Chinese government has implemented a total crackdown on Tibetan self-immolation protests, labelling the protests as an "act of terrorism" and criminalizing family members of the self-immolators who were reprimanded with arrests and heavy sentences. Yonten's self-immolation protest is the first one recorded in 2019.

Tsewang Norbu self-immolated in Tibet's capital Lhasa



Tsewang Norbu is shown in an undated photo

Tsewang Norbu, a popular 25-year-old contemporary Tibetan singer self-immolated in late February and later passed away, according to a reliable source.³⁶ Exile media have reported that Tsewang Norbu

35 <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/questioning-12052019171838.html>

36 <https://tibet.net/tsewang-norbu-passes-away-after-reported-self-immolation-protest-in-tibets-capital-lhasa-amid-extraordinary-tight-repression/>

self immolated on 25 February 2022 in front of the Potala Palace in Tibet's capital Lhasa, one of the most strictly monitored cities in the world with heavy police presence. It was reported that Chinese police immediately came to the spot and took him away. With extreme surveillance and monitoring of the flow of information in Tibet, it has become difficult to ascertain details of his self-immolation protest at the time. The cause of his death after the reported self-immolation protest also remains unknown at the moment.

Tsewang Norbu's family were reportedly informed of his passing by the Chinese police on 2 March 2022. However, the authorities have not returned his body to them. Following protests against the Chinese government in Tibet, including self-immolation protests, the Chinese government immediately imposes heightened restrictions and repression with almost complete censorship of communication. Thus, details about such protests remain unknown for years at times. Read more about Tsewang Norbu in the link here.

81-year-old Taphun staged self-immolation protest in Ngaba



Taphun is shown in the picture

Reliable sources in Tibet have confirmed another self-immolation of 81-year-old Taphun a few days ago in Kirti, Ngaba county

(incorporated into China's Sichuan Province). According to the sources, on 27 March 2022, Taphun self-immolated in front of a police station located near Kirti monastery in protest against the Chinese government's oppression. It was reported that the police took Taphun away after his self-immolation attempt. However he died later in custody.

Over the past many years, especially in March, the Chinese government has imposed heightened restrictions and repression in Ngaba county where frequent cases of self-immolations are reported. They have imposed almost complete censorship of communication so details about such protests often remain unknown for years at times.

81-year-old Taphun was a resident of Meruma nomadic village in Ngaba county. He was always vocal about China's oppressive policies and inhuman treatment of Tibetans. On his 80th birthday last year, Taphun had said, "It is certain that the sun of happiness will shine over Tibet due to the blessings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Tibetan millennials should not lose heart!"

ARBITRARY ARRESTS AND SENTENCES

F. Chinese authorities sentenced Pro-independence protesters in Dza Wonpo, Tibet



Chinese authorities have sentenced six Tibetans, including four monks and two laymen, arrested in November 2019 after they staged protests in Dza Wonpo, up to 5 years in prison.

The trials took place at the Intermediate People’s Court in Sershul on 10 and 12 November 2020. The Chinese court sentenced the monks Choephel (also called Kunsal), 20, to four years; Soetra (also called Woesser) to three years; and Tsultrim, 16, to one year. Nyimey, a 22-year-old monk was handed the longest prison term of 5 years for his social media posts on the Dza Wonpo arrests. Tsultrim, who was under 15 years old at the time of protest, a minor, was still tried and sentenced contrary to Chinese and international laws. Choegyial and Yonten were sentenced to four years in prison each on charges of “incitement to split the country”.³⁷

G. Arrested and sentenced for social media posts and online communications

³⁷ <https://tibet.net/young-tibetan-monk-dies-from-beatings-in-chinese-custody-six-others-sentenced-in-dza-wonpo-tibet/>

Tibetans in Tibet under Chinese rule are deprived of their rights to hold opinions without interference and are barred from seeking, receiving and sharing information freely while being under constant watch and surveillance.

Tsering Tso: Tsering Tso was arbitrarily detained on 12 November 2020 for “illegal” WeChat posts by local Chinese police from her home and was taken to the Trikha County detention center. Later, she was subjected to a ten-day administrative detention and charged with a monetary fine of 1000 yuan. During her detention, Tsering Tso was subjected to ill-treatment and inhumane interrogation.³⁸

‘Tsering Tso’ reportedly says she has been under constant surveillance since she graduated from the US State Department’s International Visitor Leadership Program. She was charged with causing “other provocative acts” as listed in the Article 26 of the Public Order Administration Punishment Law (POAPL). The Chinese officials never explained how she violated stability through her WeChat post.

