

## Briefing on Human Rights Situation in Tibet

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*His Holiness*  
I am very grateful to have the opportunity to speak before this distinguished gathering on the current situation in Tibet today. Since the People's Republic of China first invaded Tibet in 1949, the Tibetan people, led by the Dalai Lama, have striven for a peaceful political solution to the Tibet question. Rather than responding to violence in kind, Tibetans have favoured temperance and compromise in their initiatives with China to safeguard Tibetan cultural identity. In 1988 the Dalai Lama proposed a framework for negotiations with China, asking that Tibet be granted self-governing democratic status while relinquishing foreign policy and defence to China. *His Holiness*

*His Holiness*  
The Dalai Lama's proposal, on behalf of his people, is a consistent and simple one: genuine autonomy. An autonomy that will allow Tibetans to freely practise their religion and retain their ethnic culture - rights to which every human being is entitled. The proposal continues to be either ignored or discredited by Chinese leaders. *distinct*

*is so-called TAR.*  
China asserts that the development of the Tibetan plateau has 'liberated' the Tibetan people from their previously 'backward' society. If 'development' is to be measured only by new infrastructure, the construction of roads and Chinese-run enterprise, it may be correct to speak of a 'developed' Tibet. Yet if we look at the human implications of these drastic changes to the Tibetan social structure, the most striking feature of Tibet's Chinese-engineered economic lift-off is the lack of real benefits to the Tibetans themselves.

The tools of political repression, arbitrary detention and torture have been employed to ensure the Tibetan people don't stand in the way of 'progress'. And while their land is being stripped of its precious natural assets, so too their culture is being robbed of its unique language, religious practices and historical traditions.

### 1. Political repression

Politically motivated prosecution and arbitrary detentions continue to be sanctioned in the PRC's judicial system where international standards of due process are ignored and there is no separation of the Judiciary and the State.

The exercise of the fundamental freedoms of speech, press, assembly, association and demonstration resulted in 265 known cases of arrests of Tibetans in 1996. Thirty-five of these followed the distribution of human rights leaflets, the pasting of pro-independence leaflets or the shouting of independence slogans in Tibet. Thirty-nine arrests in 1996 followed demonstrations by Tibetans. All were peaceful and non-violent, most lasting just a few minutes and comprising a very small group of individuals. Thus far twenty-seven arrests have been reported for 1997; nine were associated with the possession of independence posters or printed materials and 13 with independence protests. *Since the "Strike Hard" campaign there been unleashed further repression & arrests.*

Fifty eight year old Chadrel Rinpoche, head of the Chinese Search Committee for the Reincarnation of the Panchen Lama, angered Chinese authorities in 1995 when he rejected China's plan to choose their own Panchen Lama. Following the Dalai Lama's proclamation of the reincarnation on 14 May 1995, Chadrel Rinpoche was arrested on 17 or 18 May 1995 under suspicion of having communicated with the Dalai Lama in exile regarding the choice of the reincarnation. For the last two years Chadrel Rinpoche has been held incommunicado by Chinese authorities and on 21 April 1997,

*during the initial period of Chadrel Rinpoche's detention kept denied that he was arrested & said that we were in hospital, etc. - Can we get exact quote?*

charged with "plotting to split the country" and "leaking state secrets", he was sentenced to six years imprisonment by Chinese authorities.

In September this year it was discovered that Chadrel Rinpoche is being held in a top-secret prison cell in which only three people are allowed to enter: two commissars who report directly to the Ministry of Justice in Beijing and another prisoner who acts as cook and guard. Chadrel Rinpoche, who is reportedly always called by a code name, is never permitted to leave his cell - the same one in which Chinese intellectual Hu Feng languished in complete secrecy for 20 years, imprisoned by Mao Tse Tung for arguing that culture should not be made to serve political ideology.

