

HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN TIBET



2021 ANNUAL REPORT



Tibetan Centre for Human Rights
and Democracy



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The centre conducts regular, systematic investigations of human rights abuses in Tibet and publishes an annual report, thematic reports, the translated testimony of victims of human rights violations, electronic newsletters, and briefings on human rights issues that confront Tibetans inside Tibet. The centre generates awareness of a wide range of issues relating to human rights and democracy through grassroots and diplomatic means, using regional and international human rights mechanisms as well as community-based awareness campaigns against human rights abuses. The centre empowers human rights advocates by providing resources, training, and other capacity building programs in the Tibetan community in exile.

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Envisioning a future where every Tibetan can exercise human rights and democratic freedoms.

VISION



MISSION

TCHRD is an NGO committed to advancing human rights and democracy in Tibet and the exiled Tibetan community by empowering Tibetan human rights advocates and monitoring, documenting, and campaigning against human rights abuses.



VALUES

Equality, Non-violence, Justice, Dignity, Empowerment, and Courage.

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I. SUMMARY

In 2021, the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) continued to perpetrate gross human rights violations involving arbitrary detention and torture, religious repression, and widespread crackdown on the right to freedom of expression and information. In particular, the Chinese party-state made no pretence that forced cultural assimilation has now become an entrenched part of Chinese policy in Tibet. Party officials and cadres must implement what the party refers to as the 'sinicization' process when managing all aspects of Tibetan lives.

The party-state justifies its harsh implementation of the sinicization policy with the rhetoric of "ethnic unity" and "building a modern socialist state". To enable the goal of creating a common Chinese national identity that is monolingual and loyal to the party-state, Tibetans who openly resist are detained and tortured in undisclosed locations for prolonged periods without access to legal representation. Tibetans are also disproportionately targeted for sharing information and communicating online; many are detained for merely keeping photos of their spiritual leader, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, on their phones. The party-state imprisoned Tibetans for criticising the imposition of Chinese medium education or holding prayers for the wellbeing of His Holiness the Dalai Lama on the spiritual leader's birthday.

Chinese authorities doubled down on their efforts to sinicize Tibetan Buddhism by banning any display of religious articles or practices not just among party members but also among school children. They enforced new regulations to tighten control over religious personnel and religious information shared on online platforms.

Accounts from the ground in eastern Tibet revealed the mass raids conducted at Tibetan homes as authorities seized mobile phones and scoured them for 'illegal' contents such as photos of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The raids covered entire villages in Wonpo and Denma Townships in Sershul County, Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Many Tibetans were either detained incommunicado or held in extrajudicial detention facilities in the name of political education.

Two giant Buddha statues, prayer wheels, and a monastic school with over 100 students in December in Drango (Ch: Luhuo) County, Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture were torn down. Their destruction reveals the unmistakable intention of the atheist party-state to mow down Tibetan religious sentiments and remove all traces of prominent religious monuments, thereby ensuring the monopolisation of Tibetan public space by the sinicization policy.

The sinicization policy has also resulted in the systematic persecution of Tibetan educators, intellectuals and cultural leaders, many of whom had been detained incommunicado and sentenced in secret. The silencing of educated Tibetans who exercise considerable influence on Tibetan society assumes increased urgency due to the continued violation of education and language rights.

Vaguely written laws and regulations were implemented to impose Chinese medium education, shutter alternative avenues for Tibetan medium education, and institutionalise party ideology and propaganda in the state education system in the name of 'compulsory education'.

Despite the extreme risks involved, Tibetan human rights defenders and activists showed remarkable courage and determination in countering the Chinese party-state's propaganda on Tibet. This principled courage was demonstrated by Tibetans from all walks of life and backgrounds, such as the Tibetan language rights advocate Tashi Wangchuk, who opened a Weibo account to continue his advocacy months after completing his five-year prison term.