In 2017, Tsering was detained and brutally beaten after she advocated for the rights of the local Tibetans to apply for passports in accordance with the law in the Yushul Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.



A file photo of Tsering Tso hospitalized in 2017. Photo: TCHRD

Crackdown on Tengdro Monastery: For allegedly contacting Tibetans in exile and contributing funds to a sister monastery in Nepal that suffered an earthquake, four monks from Tengdro Monastery were subjected to extraordinarily long prison sentences in a secret trial. Chinese officials also started conducting daily political education sessions with monks and village residents after they suspected they had photos of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

At the sentencing hearing held in September 2020, the Shigatse Intermediate People’s Court sentenced Choegyal Wangpo to 20 years; Lobsang Jinpa, 43, to 19 years; Norbu Dondrub, 64, who sustained critical injuries from police beatings, was sentenced to 17 years; and Ngawang Yeshe, 36, to five years.³⁹

H. China sentences Tibetan singer to six years in prison



Lhundrub Dakpa in an undated photo

Lhundrub Dakpa, a 36-year-old singer from Driru county, Nagchu in the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) was detained in May 2019, within two months after the release of song ‘Black Hat’. The Chinese authorities detained Lhundrub Dakpa for more than a year during which he was subjected to harsh interrogations and constant beatings. In June 2020, a Chinese court in TAR sentenced him to a

³⁹ <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/07/06/prosecute-them-awesome-power/chinas-crack-down-tengdro-monastery-and-restrictions>

six-year imprisonment term on charges of “separatist activities”.

In 2013, Lhundrub has collaborated with another Tibetan singer on a song called ‘Tashi Yardo’ that pays homage to the long life of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The other singer who is known for his patriotic songs was eventually sentenced to three and a half years in April 2015.

I. Ten Tibetans Sentenced After a Sham “anti-gang” Trial in Tibet

Ten respected Tibetan community leaders were sentenced to prison terms ranging from 9 to 14 years for “extortion” and “forced trading” on 28-29 June by the Sangchu County People’s Court.

The community leaders namely, Tashi Gyatso, Nyingchak, Gyalo, Sonam Gyal, Takthar Gyal, Tsewang, Tenpa Gyatso, Tamding Dorjee, Tamding Tsering and Choepa Tsering were asking nothing but “requesting compensation for the property damage from the state highway projects; raising concerns about a slaughterhouse in their hometown; fundraising and procuring a piece of abandoned land for the monastery’s use.”⁴⁰



*Ten Tibetans were subjected to unjust sentences in Sangchu, Tibet.
Photo: State media handout*

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<https://tibet.net/ten-tibetans-sentenced-after-a-sham-anti-gang-trial-in-tibet/>

The court distorted the evidence against ten men by labelling a one million yuan compensation paid to locals by a slaughterhouse company in 2012 as “extortion” by community leaders. Also, the compensation given to the locals in Sangchu for damage caused by the Lin-He expressway construction was argued to be evidence of “extortion” against the ten men.

J. Khando Tsetan and Tsego

Khando Tsetan and Tsego were sentenced to seven years and three years in prison respectively on the false charge of “state subversion” and “leaking state secrets” after they composed, sang, and circulated a song that praised His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Exile media reported that Khando wrote the song that was later sung by Tsego.

In 2010, Khando Tsetan took part in a Tibetan student’s protest in Rebgong calling for language rights. He spent one and a half years in detention before being released in 2014. Still, he persevered with his spirit, and in 2019, he composed a song praising His Holiness the Dalai Lama.



Khando Tsetan with his child. Photo: Tibet Times

Khando Tsetan and Tsego are from Tsekhog County in Malho (Ch: Huangnam) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai Province.

K. Passang Norbu

Passang Norbu, in his 20s, was arrested on 11 March 2022 by Chinese authorities on suspicion of running an “illegal” business of renting out bicycles. He was reportedly beaten while in detention. Pasang Norbu’s business is legally registered with the official tourism administration, according to a report by RFA. He even paid 18000 yuan for a permit.⁴¹

It was also reported that Passang was threatened twice in the past by the Chinese officials to shut down his business. Passang, whom the locals described as a “very decent and friendly person”, currently remains unknown to his family and in Chinese custody. His family consisted of his mother, Tsamchoe, and his 13-year-old sister Choedon who studies at school.