## 2. Religious Repression

In 1996 the national "Yan Da" campaign (or "Crack Down Severely on Crime") was launched in Tibet, targeted at "splittists" - individuals who support Tibetan independence and the leadership of His Holiness the Dalai lama. The main sub-campaign of Strike Hard within Tibet is the "Patriotic Re-education" Campaign which aims not just to strike at the heart of Tibet's spiritual culture but also to clamp down on the powerful dissident movements in many monastic institutions.

Under the "Re-education" Campaign, regulations allowing entrance into monasteries have been strictly intensified and Chinese "work teams" have been sent in to "re-educate" monks along Communist lines and to instruct them on the "evils" of the Dalai Lama and Tibetan nationalism. A five-point political pledge requires monks to oppose the idea of an independent Tibet, to denounce the Dalai Lama and to recognise the Chinese-appointed Panchen Lama. Democratic Management Committees established by Chinese "work teams" in Tibetan monasteries and nunneries ~~comprise individuals directly chosen by the Chinese authorities.~~ *were reconstituted by the "work team"!*

When monks refuse to accept these principles, they risk expulsion, arrest and imprisonment. The campaign is reported to have swept 1780 of Tibet's temples and monasteries and since its launch there are reports of more than 129 arrests. Twenty-four of the arrests were a direct result of monks questioning a work team's form of education. There were at least two deaths in 1996 in connection with the campaign and reports of expelled monks now total around 2089.

Entrance to the monasteries has recently been denied to those aged below 16 years. The effect of this is to further reduce the monastic population, *and discourage religious studies.* for without religious education and initiation no one can in fact become a monk. Without students, the monastic traditions will necessarily die out.)

In July this year, in a radical re-definition of centuries of history, China's top leader declared Tibetan culture to be, in fact, "Non-Buddhist". This was followed by the announcement in November in China's official newspaper that the ideological re-education campaign could continue for the next three to five years. The official Chinese newspaper stressed that "Religion must adapt to the development needs of socialism and not socialism adapting to the needs of religion" and complained that monks were not contributing to economic growth.

## 3. Detention and Torture

As at the end of 1996, over 1019 known Tibetan political prisoners were being detained in various Chinese prisons in Tibet. At present there are 52 known cases of prisoners serving 10 years or more in prison as a result of voicing their political opinions.

Tanak Jigme Sangpo, a former primary school teacher, now 70 years old, is serving one of the longest sentences imposed on a prisoner of conscience in Tibet. Tanak Jigme Sangpo had already served some 13 years in prison for independence activities when he was sentenced in 1983 to 15 years imprisonment for "counter-revolutionary propaganda and incitement". His sentence was

*Tibetan monasteries and the nunneries are learning institutions, where students are necessitated to study religious philosophy for their own practice and, in fact, their understanding of the practice. Without the necessary study and the understanding of the philosophy, it will simply die out.*

subsequently extended by five years and later a further eight years for shouting independence slogans in prison. By the time he is released in 2011, he shall have spent 28 unbroken years and a total of 41 years behind bars.

In 1996 there were eight reports of Tibetans <sup>died</sup> dying as a result of torture and ill-treatment at the hands of Chinese officials and three of these were deaths in custody.

#### 4. Education and language

Until recently Tibetan children have been taught in their own language from age six until 13 and have begun to learn Chinese from age nine. In April 1997, Chinese authorities in "TAR" announced that Chinese would be introduced from the first year of schooling and suggested that in some primary classes Chinese will replace Tibetan as the language of instruction.

When they reach medium school Tibetan students must switch to Chinese medium, with the exception of 40 "special" secondary schools in Qinghai province (incorporating Amdo). Similarly in tertiary institutions, Tibetans are taught and examined primarily in Chinese. In December 1996, authorities announced that the History of Tibet course, taught by the University of Lhasa's Tibetan Language Department, would henceforth be taught in Chinese rather than Tibetan, leaving all except one of the 17 university courses taught mainly in Chinese. It was announced in 1997 that the Tibetan Language Department would not take any new students for the 1997-98 academic year.

