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**TIBETAN  
CENTRE FOR  
HUMAN  
RIGHTS AND  
DEMOCRACY**

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**Attention: Miss Christina Saunders**

**By both registered and  
electronic mail**

Date : 31 August, 2000

Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy  
UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women  
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights  
United Nations  
Palais des Nations  
1211 Geneva 10

Ref: Reports of death and torture committed against Tibetan women

Dear Madam,

I on behalf of the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy would like to extend our deep appreciation for your continuous support in highlighting the cases of Tibetan women over the years. The gravity of the Tibetan women being subjected to various form of violence is getting alarming day by day. We therefore strongly urge you to visit Tibet to investigate and assess the situation of Tibetan women personally.

Although it is difficult to gather complete information on Tibet due to risk and difficulties involved. In this present report we have attempted to provide as details information as possible about Tibetan women being arbitrarily arrested for exercising their right to freedom of expression and are subjected to ill-treatment and torture in prison, resulting in the death of several of these female political prisoners. The report also covers information on Tibetan women being subjected to enforced sterilisation, including contraceptive and abortive procedures.

In case of your visit to Tibet we recommend you to demand private interviews with prominent female political prisoners such as Ngawang Sangdrol, Phuntsok Nyidron, Jangchub Dolma and Chogdrup Dolma.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely Yours

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## **Report on the Violence against Women:**

### **1. Introduction**

The present report examines policies and practices those impact women's reproductive rights and contribute to, cause or constitute violence against women. This report testifies Chinese government continuous engagement in a premeditated and discrimination and violence against Tibetan women such as torture, forced sterilization, abortion and prostitution. These 'state-sponsored' policies curtail Tibetan woman's ability to own their means of reproduction and resist these destructive measures. The US State Department 1999 report on China remarked on the deteriorating human rights record of the Chinese government, including the violations of women's rights. Today, Tibetan women, mainly nuns makes up nearly a third of the hundreds of political prisoners held in Tibet. In 1999 alone the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy recorded more than 162 female political prisoners in Tibet.

Tibetan women prisoners are being sexually assaulted in an organised and systematic way by the Chinese authorities. Written and oral accounts by nuns of their experiences in prison, particularly in Gutsa, and other detention centre are strikingly consistent and indicate that nuns have been singled out for special treatment. Torture apparently reserved for nuns include: the use lighted cigarettes being applied to the torso and face, prolonged military style exercise, exposing to sun for long period of time, use of electric cattle prods, sleep deprivation, make them stand in cold water barefooted in winter for several hours and the use of electric batons in the genitals.

### **2. International Legal Framework**

Reproductive and sexual health rights under international human rights law derive from a number of separate human rights. The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW Convention) recognises that the ability of a woman to control her own fertility is fundamental to her full enjoyment of the full range of human rights to which she is entitled.

The CEDAW Convention also contains several provisions that, in addressing the exploitation of women, are relevant to women's reproductive health. For instance, article 6 requires states to take all appropriate measures to suppress all forms of trafficking and exploitation of prostitution. Recognised as customary international law, the fundamental human rights to be free from torture, to be free from gender discrimination and the inherent right to life, are directly applicable to the issue of violence against women and women's reproductive health.

### **3. Female Political Prisoners**

Tibetan women constitute approximately 35 per cent of the total population of political prisoners in Tibet. There are currently 162 female political prisoners in Tibet; eleven of them are serving more than 10 years imprisonment. Torture and ill-treatment of women is endemic, and sexual abuse and rape of Tibetan woman while in detention centre are consistently reported.

The US state department report also confirms reports of continuing mistreatment and beatings of nuns in prison, and testimonies given by newly arrived refugees from Tibet details cases of sexual abuse, extensive and often fatal beatings, extended and continuous torture sessions, lengthy solitary confinement and appalling conditions in prisons. Below is one such example

Ngawang Sangdrol 22 year-old nun from Garu Nunnery was first arrested when she was ten year-old in 1987 for participating in a demonstration. Ngawang was formally sentenced to three-year years for attempting to stage a demonstration in Lhasa and was imprisoned in Drapchi prison. While in Drapchi Sangdrol sentenced was extended by six years on October 8, 1993 on charges of "spreading counter-