L. Three Tibetan Students Arrested Following Announcement of New Language Policy

In Tibet’s Markham County, Palsang, aged 16, Sermo and Yangkyi, 15 and 11 years old respectively were arrested from their school after they expressed displeasure at the policy that undermines the use of Tibetan language in classes. The students were arrested in October 2021 under the pretext of “needing psychological counseling”, reported Tibet Watch.⁴²

The three children, whose homes are in Pangda village, have been taken to a so-called ‘reform through education center’ in Markham County, Chamdo. After five months into their detention, little is known about their well-being and whereabouts.

China started implementing the new education policy, that ruled

41 <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/guide-03142022153918.html>

42 <https://www.tibetwatch.org/news/2022/4/1/three-children-arrested-after-new-language-restriction-announced>

out classes in their mother tongue, in September 2021. And prior to that, all school textbooks in local languages, including Tibetan, have been replaced by those written in Mandarin Chinese, and teachers have also been forced to deliver classes in Mandarin.

M. Choedon

Choedon, a Tibetan University student was arrested in Riwoche County on 13 February on suspicion of teaching Tibetan language to children in her village. According to Free Tibet, Choedon's arrest was a calculated attack on Tibetans who actively take part in Tibetan language preservation efforts.⁴³

Choedon is known to take private classes for Tibetan children in her village of Yamda, in Riwoche County, teaching them Tibetan language during her University breaks. Following her abrupt arrest, the officials have not disclosed any information on the reason for the arrest and where she was being held.



Choedon is shown in an undated photo

N. Tenzin Norbu and Wangchen Nyima

Tenzin Norbu and Wangchen Nyima, monks of Nenang Monastery, in Kham Karze's Drakgo County were arrested on 15 August 2021 and are currently being held in Tawu (Ch: Daofu) County prison in

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<https://freetibet.org/latest/student-arrested-teaching-tibetan/>

Karze (Ch: Ganzi). Following the arrests, officials have withheld any information about the arrest and the charges of the two monks.⁴⁴ Though the reason for their arrest is unclear, it is suspected that it might be due to their involvement in the monastery's running of informal classes teaching Tibetan language, culture and religion for local Tibetan children.



Tenzin Norbu (left) and Wangchen Nyima (right). Photo: RFA

They have reportedly been under the monitor of local authorities for a long time. Wangchen Nyima is a well-known advocate for Tibetans' education and health. He was earlier arrested in 2015 when the Chinese government forcibly shut down schools in his monastery. His brother Orgyan Choedrak was also arrested at the same time.

O. Lobsang Thinley

Lobsang Thinlay, a Kirti Monastery monk, was reportedly sentenced to five years in prison for sharing books and teachings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He was taken into custody on 1 July 2021 by police in Ngaba County, who later informed Lobsang's family of his five year sentence in September 2021. Currently, he was reportedly being held in Mianyang prison after he was tried behind

⁴⁴ <https://tibet.net/two-tibetan-monks-held-incommunicado-for-five-months-chinese-governments-poultry-and-pig-farming-projects-in-drakgo/>

closed doors where no family members or legal representatives were present.⁴⁵



Lobsang Thinley is shown in an undated photo. Photo: RFA

Thinley had run into trouble with police in the past for sharing teachings by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and was detained and released several times before, RFA reported, citing a source in the area. “This caused his family and other relatives great concern, but he was undeterred by warnings from the police and continued his activities right up until his arrest in July,” the report said.

P. Tenzin Dhargye

The well being of Tenzin Dhargye, a monk of Barong Monastery in Shershul County, remains unknown more than a year after his arrest in September 2020. He was arrested on the suspicion of repudiating against the Chinese government’s celebration of the 70th anniversary of the so-called peaceful liberation of Tibet.⁴⁶ Along with him, several other monks were also arrested, who are reportedly being held incommunicado at the Sershul County Detention Center.

45 <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/prison-12132021163528.html>

46 <https://tibet.net/a-tibetan-monk-from-barong-monastery-has-disappeared-since-his-arrest-in-september-2020/>

It is also widely believed that he may also have been arrested for sharing information and writings, deemed politically sensitive by the Chinese government, on social media, a source ours reported. While Dhargye continues to remain in Chinese custody without any official verdicts, it is a very worrying situation for his family and relatives, who are forced to live in the dark concerning the well-being of him.



Tenzin Dhargye is shown in the photo

Q. Lobsang Choephel

Chinese authorities detained Lobsang Choephel, a 34-year-old monk of Kirti monastery in Ngaba county in early October 2021. His whereabouts and status of physical condition following the arrest is currently unknown.⁴⁷ Prior to the arrest, he had also been arrested twice by Chinese authorities. He was first arrested in Lhasa in 2008 and again in 2011 at Ngaba. He was detained for over four months at that time.

