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THE TIBET BUREAU  
OFFICE OF THE REPRESENTATIVE OF H. H. THE DALAI LAMA

13 July, 1998

**By Registered Post &  
Electronic Mail**

UN Special Rapporteur on Extrajudicial,  
summary or arbitrary Executions  
Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights  
Palais des Nations  
1211 GENEVA 10

ATTN: Ms. Emma Guerras

**Ref: Extrajudicial Killings at Drapchi Prison in Tibet**

Dear Ms. Guerras,

Tibet Bureau for UN Affairs would like to express our gratitude to you and Mr. Bacre Waly Ndiaye for taking up cases in Tibet in the last report to the 54<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Commission on Human Rights. We believe the concern expressed on the situation in Tibet has informed the member of the Commission about the gravity of the situation there. We also take this opportunity to congratulate to Mr. Ndiaye on the assumption of his new post in New York and wish him success in his endeavours.

We are approaching your office today in view of some tragic deaths which took place in early May this year at the Drapchi Prison in Tibet.

Information received from our sources in Tibet and of independent sources now confirm that several Tibetan prisoners were indiscriminately shot dead by the security forces of the Chinese authorities on 1 and 4 May, 1998 at Drapchi Prison, on the outskirts of the Tibetan capital, Lhasa.

The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy based in India who monitors the situation in Tibet put the figure of those shot dead to seven prisoners, including ones who were serving sentences for political reasons.

The extra-judicial killings at Drapchi Prison first occurred on 1 May, 1998 when prisoners showed their displeasure to see an overwhelming numbers of Chinese national flags being hosted in the prison complex where a function was being held to

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celebrate the International Labour Day. The prison authorities' plan was to film the event to show a positive image of the prison and to provide evidence to the delegation of EU Trioka Ambassadors (who were to visit the prison three days later) that the political prisoners were being well-treated.

This display of Chinese authority and rule apparently led to a demonstration by the Tibetan prisoners, numbering over 150 who were called to attend the function. As soon as the meeting and filming began, two non-political Tibetan prisoners, **Karma Dawa** and **Karma Sonam** reportedly threw "Free Tibet" leaflets and shouted nationalist slogans. The meeting was suspended and those who participated in the protest, initially around 10 prisoners, including Karma Dawa, were "put into solitary confinement and tortured" sources said.

"We were dismayed and saddened by not seeing a single Tibetan national flag," Karma Sonam and Karma Dawa reportedly answered to prison officials who interrogated them afterwards under harsh and inhuman conditions. The Chinese authorities accused them of instigating the demonstration. Both hail from south-eastern region of Tibet, known to Tibetans as Kham.

The indiscriminate shooting on the prisoners on that day occurred when the Chinese authorities deployed members of the Public Security Bureau (PSB) or police and the People's Armed Police (Ch: Wu Jing).

**Karma Dawa (aka Kardar)** died in prison. The cause of his death is not known. The words "Free Tibet" were found inscribed on his body. There were fear amongst the prisoners at Drapchi that he and Karma Sonam may face execution because of their role in this prison demonstration. Karma Dawa was serving a prison sentence of 13 years for non-political reasons.

The second identified prisoner who died after shooting was 24-year-old **Lobsang Choephel (Tenzin Choephel was his lay-name)**, a monk from Khangmar Monastery in Dhamshung district under Lhasa prefecture. His body was secretly cremated near Chupsang Hermitage where the Chinese authorities told his 74-year-old father that his son had "committed suicide" and gave him 700 *yuan* (approximately 75.00 \$) as "compensation". In reality he died after being shot on 1 May at Drapchi Prison sources said. Lobsang Choephel was detained on 15 April 1995 (or on 9 September 1995) after staging a demonstration in central Lhasa, shouting "Free Tibet", along with three colleagues from his monastery.