



བོད་ཀྱི་འགྲོ་བ་མིའི་ཐོབ་ཐང་དང་མང་གཞི་འཕེལ་རྒྱས་ལྗེ་གནས་ཁང་།
TIBETAN CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY

(Registered under Societies Registration Act 21 of 1860)

December 1 1998

His Excellency Kofi Annan
The General Secretary
United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017
USA

We are aware that you have always stood for human rights of all people, and particularly of the Tibetan people. I am writing to bring to your attention to the case of the Tibetan musician, Ngawang Choephel, who was sentenced to 18 years imprisonment on a false charge of espionage activities. Choephel has recently been transferred from Nyari Detention Centre in Shigatse to the remote and high security Powo Tramo Prison in Tramo County. This transfer alienates Choephel from international attention and further inhibits the campaign of his mother, Sonam Dekyi, to gain visitation rights.

It appears that China is again attempting to deflect the international focus on their violations of human rights which has been generated by the case of Ngawang Choephel. Powo Tramo Prison is located approximately 500 km east of Lhasa in the Kongpo region which is also a base for China's military. The area is therefore highly restricted to tourists and independent information is therefore difficult to attain. By transferring Choephel to Powo Tramo Prison they are restricting information dissemination and thus attempting to isolate Choephel from international attention.

Prisons in Lhasa are visited by foreign delegations. However, due to its isolation, no delegation has ever visited Powo Tramo Prison and so political prisoners held here have not received the attention of important dignitaries. Therefore, Choephel's transfer jeopardises the ability of international bodies to effectively pressure the Chinese government regarding his case as information from the prison is not readily accessible.

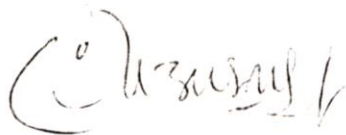
Unlike in other prisons, political prisoners in Powo Tramo Prison are denied any visitation rights. This further obstructs the campaign of Sonam Dekyi, Ngawang Choephel's mother, who has been undertaking a lone campaign since her only son Choephel disappeared in August 1995. For the last three years she has been appealing to

the Chinese authorities for permission to visit her son in Tibet. As yet, the Chinese government has made no response to her humanitarian appeal.

Sonam Dekyi has asked our Centre to request you to help her realise her last wish; to meet her son before she dies. Sonam Dekyi is 62 years old and has recently recovered from tuberculosis. Her health has been deteriorating for the last three years. By not allowing Sonam Dekyi to visit her son in prison, the Chinese authorities are violating both the international law (Article 37 of the UN's Standard minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners) and their own prison law (Article 48 of the Chinese Prison Law) which provide for the visits of relatives.

On her behalf, we ask you to kindly take up the case of Ngawang Choephel most urgently by encouraging the Chinese government to grant him an unconditional release, or at the very least to allow Sonam Dekyi the right to visit her son.

With our highest regards,



Lobsang Nyandak
Executive Director