Lobsang Choephel hails from Ngasib Kanyag Ruwatsang. He joined Kirti monastery in Ngaba from an early age. At the monastery, he works as a staff of the monastery's computer section and also serves as the monastery's official photographer. He also likes to take photographs of natural sceneries and has won several awards in various photography contests. His photographs are circulated online

⁴⁷ <https://tchrd.org/lobsang-choephel-and-other-kirti-monks-detained/>

under the professional name Rewai Dawoe.



Lobsang Choephel. Photo: TCHRD

Retaining prisoners after their sentences have ended:

In spite of the completion of their prison sentences, China continues to imprison some Tibetans. A major reason for this is that information and communication are strictly censored, so news of release or arrest is not disclosed to the outside world or to the country itself. On 31 July 2021, Bangri Rinpoche, a Tibetan philanthropist sentenced to life imprisonment, but later reduced to an 19-year sentence, will be released. However, no evidence has been found that he had been released from Chinese custody.⁴⁸



Bangri Rinpoche is shown (L) before his arrest, and (R) while serving prison sentence in the early 2000s. Photo: TCHRD

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<https://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/release-08022021174302.html>

MONITORING AND SURVEILLANCE

Restriction on Freedom of Movement: Grid-Based Surveillance



Under the guise of “social stability maintenance,” Tibet is under heavy surveillance and control. With the launch of the “grid-system of social management” in 2012, and the imposition of over 600 “convenience police-posts” with high-tech equipment to monitor daily life, particularly of “special groups” in the region, former prisoners and those who have returned from the exile community in India, among others are under constant watch.⁴⁹

With already stringent measures against freedoms of expression, belief, association and movement of Tibetans, the “grid system of social management” further exacerbates the situation. Under the system, a designated place is divided into smaller subdivisions; for instance, the municipal district in Lhasa, the capital city of Tibet, with an area of 525 sq km is divided into 175 divisions. The system intends to facilitate the officials to closely monitor and identify “potential trouble makers,” and gather real-time information from the community worker stationed within the areas.⁵⁰

49 <https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/03/20/china-alarming-new-surveillance-security-tibet>
50 <https://www.economist.com/china/2013/06/22/grid-locked>

Every movement of the residents is monitored on screens in offices and information is fed to these officers by grid staff stationed in respective areas equipped with smartphones, which can upload geo-tagged photographs.

The ID cards issued are smart chip-enabled. Beijing-based writer Woesser described her experience on her visit to Lhasa in 2012 when she noticed the Chinese authorities were scanning the ID cards of only the Tibetans who arrived with her on the train. The ID cards are scanned around Lhasa at all the checkpoints to limit movement and those flagged are turned back.⁵¹

“All villages become fortresses, and everyone is a watchman” is the official slogan used to describe the objective of the village-based grid management teams.

China’s Grassroots Surveillance Program and ‘Discipline Committees’

As part of the controversial ‘Solidify the Foundation, Benefit the Masses’ (Ch: qianji huimin) campaign in Tibetan Autonomous Region, the Chinese authorities set up ‘discipline committees’ and deployed almost 2,000 “inspectors” in rural areas to oversee the functioning of villages and towns tightening surveillance and security.⁵²

The program started in October 2011 and has been used to monitor and surveil local Tibetans, organise anti-Dalai Lama-themed political indoctrination campaigns and expand the influence of the party-state in Tibet. In the run-up to the 10th March anniversary of 2021, Chinese authorities have arrested Tibetans suspected of sharing information on the deaths of Chinese soldiers killed in a border clash with India last June in the Galwan Valley of Ladakh, a source in Lhasa says. The

51 <https://www.rfa.org/english/commentaries/lhasa-10162012104608.html>

52 <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/discipline-03112021153907.html>

arrests and crackdowns were being done more frequently.

Anti-espionage Regulations Force Tibetans to Spy on Tibetans

The Chinese authorities openly acknowledge and approve the counter-espionage regulations aimed at coercing and silencing Tibetans to maintain political control. Tibetans under Beijing's rule are often required to report fellow Tibetans to the authorities as a test of their loyalty to China's party-state.

China has been using the "Double-linked Household" system in the past to ensure stability and nip potential dissent. This system has a dual function of enlisting the communities themselves as low-level state surveillance; 'loyal' families are often paired with 'suspect' families to watch for 'religious extremism', potential threats to Party's control, and monitor specific individuals.

