



HUMAN RIGHTS *update*  
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# HUMAN RIGHTS

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*update*

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## A Singing Nun's Journey

Palden Choedron rubs her fingers against her wrist and says "There!" She then swings her right arm back to tap her back, "And there! They sent electricity through me there." She remarks in her quiet, yet vibrant Tibetan voice. She says her skin fell off; the heat from the electricity burned it.

Her companions and she, all members of the Shungsib nunnery in Lhasa, had come to an agreement beforehand, understanding that their actions would get them arrested. They decided that when questioned they would say the Tibetan flag was given to them by



**Drachi Prison where Nun Palden Choedrun spend most of her prison time**



**The Singing nun Palden Choedrun**

This was the punishment she and her five friends received after being found in front of Barkhor protesting and waving a Tibetan flag as they circled the main market. They were pulled into a detention center and lined up, like felons, waiting to be questioned and tortured. Choedron shuddered at the thought, but continues speaking.

an old nun who had already died, and the reason for their protest was due to the unfair actions by the Chinese government from 1987 – 1989 when multiple nuns were dismissed from their nunnery. The agreement was made to make sure the Chinese officials could not bring in other nuns and bystanders and accuse them of being participants or masterminds behind this plot. They remained

in the detention center for four months, suffering from multiple interrogations filled with torture until October 1990 when they were moved to Lhasa's Intermediate People's Court for their trial.

Chemi Dickyi, Pempa Dolkar and Choedron received a three year sentence with their political rights removed for one and a half years. While their companions Woser, Yangchen and Yangzom received a longer sentence of seven years and had their political rights removed for three years. This would be the beginning of a new phase of her life as one of the courageous singing nuns in Unit 3 of Drupchi prison.

The nickname *singing nuns* came into existence in 1993, when members of the female Unit, Unit 3 Room 4 composed, sang and recorded freedom songs filled with hope and praising His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The first batch of tapes was sent out successfully through discreet channels and their voices were heard all over Tibet.

It was the second time, in Unit 3 Room 6, that several nuns got caught. Though immediate punishment was not given, it would only take until 27 August 1993, the day Chemi Dickyi, Pempa Dolkar, and Choedron were suppose to be released, for the consequences of their actions to be revealed. The police did not allow them to leave, stating a decision had not been made on the situation. Unit 3 split into two subunits and the nuns found that

every one of them faced additional years in prison. Some were lucky to get only an additional five years added to their sentence such as Choedron, while others faced up to an additional nine years on top of their prior sentence term.

Palden Choedron was finally released on 22 August 1998 from her elongated sentence and given to local police officials. Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regulations state that a previously arrested and detained nun cannot return to her monastic studies. Therefore, Choedron was left to return home where her every action was monitored.

In an attempt to leave the Chinese controlled Tibet, Palden Choedron fled to Nagchu County where she was caught and returned to a detention center in Lhasa and later put in prison for one year.

After her release she made another attempt at escape. She was finally successful. On 10 August 2010 Palden Choedron entered Dharamshala, India. She brings with her memories of courageous actions while in prison. As she tells her tale, her fingers lazily swirling over her wrist, she reminds us once again why she is not a felon, but another brave voice for Tibetans all over Tibet. Even if she does not think so, she represents hope.

## Missing Student Reportedly in Detention Center

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s tight grip over the Internet is a well-known fact. It is one of their many methods to control and restrict information that funnels into the People's Republic of China (PRC).

Kalsang Norbu, a resident of Sog County, Nagchu Tibetan Autonomous Region "TAR" is a twenty year old student at Nagchu High School (translation for school name may vary). On September 2009, Chinese security police entered his house with a warrant for his arrest. He was arrested for downloading pictures.

The People's Republic of China discovered his and many other students' *illegal actions* by monitoring the Internet. By screening Internet sites and users, daily, the CCP can identify which persons, Han Chinese or minority, are carrying out acts against the CCP that might cause political disharmony. By monitoring the Internet, they know whom to arrest. Kalsang Norbu, like other Tibetans, was arrested for downloading a picture of His Holiness the Dalai and the Tibetan Flag in a cyber café. His Holiness the Dalai Lama's picture has already been banned all over Mainland China and anyone who supports him is considered part of the "Dalai Clique" which is looked upon, negatively, as a separatist group. Therefore Kalsang Norbu was arrested under the accusation of participating in separatist activities.