*Amdo, incorporated Qinghai Province.*

New schools constructed in the "TAR" are primarily located in large towns and cities and are geared toward Chinese settlers. There are few schools in the countryside where Tibetans principally reside. Tibetan students who have escaped to exile also report the dominance of Communist ideology and Chinese history in schooling and the imposition of prohibitive fees for Tibetan students.

*Some thing about the schools fees required.*

#### 5. Women

In 1996, 23 women were arbitrarily arrested with nuns making up 21 of the arrests, all for their participation in demonstrations. There are currently 270 known female political prisoners.

Ngawang Sangdrol, a Garu nun, is serving an 18 year sentence, the longest known sentence of any female political prisoner in Tibet. Originally arrested for pro-independence demonstrating, she and 13 other nuns had their sentences extended after recording pro-independence songs in prison. In March 1996 Ngawang Sangdrol was amongst a number of female prisoners who refused to tidy her cell, apparently as a protest against the Panchen Lama re-education campaign being conducted in the prison, and also refused to stand up on one occasion when a Chinese official entered the room. When she was sent to stand in the rain as punishment, Ngawang Sangdrol called out "Free Tibet". As a result, Ngawang Sangdrol's sentence was extended by another nine years in July 1996.

Birth control policy is carried out in all parts of Tibet through propaganda, coercion and strict regulatory measures. One of the many reports received describes the sterilisation of 308 Tibetan women in the sub-district of Takar in Chushur under Lhasa City in the space of just 22 days between September and October of 1996. Amongst these women, Nyima Dolma, aged 27, died after one such forced sterilisation and Yangzom Dolkar, aged 27, is currently ill. Another woman, Nyima, was forced to abort her three month old child before also being sterilised.

#### 6. Children

At least 50 Tibetan child political prisoners currently languish in Chinese prisons in Tibet for exercising their freedom of expression. They are detained in adult prisons, denied legal representation and contact with family and subjected to severe ill-treatment.

On 14 May 1995 the Dalai Lama announced Gedhun Choekyi Nyima as the 11th reincarnation of the Panchen Lama. Some days later the six year old boy and his parents went missing, reported to have been taken by Chinese security forces to Beijing. The safety and whereabouts of the boy remain unknown and no international monitor has yet been allowed to visit the family. A Chinese-selected "Panchen Lama" was chosen on 29 November 1995 and subsequently enthroned on 8 December 1995.

## 7. Tibet's "Development"

China proudly alleges that, without Beijing's help, Tibet would be floundering, dependent on yaks for subsistence. In 1996 Beijing said it had invested four billion yuan (482 million dollars) in infrastructure building and granted three billion yuan as subsidy, yet the "TAR"'s Economic Commission admits that an estimated 300,000 Tibetans still live below the poverty line, each living on less than 78 dollars a year. Of the frequent power cuts, the Commission says these "will be solved this year in Lhasa and over the next two years in central Tibet".

One Tibetan exile who returned to Tibet ten years ago was struck by the development that had taken place in his village: a power generator had been built, power lines had been erected and there were bulbs and switches in every house. Yet, when after four days, he still had not witnessed lighting, he made enquiries of the villagers. He was informed that the electricity stopped just a few months after construction in the 70's and had not returned at all in the 10 years since. In his next visit to his home, recently made, even the power lines had disappeared - pulled down by the villagers to be used for more practical purposes. The other major 'development' was the construction of an irrigation channel. Built by conscripted "volunteers" - many of whom died on site - the mega-project services just five families.

Of his local hospital, the same Tibetan described the sharing of a single needle amongst 40 or 50 patients. He estimates the state allocation for health care as a little over 3 yuan (35 cents) per person per month and contrasts this with the drug costs of his cousin who suffers from partial paralysis - a pay-out of over 6000 yuan per year. Beijing claims a policy of free medical facilities for Tibet, yet without a deposit of 5000 yuan, the "TAR's First People's Hospital" will not admit a patient even in the most critical condition.