If any individuals are found to witness but not report any "suspicious" activities, it also falls under suspicion and may face interrogation at length. Those who succeed in reporting other Tibetans were rewarded in the form of access to jobs in the subsidised state sector, a ceremonial career in government or immunity from harassment by law enforcement officers.

Moreover, in an attempt to propagate "counter-espionage" in every corner of society, the national security programming of school children, village committees and internet service providers are tasked to carry out "counter-espionage" propaganda in any form possible.

High-Tech Repression and New "Social Security Card"

The official Chinese media announced the distribution of about 2.7 million social security cards across TAR by the end of June 2019

and had expected to complete the distribution by issuing 3 million cards altogether by the end of 2019. According to International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), the card gives access to a wide range of facilities including banking, welfare, medical services etc. which will be cut off to those Tibetans whom China arbitrarily deems to be disloyal based on the social credit system.⁵³

The social credit system will provide a score to each individual based on his or her political leanings, education, ethnicity, and personal associations. The score will define where one can find housing, and employment, whether one has access to state healthcare, and whether someone can send their children to state-run schools. The more Chinese authorities replace community education, healthcare, and housing with state-provided resources, the more Tibetans are forced to comply in return for simply accessing basic privileges.

China has intensified the distribution of new social security cards to Tibetans aimed at exercising more social control over Tibetans. “The new system—which authorities say achieves ‘one person, one card,’ in TAR—and the rollout of the social credit scheme will strengthen the Chinese government’s comprehensive system of ‘grid management (the ‘Iron Grid’) in the TAR,” ICT said.



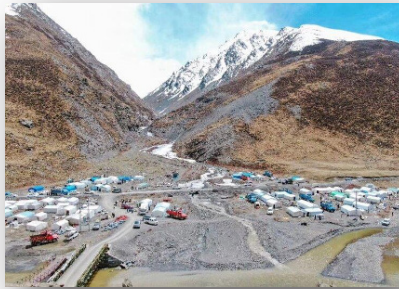
Photo: RFA

⁵³ <https://savetibet.org/new-social-security-cards-in-tibet-expand-chinas-control-over-tibetans-lives/>

Grid management in the TAR primarily targets Tibetans who had returned from India, those who had attended His Holiness the Dalai Lama's teachings and former political prisoners and see them as potentially problematic citizens.

The Chinese Government Construct a New Military Camp in Tibet: Checks Tibetans from Leaving the Country

China has opened the year 2020 with military training exercises in Lhasa and Tibetan border regions. The drill was an attempt to show off and remind the rest of the world of its military might. The exercises saw the deployment of heavy military vehicles including the Type 15 light battle tank and the 155mm vehicle-mounted howitzer designed to work in high-altitude environments.⁵⁴



A Military Camp is shown in the picture

In the following months, Chinese authorities started building military camps and villages near the border areas of Bhutan in May. Some of the new “border defence villages” are on routes which the Tibetans took in the past to escape to India and Nepal. In a notice issued to protect border security, locals are encouraged with reward money of 500 to 50,000 yuan, to turn in criminals and pass on information to authorities.

54 <https://www.tibetwatch.org/news/2020/6/4/chinese-government-begins-construction-of-new-military-camp-in-tibet>

Additionally, for the past several years, Tibetans, leaving the country, are being forced back into Tibet at the border by the Nepal authorities due to Chinese pressure. Occasionally, Tibetans travelling to India to attend Buddhist teachings on valid visas issued by the Chinese government are denied re-entry into Tibet by the Chinese authorities. The reason: Tibetans need to apply for special permits to enter Tibet. Because of the policy, there is a clear drop in Tibetan refugees' arrival to India from Tibet from the start of 2012. It hit a new low in 2017 when only 80 Tibetans were reported to have reached India from Tibet, as compared to the average of 3000 Tibetans in 2008.

China: World's Worst Abuser of Internet Freedom for the Sixth Consecutive Year

In the report "Freedom on the Net 2020" China remains the world's worst abuser of internet freedom for the sixth consecutive year. China has added 49 million new internet users during the coverage period totalling 903 million users as of 31 May 2020.

The report assessed internet freedom in 65 countries from June 2019 to May 2020 and assigned each country with a score between 0 to 100 where 0 indicates least free and 100 indicates most free. The score received by each country was given on grounds of obstacles to access, limits on content, and violations of user rights.