His whereabouts were unknown for several months, but on December 2009, he was reported to be located at a detention center in Nagchu Tibetan Autonomous Region "TAR". There is no news of future trial dates or if he will receive a just trial to begin with.

## Acquiring a Job Means Rejecting Beliefs

With one hand holding a slogan and the other gripping a small Chinese national flag, a group of students held a protest in front of a Chinese government office in the Tibetan Autonomous Region “TAR” on 2 September 2010. These students, graduates of the Tibetan Higher Institution for Medicine, feel there is a growing disparity when acquiring a job.



**Gate of Tibetan Higher Institution for Medicine**

On 31 August 2010 an announcement for recruitment was released like every year before it. For the year of 2010, there was an estimated 2,704 government job vacancies. Under the Health and Social Work Department for the year 2009, there were 1,000 job vacancies to be filled by the Tibetan Higher Institution for Medicine’s students. 1,511 applicants applied for the position. Yet in 2010, only 56 vacancies were reserved for the students of the Tibetan Medical Institute which does not meet the guarantee the Chinese government had given, which was to provide jobs for all students. The 2010 graduating class has 256 students, but only 56 of them are employed. About eighty

percent of the students are currently unemployed.

Students all over the Tibetan Autonomous Region “TAR” have begun to notice a downward trend when it comes to jobs being provided to people of Tibetan origin. For those 56 Tibetan students who managed to attain a job under the Health and Social Work Department, they had to not only face written exams, but also agree to several extremely personal terms. One of the students who managed to obtain the job remembers being told the final step to officially get it is by fulfilling three requirements. She must first promises to fight against the separatists – her own people. Second, she must oppose and reject the Dalai Lama. This second requirement imposes upon her freedom of religion. Lastly, she is asked to wholeheartedly commit and dedicate her life to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

Many of the students who faced these demands spoke of the emotional distress they felt having to decide between their people and their country or their job. Yet having grown up under the People’s Republic of China, many feel they have the right to the jobs that were guaranteed to them before they entered the school. They all feel it is extremely unfair to have their future stripped away because they are a minority.

So on 1 September 2010, a day before the protest, several students made a request to the head office of the Tibetan Autonomous Region’s Health Department. They

received no reply, resulting in the protest the next day. The Chinese officials believing the news of the protest would spread rushed the students behind closed doors.



**A group of Tibetan students holding a slogan and in the other hand gripping a small Chinese national flag during the demonstration**

It is one thing to have less job offerings due to immense amount of candidates and spaces already being filled, but to require Tibetans to reject their beliefs to get a job is extreme discrimination and imposes upon the students’ freedom of religion and belief.

Furthermore, it is acknowledged that Han Chinese who arrive with proposals to improve or teach at Tibetan schools are given Director positions at Tibetan institutions such as the Tibetan Medical Institute without interviews, exams or any other reasonable or unreasonable requirements. This inequality when attaining a job exists both inside and outside the Tibetan Autonomous Region “TAR”, but it is even more unfair when Tibetans are treated as inferior and given unequal jobs because of their ethnic background. It is getting to a point where attaining a job means rejecting you are Tibetan.



## Protesting: One-Way Ticket to Expulsion

On 2 April of this year, students of Machu Tibetan Middle School all heard the same announcement. “Ngawang Lhamo is expelled”, the announcement speaker representing the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) barked out.



Ngawang Lhamo

Not only was Ngawang Lhamo's position at her school terminated, but she was also given strict orders that she could not enter any other school. She did not have the rights to an education any longer.

The reasons for her expulsion and several of her instructors' expulsion, including Kyabche Dendul, the school's director and a poet at Machu County, Khalo Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu Province was supposedly due to the protest against Chinese policies in Machu County. These protests, which are supposed to be categorized as freedom of expression, are labeled as a revolt against the Communist government that could endanger the state. Therefore, from the People's Republic of China (PRC)'s perspective direct action had to be taken to eliminate the *threat*.

Another classmate, Thupten Nyima (17), was accused of being the ring leader of the protest. He was arrested and has been detained since 28 March 2010. His trial, finally held in Khalo Intermediate People's Court in July, sentenced him to two years in prison for his unlawful actions.



Thupten Nyima

Along with the announcement of the expulsions to purge the threat of another line of protests, the CCP warned that if another revolt were to occur the school would be officially shut down. Lhamo adds that the announcer made it very clear that it did not make a difference to the CCP if one minute school in the Tibetan Autonomous Region were to close. Indicating that educating a minority community was the least of their priorities. The announcer even declared that violence would be used to subdue peaceful protests if it occurs again.