Tibetans inside Tibet sacrificed and persevered in making their voices heard and aspirations known. They demonstrated that human rights abuses and political repression will not go unchallenged. Tibetans will continue to call out the unjust and inhumane policies of the Chinese party-state and demand accountability for human rights violations, political repression and crimes against humanity.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Chinese government:

1. Immediately halt the 'sinicization' policy in Tibet and other Tibetan areas in Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan, and Yunnan provinces
2. Allow the Tibetans to determine their own educational and cultural affairs as provided in the PRC's Constitution and Regional National Autonomy Law
3. Immediately halt closure of Tibetan language schools and imposition of Chinese medium education
4. Cease targeting Tibetans for random raids and searches of their personal belongings
5. Abolish all forms of arbitrary detention, including but not limited to 're-education' facilities and 'administrative detention'
6. Investigate and publicly account for the status and whereabouts of all Tibetans subjected to arbitrary detention and enforced disappearance
7. Release all Tibetan political prisoners, including the 11th Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, who was disappeared at the age of six in 1995
8. Guarantee fair trial rights to Tibetan detainees and provide them with immediate legal representation of their choice, including informing their family members about the reason and legality for detention
9. Launch independent and thorough investigations of state officials responsible for the torture and death of Tibetan detainees
10. Recognise the Committee Against Torture as set out in Article 20 of the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhumane and Degrading Punishment
11. Revise or repeal laws and policies that engender human rights violations and political repression, such as the National Security Law, the Cybersecurity law, Regulations on Religious Affairs, Regulations on Tibetan Buddhist reincarnation system, Education Law, the Compulsory Education Law, and the Putonghua promotion law
12. Uphold international human rights treaty obligations to respect, protect and fulfil fundamental human rights
13. Ratify International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Convention on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearances
14. Issue a standing invitation to UN independent experts to conduct official visits in Tibet and other parts of the PRC

To the international community including the UN, democratic governments, human rights organisations and other civil society actors:

1. Invite the UN special rapporteur on the right to education and minority rights to assess the quality and availability of culturally relevant education in Tibet
2. Allow the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to visit Tibet and assess the human rights situation
3. Raise human rights issues with Chinese government representatives during bilateral and multilateral meetings
4. Suspend all bilateral human rights dialogues that have failed to achieve concrete results or bring positive changes in Tibet and elsewhere in PRC
5. Impose appropriate sanctions on Chinese government officials and party members responsible for human rights abuses, crimes against humanity, and genocide
6. Support the UN's June 2019 call for an immediate moratorium on the sale, transfer, and use of surveillance technology until human rights-compliant regulatory frameworks are in place. Restrict the sale of such surveillance technology to the PRC until such conditions are fulfilled
7. Demand accountability from the PRC for its human rights violations by not supporting PRC-sponsored resolutions at the UN and other multilateral platforms
8. Support the June 2020 call by 50 UN human rights experts to act collectively and decisively to ensure China respects human rights and abides by its international obligations

III. EDUCATION AND LANGUAGE RIGHTS

In 2021, education and language rights became a major focus of the Chinese party-state as it intensified forced cultural assimilation – or what party leaders refer to as the ‘sinicization policy’ – in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) and more recently in other Tibetan areas in Qinghai, Gansu, and Sichuan.

The forced cultural assimilation policy was reinforced at the Central Ethnic Work Conference held in August, where president Xi Jinping called on the party leaders in Tibetan areas to prioritise the work of “forging the sense of community for the Chinese nation”. In other words, to effectively undermine and marginalise minority cultures and languages in favour of Putonghua (Mandarin Chinese based on Beijing dialect) and Han Chinese identity.

More legal and policy measures were introduced to impose Chinese medium education from the preschool level, while local non-governmental initiatives to provide alternative forms of education such as private schools offering classes on Tibetan language and culture were suppressed.

Popularising Putonghua

In September, the “Children Homophony Plan”¹ went into force, requiring the compulsory teaching of Putonghua in preschool education. Preschool children in minority autonomous regions will now be taught primarily in Putonghua and preschool teachers are required to attain a certain level of proficiency in the coming years. Paired assistance is to be set up between schools in minority areas and mainland China, with ‘qualified’ teachers to be sent from China to teach Putonghua. By 2025, the plan aims to increase the rate of Putonghua proficiency by 90 percent.