According to the report, "Censorship and surveillance were pushed to unprecedented extremes as the government enhanced its information controls, including in response to persistent anti-government protests in Hong Kong and the coronavirus pandemic that began in the city of Wuhan". The report also mentions the Chinese technology companies systematically aiding government surveillance, including through the development of mandatory or semi-mandatory propaganda and public health mobile phone

applications that were found to collect data and transfer it to authorities.

The Great Firewall and Internet Censorship

The Great Firewall is specifically built by the Chinese government to regulate the Internet domestically. Chinese social media platforms such as WeChat and Weibo were allowed to operate to maintain social stability while other social media giants, such as Facebook, Google, Instagram etc., were blocked by the Chinese netizens. Even so, the search results and the information on these platforms are being censored to match Party Lines.⁵⁵

WeChat is the most popular application used by Tibetans in Tibet to cater to their regular online communication. But the messages shared between individuals are often being monitored and examined. A study of Chinese microblogging sites found that more than half of messages originating in Tibet are deleted, compared to a mere 12% in Beijing.

Moreover, the Chinese government has enforced using real names and personal information during online registrations. Because by doing so, it would be easier for the authorities to maintain each person by matching his/hers profile, such as the image of the individual captured in CCTV cameras, with the one saved in the Police database along with the DNA samples, in the name of fighting crimes.

In December 2020, Chinese Internet police announced regulations and punishments for online “dissent” acts. One such regulation prohibits the use of VPN technology. China has recently built a Tibetan voice-to-text technology which allows algorithms to monitor not only voice messages in Tibetan but phone calls as well.

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<https://tchrd.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Tibet-surveillance-censorship-.pdf>

Discriminatory Practices in Issuing Passport for Tibetans

The United Nations' Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) recently concluded its review of the “combined 14th to 17th periodic reports of China” and published its concluding observations on 30 August 2018. The UN Committee in its report has raised concerns over the significant restrictions on the movement of Tibetans within and beyond the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) and also abroad. It has further raised concerns about the entire banning of issuance of passports to Tibetans for foreign travel and has recommended China revise its regulations and practices to ensure non-discriminatory determinations on passport applications and freedom of movement of Tibetans within and beyond TAR, and abroad.



China has heightened its restrictions on the freedom of movement of Tibetan people by denying them passports since 2012. **(Annexure 2)** It has been reported that in 2012, in Tibet's Changdu (Tib: Chamdo) prefecture with a population of 650,000, only two passports were issued.

“Getting a passport is harder for a Tibetan than getting into heaven. This is one of those “preferential policies” given to us Tibetans by [China’s] central government.” – Posted by a Tibetan blogger on a Chinese-language website, October 2012.

According to Human Rights Watch, since 2012, the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) authorities have ordered the confiscation of all ordinary passports held by registered residents of the region, over 90 per cent of whom are Tibetans.

A discriminatory regulation placed two systems in issuing passports:

1. Quick and straightforward,
2. Extremely slow (**Annexure 3**)

The quick and straightforward system is available in areas that are largely populated by the Chinese majority, while the extremely slow system has been imposed in areas populated mainly by Tibetans and other religious minorities. In case of the fast-track system, a passport application only requires approval from one office—the local branch of the Exit and Entry Administration under the Ministry of Public Security—and these offices are required to issue a passport to any citizen within 15 days of an application or to explain the delay. But residents of areas under slow-track processing are subjected to extremely long delays, often lasting several years, before passports are issued, or are routinely denied for no valid reason.

Minority Areas Excluded from Fast-Track Processing (Human Rights Watch Report)

| Provinces with prefectures that are not permitted fast-track passport processing | Number of prefectures not permitted fast-track processing | Number of prefectures not permitted fast-track processing that have substantial Tibetan or Muslim populations |
|--|---|---|
| Xinjiang | 14 | 14 |
| Tibet Autonomous Region | 7 | 7 |

HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS: THE CASE OF TIBET

| Provinces with prefectures that are not permitted fast-track passport processing | Number of prefectures not permitted fast-track processing | Number of prefectures not permitted fast-track processing that have substantial Tibetan or Muslim populations |
|--|---|---|
| Jiangxi | 1 | 0 |
| Sichuan | 2 | 2 |
| Yunnan | 1 | 1 |
| Gansu | 2 | 2 |
| Qinghai | 8 | 8 |
| Total | 36 | 35 |

ANNEXURE 2

**Internal Notice issued by the TAR authorities, April 29, 2012
(Unofficial translation from Chinese)**

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TAR Party Committee General Office Document