This is just one of many incidents in which students are stripped of their right to education because they expressed their opinions and/or concerns for a topic that is too sensitive



School Gate of Machu Middle School

for the CCP's ears. Student-run protests or student participation in protests are becoming a one-way ticket to expulsion.

## A 2008 Experience

Tsering Dhondup, a former lama, has finally found equality. As he sits in his small cell, he can hear the screams of his cellmates in the detention center and in the back of his mind he knows his turn is coming up soon. He has found equality in the ill treatment of Tibetans in detention centers.

The 2008 protests that propelled from the capital Lhasa, not only brought international attention to the human rights violations carried out by China, but the People's Republic of China also took this time to blame the protests on the Dalai Clique.

As a result, people like Tsering Dhondup are one of the many Tibetans arrested and detained by the Chinese security police for protesting against Chinese rule and supporting the Dalai Clique. He is one of the many Tibetans stripped of human rights and subjected to torture for saying “Free Tibet”.

He is one of the many Tibetans who have been electrocuted by electric prods, who have had needles digging into their fingers and toes, and who have had cigarettes jabbed at every sensitive part of his or her nude flesh, all for saying “Free Tibet”. Dhondup and others are all tortured for stating their opinion.

After being arrested on 16 March 2008, he and his cellmates endured living in a small room with very little food and no water. He describes that at desperate times, he and his new companions resorted to drinking urine to quench their thirst.

Many of these protestors along with Dhondup were moved to a new detention center. Dhondup stayed there for six months until his health gave in. He was released with another Tibetan protestor due to heart problems.

With 15,000 Yuan in the hands of a guide, Tsering Dhondup entered India on September 2010 with memories of his ill treatment in jail after the 2008 protests. Most of the 2008 protestors have been detained and tortured. Many of them have disappeared under the hands of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and only some are finally resurfacing and are given prison sentences. A few lucky ones have survived the journey from Tibet into India to tell their story. This is just one of many stories.

## Tibetan Patriotic Music Leads to Arrest

Words communicate ideas, empathize with people and are the foundation of day-to-day activity. Words form music, music which we listen to and enjoy. With headphones stuffed in our ears, we forget the importance of just that act. We have the freedom to listen to others’ expression of opinion through music.

But, just recently, Norbu (19) from Sog County, Nagchu Tibetan Autonomous Region “TAR” was arrested and detained under the claim that he was participating in separatist actions that would harm the Motherland, the People’s Republic of China (PRC).

He was questioned and tortured, repeatedly, for listening to music.

Norbu explains, after being released due to lack of evidence against his crime, that there were at least seventeen other people with him. All of them faced the same tumultuous routine of being questioned and tortured for listening to *separatist* music. Norbu was released with a fine of 1000 Yuan and his mobile phone filled with Tibetan music, gone.

The Tibetan Autonomous Region “TAR”, especially Lhasa, filled with smiling faces greeting tourists will never loudly broadcast Tibetan music such as *Bhol Pa Tso Chikdik Chi* (Tibetan People, Let’s Unite) because freedom of expression is severely controlled.

Sources reveal that police wander the streets incognito and arrest people listening to any songs that contain “politically incorrect” words. Songs that express the lack of freedom of expression and human rights or songs that praise His Holiness the Dalai Lama or songs that just remind the Tibetans to remain hopeful are all confiscated. The listeners are labeled part of the *Dalai Clique*, a separatist organization.

The People’s Republic of China has set out to control the freedom of expression through music through a method the PRC knows best: by instilling fear in the Tibetan community. But this new generation of artists, writers and musicians seem even less deterred to give up their freedom of expression. Understanding that they are risking their life, these artists, intellectuals and students continue to pick up their pencils to compose new lyrics or put headphones into their friends’ ears and tell them to listen to songs filled with hope.

## Thirteen Years in Prison

On 2 October 2009, Wangdul Gyatso held a solo protest at a market place located in Chamdo.

Gyatso, a twenty-three year old man from Gonjo County, Chamdo Tibetan Autonomous Region “TAR”, was previously a member of Raja Monastery (spelling may vary). There he studied Tibetan religious texts until his promotion into the Peyul Monastic Institution to study mainly religious debate.

During his solo protest, he held up various signs. One called for the swift and safe return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Tibet. Another simply read ‘Free Tibet’.