## 8. Population Transfer

The preservation of the Tibetan identity is perhaps the most critical and immediate threat faced by the Tibetan people today. The Tibetan culture is a rich and ancient mix of distinct language, religious practices, spiritual beliefs, dress, music and literature, arts and architecture, history and folk lore, medical and political systems, environmental respect, festivals and social customs. Where the physical introduction of another race has the effect of marginalising the other, these cultural will be irretrievably lost.

Since mid-1994, it is estimated that more than 500,000 new Chinese immigrants have been moved into Tibet to work on the 62 new industrial development projects initiated by Beijing. The population transfer that accompanies such project results in further marginalisation of the 6 million Tibetans who are now outnumbered by 7.5 million Chinese settlers.

These settlers receive preferential treatment in housing, employment, education and social services. New schools and hospitals constructed in the "TAR" are primarily located in large towns and cities and are geared toward Chinese settlers. Traditional Tibetan-style housing has been destroyed in favour of Communist-style blocks. The latest project - the massive Three Gorge Dam - promises to wreak further havoc on Tibet's fragile ecological system, already seriously endangered by China's extensive deforestation and mining, and to propel a potential 1 million more Chinese into Tibet.

## 9. Environment

The rights to life, health, adequate food and shelter are rights which China consistently claims to promote, yet all have been violated in the course of the reckless environmental damage in Tibet. Tibetans have for centuries lived in harmony with nature, guided by their Buddhist culture which emphasises the interdependence of man and nature and teaches that one should not harm any living thing. Today these precious natural assets are valued only for their market price.

International funds are flooding China as Tibet is promoted as a toxic waste dumping zone and Tibetan animals are used for fur and meat exports. Tibet is also China's largest source of timber: between 1959 and 1985 Tibet's 25.2 million hectares of forest land was reduced to 13.57 million hectares, accounting for more than US\$54 billion worth of timber revenue for China. Tibet's rich mineral resources include the largest uranium deposit in the world and oil fields producing over 1 million tons of crude oil per year. The total potential income from the "TAR"'s mineral resources alone is estimated at US\$78.27 billion. *per year!*

As the main source of the principal rivers of the Asian sub-continent, river pollution in Tibet affects the environmental health and lives of millions of people in downstream valleys of Asia. Environmental upheaval on the Tibetan plateau also impacts significantly on the global climatic patten. Environmental problems in Tibet are estimated to affect 85% of Asia's population and 47% of the world population.

## Conclusion

While downplaying individual human rights, the People's Republic of China has repeatedly claimed to uphold communal rights such as shelter and livelihood in Tibet. Yet Tibet is a unique case of human rights abuse in that the Tibetan people are being targeted as a whole, their distinct cultural identity systematically destroyed. Having signed the United Nations Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in October this year, such actions henceforth constitute a specific violation of China's international obligations. Culture is not only a vital part of the lives of the Tibetan people, *other interested* ~~it~~ also has the potential to make a relevant and useful contribution to the ~~entire~~ international community, including the Chinese people. *I believe that it also*

*Ad* All aspects of Tibetans' human rights will continue to be violated until such time as there is a satisfactory political resolution to the question of Tibet. Chinese President Jiang Zemin has recently demanded once more that the Dalai Lama "recognise publicly that Tibet is an inalienable part of the People's Republic of China, that he must state publicly that he gives up Tibet's independence, and that he must stop all activities at splitting the motherland." Such a demand requires the Dalai Lama to state a historical lie and ignores the fact that for a long time His Holiness has not asked for Tibetan independence, but merely/autonomy. It also neglects to acknowledge that actions to regain freedom will continue as long as China scorns the Dalai Lama's conciliatory proposal.

I therefore ask you, as representatives of the international community, to add your urging to prevail upon the Chinese government to resolve the Tibetan issue and cease the repression of the Tibetan people. The continuance of our culture, part of the world's heritage, depends upon it.

Thank you for your time and understanding.