TAR Party Committee General Office Document (2012) No. 22

TAR Party Committee General Office

TAR People's Government General Office

Notice on Printing “Suggestions on Further Strengthening Our Region's Passport Handling, Approvals, and Issuance Management”

All prefecture and prefecture-level city Party committees, all administrative offices and the Lhasa City People's Government, the Regional Party committee and all departmental committees, all committees, offices, departments and bureau in the autonomous region, and all People's collectives:

“Suggestions on Further Strengthening Our Region's Passport Handling, Approvals and Issuance Management” has been approved by the regional Party committee and government, and is hereby issued to you in print. Please integrate realities and implement them conscientiously and thoroughly.

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TAR Party Committee General Office

TAR People's Government General Office

April 29, 2012

(This document has been sent to prefectural department levels, and to county Party committees and county governments.)

[Page 3]

Suggestions on Further Strengthening Our Region's Passport Handling, Approvals, and Issuance Management.

In order to further regulate our Region's passport handling, approvals and issuance work and in accordance with relevant national laws and regulations, and by integrating the work realities of our region, the following work suggestions are specially proposed:

I. Earnestly strengthen management work over citizens' handling, approvals and issuance of ordinary passports

1. Using the opportunity of the national launch of ePassports in May of this year, all still-valid ordinary passports in our region shall be withdrawn without exception.

Those needing to apply for an ordinary passport shall be re-issued with an ordinary e-Passport following strict review and approval.

2. Strictly control approvals for the issuance of ordinary passports. Ordinary passport applications and issuance shall be carried out under a system of "apply in the domicile, examine at the prefecture, unified approval by the regional Public Security Department." First, all citizens in the region without exception and in accordance with the principle of local management, when applying for an ordinary passport shall apply to the prefecture-level (prefecture-level city) public security agency where their household is registered; the regional Entry and Exit Administration of the Public Security Department shall no longer accept or

handle applications. Second, ordinary passport applicants must provide a self-completed application to be delivered in person to their local village (neighbourhood) committee, township (town) People's Government (neighbourhood affairs office) and police station for initial examination. The police station shall submit the application materials to the township (town) People's Government (neighbourhood affairs office) for review by the leaders, and report it to the county (county-level city, district) Public Security Bureau for handling. Following a review by the county (county-level city, district) Public Security Bureau, the application materials shall be sent to the county (county-level city, district) People's Government leaders for examination and approval and for them to provide their opinions. After reporting to the prefecture-level (prefecture-level city) Public Security Exit and Entry Administration, the application materials shall be delivered to the principal leaders of the prefecture-level (prefecture-level city) Public Security Bureau (Office) for examination and approval, and then reported to the principal leaders of the [prefecture] administration (Government) for review and approval. Once all formalities are complete, the prefecture-level (prefecture-level city) Public Security Entry and Exit Administration departments shall report to the Regional Public Security Department Entry and Exit Administration for review and approval, and issuance. Upon returning to the country, passport-holders without exception must hand their passport into the local prefecture-level (prefecture-level city) Public Security Exit and Entry Administration department for unified safe-keeping.

3. Strictly limit state workers holding ordinary passports. When prefecture (prefecture-level city) Public Security Exit and Entry Administration departments receive a citizen's application for an ordinary passport, an examination should be carried out of the applicant's application materials and the applicant should be interviewed to ascertain whether or not they are a state worker.

On the principle of not issuing ordinary passports to state workers in our region, if an ordinary passport is required for crossing the border due to exceptional circumstances, cadres at county-level and below shall be reviewed and approved by their local prefecture (prefecture-level city) Party committee Organization Department; cadres above county level applying for an ordinary passport shall be reviewed and approved by the autonomous regional Party Committee Organization Department. Upon returning to the country from travelling abroad, all passports without exception must be handed into the passport holder's local Organization Department at the county-level (county-level city, district) or above for unified safe-keeping.

4. Implement a system of persons [Ch.: renyuan] with ordinary passports signing a declaration of responsibility [Ch.: zeren shu]. When such persons collect an ordinary passport for the purpose of private foreign travel, they must sign a declaration of responsibility in person at the prefecture (prefecture-level) Public Security Exit and Entry Administration, guaranteeing that on leaving the country they will not engage in any activities that threaten national security or national interests, or other illegal criminal activities. The Public Security Exit and Entry Administration must seek out a visit with the passport holder on their return and conduct a face-to-face interview, and if any illegal activities are discovered, the passports without exception shall be cancelled or declared invalid.