As a member of the United Nations, People’s Republic of China (PRC) has legal obligations as stated by the United Nations Charter. One of these obligations is to respect human rights and fundamental freedoms of its people. Therefore, taking into account that the PRC demands that Tibet is part of the larger China and that the solo protest did not include any violence, by United Nations’ standards, Wangdul Gyatso was simply expressing his freedom of opinion and he has every right to do so.

But the PRC continues to ignore its obligations to the United Nations Charter. The PRC’s security force repeatedly arrests peaceful protestors such as Wangdul Gyatso under the allegation that these protestors are revealing “state secrets” and/or causing “political error”.

Not only was Wangdul Gyatso arrested on the same day he held his protest, but his father, Pema Yeshe, a man working under the pay roll of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) was also fired.

Wangdul Gyatso’s whereabouts were not revealed until August 2010 when the Chamdo People’s Court, inside closed doors, gave him a sentence of thirteen years in prison for expressing his views.

## A Tibetan arrests in Ngaba County

Julab Dawa was arrested on 1 October 2010 in Ngaba County, Ngaba “Tibet Autonomous Prefecture” “TAP” Sichuan Province according to information received by the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy.

Dawa, 38, is a teacher at a Tibetan School in Ngaba County and also work as the editor for a journal “Durab Ki Nga”. Two writes of the same journal have been arrested earlier.

Dawa had been detained for about a month with accusation of leading massive burning of clothes are made of animal fur and skin after the Dalai Lama spoke against use of animal skin and fur during the Amaravati Kalachakra 2006.

He is currently said to be held at a detention centre in Ngaba region but exact location is unknown.

## Tibetan monk jailed for 13 years

Tibetan monk was sentenced to 13 years in prison by the intermediate people’s court in Chamdo, Tibet Autonomous Region (“TAR”) on 8 September 2010.

Wangdue Gyatso was arrested on 2 August 2010 after staging a solo protest against Chinese Government, calling slogans for a “Free Tibet and Swift return of Dalai Lama to Tibet”. His families were left uninformed until he was sentenced.

Wangdue Gyatso was born to father Pema Yeshe and mother Tsega in 1984 in Rasa Village, Lingchung Valley, Gojo County and fifth son of his parents.

Gyatso was ordained in Gara Monastery when he was a child and later moved to Palyul Monastery, Dege County Eastern Tibet to study Buddhist Philosophy.

His father was recently expelled from his government post due to Gyatso’s protest.





# TCHRD ACTIVITIES

*Bulletin*

## Centre conducts workshop on up coming election of Exile Tibetan Leaders

Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) conducted workshop on upcoming election of Kalon Tripa (Prime minister) and members of Tibetan parliament in Exile at Dekyiling

### Resource persons and their related topics

Mr. Tashi Phuntsok, Ex Chief election commissioner gave detailed account of the participatory

democracy in exile with discussing statistical data, facts and figures of past elections and he urged and stress how important individual play roles in democratic government and Tibetan people need to participation maximum level in upcoming election of Exile Leaders.

Mr. Tsering Wangchu, additional secretary of Kashag (Department of Ministers) spoke on system of functioning of the Executive Body (Kashag) in Exile Government and Middle Way Approach.

Mr. Jampa Monlam, Assistant Director of TCHRD delivered a talk on Current Human Rights Situation in Tibet by using power point. TCHRD received tremendous response and appreciation from the audience during the feed back session after the workshop.



One of the participant's asks a question during the workshop

Tibetan Settlement Dehradun, U.A North India from 29-30 September 2010.

This 2 days work shop attended by 53 participants from more than 12 different Tibetan settlements, Rajpur, Poanto Sahib, Herbert, Puruwalah, Dhondupling, Tsering Donden, Saton, Mussoorie, Dekyiling who represented member of regional election commissioners and Observers and also some local Tibetans who are interesting such workshop.



workshop in progress

If undelivered, kindly return to:



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

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

#### Partial list of TCHRD publications:

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

## Join hands with TCHRD

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

### Join hands with TCHRD BECOME A MEMBER

#### ***Your benefits and responsibilities***

#### ✓ You'll receive free of cost our **Human Rights update**

- ✓ All our publications will be sent for free upon request
- ✓ You'll receive a membership card
- ✓ You can join our campaigns
- ✓ Annual membership fee:  
Rs. 100/- for members within India  
US\$ 20/- for student members outside India  
US\$ 40/- for non-student members outside India

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