II. Conscientiously carry out good work on tour group passport applications in accordance with Article 9, Chapter II of the “Tourist Agency Regulations” promulgated by the State Council, and the provisions of Article 10, Chapter II of the “Detailed Implementation Measures,” earnestly strengthen the handling of tour groups’ ordinary passports.

1. When travel agency tour groups travel abroad, citizens from our region applying for an ordinary passport necessary for travel must carry out their passport application in strict accordance with the relevant provisions, being checked and approved one by one, and in strict accordance with the principle of “whoever checks also approves and is also responsible.” Travel agencies must sign a formal travel contract with the traveller.
2. When travel agencies complete their handling of passports, a responsible person shall go to the autonomous regional Tourism Bureau Supervision and Management Office to receive a “Form for a Name list of Chinese Citizens Leaving the Country in a Tour Group,” and complete it conscientiously. Once completed by the tour group operator, the third copy of the “Form for a Name list of Chinese Citizens Leaving the Country in a Tour Group” shall be retained by the autonomous regional Tourism Bureau Supervision and Management Office.
3. Strict tour-group management of passports. Regarding citizens from our Region who have participated in a tour group and applied for an ordinary passport, and upon such tour group participants’ return to the country, without exception, their passports shall be collected and handed into the prefecture (prefecture-level city) Public Security Exit and Entry Administration Department by the travel agency organizing the tour group for safe-keeping.

III. Further strengthen management work on the approval and issuance of public affairs passports

1. Strictly strengthen management work on public affairs passports in accordance with the “Notice on Printing ‘Diplomatic Passport, Service Passport, and Public Affairs Passport Retrieval Measures’ (MFA Doc [2006] No. 60)” issued by the Ministry of Foreign

Affairs, the “Notice on ‘Detailed Measures on the TAR Public Affairs Passports Issuance and Management Implementation’ (Experimental)” and the “Notice on the ‘TAR Public Affairs Passport Retrieval and Management Detailed Implementation Measures’ (TAR External Affairs Doc [2007] No. 53)” issued by the TAR External Affairs Office, and in accordance with the spirit of the “Notice on Printing ‘Diplomatic Passport, Service Passport and Public Affairs Passport Issuance and Management Measures’ (MFA Doc [2006] No. 23).”

2. All tour groups and individuals travelling abroad on public affairs who apply for a public affairs passport must handle formalities through application channels for going abroad on public affairs. Public affairs passports must be returned to the agency nominated by the issuing department within seven days of returning to the country for safe-keeping or for cancellation. Individuals or work units which delay handing in passports or who do not carry out document management provisions shall be temporarily prevented from going abroad on public service.
3. Strengthen passport management for foreign travel by enterprises and work units in our region, increasing the rigour of approvals for public affairs passports for going abroad on public affairs, and put an end to ordinary passport holders going abroad to conduct public affairs.

Copies sent to:

TAR Military District Political Department, Air Force Lhasa Command Office Party

TAR Party Committee General Office Private Secretary’s Office.

Printed on April 29, 2012

ANNEXURE 3

The 10 Stages of the Application Process for an Ordinary Passport in the TAR

A summary based on the instructions given in Notice No. 22, on 29 April 2012

Source: Human Rights Watch

1. Applications are submitted to the applicant's local Village (or neighborhood) Committee, Township (or Town) People's Government (or neighborhood affairs office), and police station for initial examination.
2. Applications are submitted by the applicant to the applicant's local police station for initial examination.
3. The local police station submits the application to the Township (or Town) People's Government (or neighborhood affairs office) for "review by the leaders" [Ch.: yiba shou].
4. The application is submitted to the County-level (county-level city, district) Public Security Bureau for review and approval.
5. The application is then submitted for examination and approval to the County-level (county-level city, district) People's Government leaders, who "provide their opinions" on the application.
6. The application is then filed with the prefecture-level Public Security Exit and Entry Administration for review and approval.

7. Following approval, the application is passed on to the “principal leaders” [Ch.: zhuyao lingdao] of the prefecture-level Public Security Bureau [the Exit and Entry Administration’s controlling agency] for examination and approval.
8. The application is then submitted to the “principal leaders” in the prefecture-level government for review and approval.
9. The prefecture-level Public Security Exit and Entry Administration file the application with the autonomous regional Public Security Department Exit and Entry Administration for review and approval.
10. The autonomous regional Public Security Department Exit and Entry Administration issues the passport.



**The Department of Information and International Relations
Central Tibetan Administration**