This was followed by the Qinghai provincial authorities issuing the “Action Plan for Preschool Children’s Putonghua Ability Improvement (2021-2025)”, which involves spending 9.3 billion yuan on introducing Putonghua learning to preschool children, particularly in kindergartens built across the country, to “promote the all-round development of preschool Putonghua education”.²



A police officer instructing a primary school class on “Patriotic Education” in Gangkar village in Dingri County, Shigatse Prefecture, TAR. Photo: tibet.cn

For the Chinese party-state, education is a means to cultivate loyal followers for the party and continue the party’s perennial rule, both of which are carried out in the name of “building a modern socialist state” and promoting “ethnic unity”. Chinese education law requires all children above the age of six to enrol in government schools to study the nine-year ‘compulsory education’ curriculum (15 years in the case of TAR and Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region).

In September, amid a widespread campaign to purge Tibetan homes and phones of ‘illegal’ articles and content such as photos of His Holiness the Dalai Lama or criticism against the Chinese government in Sershul County, local Tibetans were rounded up and parents were forced to sign letters promising not to send their children to join the monastery before they turn 18 years of age.³ Instead they were ordered to send their children to government schools.

All state schools in Tibet are now adopting Chinese medium education from the preschool level. The state education curriculum is heavily biased towards the Han Chinese view of Tibetan culture and history as ‘backward’ and ‘uncivilised’. This kind of education is designed to sever ties between the new generation of

¹“China enforces compulsory Mandarin Chinese learning for preschool children in Tibet”. Tibetan Centre For Human Rights And Democracy, 17 September 2021, tchrd.org/china-enforces-compulsory-mandarin-chinese-learning-for-preschool-children-in-tibet/.

²“Local language committees uphold integrity and innovation, deepen reform and earnestly implement the spirit of the National Language Conference”, Ministry Of Education Of The People’s Republic of China, 22 October 2021, moe.gov.cn/jyb_sjzl/s3165/202110/t20211022_574399.htm.

³“Tibetans subjected to extrajudicial detention, random home inspections and seizure of cell phones under China’s social media purge in Dzachuka”. Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, 29 October 2021, tchrd.org/tibetans-subjected-to-extrajudicial-detention-random-home-inspections-and-seizure-of-cell-phones-under-chinas-social-media-purge-in-dzachuka/.

Tibetans and their linguistic and cultural heritage. Most importantly, the compulsory education curriculum is designed to neutralise dissent and obligate children, youths, and their parents and guardians to become loyal party followers.

In September, the China Vocational Education Society (CVES) inaugurated the “‘Warm Project’ National Common Language Training base” at the Qinghai Tibetan Buddhist College to implement the national common language or Putonghua training program for Tibetan farming and nomadic communities. At the inauguration ceremony, it was announced that the numerous measures to promote Putonghua in Tibetan areas in Qinghai Province will be implemented by the provincial CVES, which is responsible for coordinating and promoting Putonghua among the rural Tibetan populace. The ‘Warm Project National Common Language Training Base’ will also be listed in nine colleges and universities across the province.⁴

In July, Chinese education authorities in the Tibetan autonomous prefectures of Malho (Ch: Huangnan), Tsolho (Ch: Hainan) and Yushu (Ch: Kyegudo) in Qinghai Province issued a notice stating that Tibetan language will no longer be accorded more weightage in school entrance exams. The change hurts Tibetan applicants’ chances of admission to the only national-level secondary schools still teaching some Tibetan.⁵

The same month, a research team commissioned by Human Rights Watch (HRW) revealed the downgrading of Tibetan language in public spaces as more public signs, notices and slogans in Chinese are placed above Tibetan, a major shift from decades of official policy that gave more prominence to Tibetan language in such spaces.⁶

Private schools under attack

More reports emerged of private Tibetan schools either being closed or foreign funding cut off to these schools in Tibetan areas of Qinghai and Sichuan provinces. Some schools were pressured to adopt Chinese medium education or become state schools. The Education

Law and Compulsory Education law require all school-age children to attend state schools. At the same time, parents are prohibited from enrolling their children in private schools and coaching or tutoring classes have been deemed illegal by the government, even if it means attending Tibetan coaching classes during winter vacation.

On 1 September, amendments to the ‘Regulations on the Implementation of the Law of the People’s Republic of China on the Promotion of Privately-run Schools’ took effect, tightening restrictions on private schools using the ‘compulsory education’ curriculum and increasing the party’s control over the private education sphere.⁷ The new amendments further emphasise the absolute authority of the party-state and its various regulatory arms in deciding both the form and substance of private education. Private schools must set up a “supervising agency” consisting of representatives from the party’s grassroots organisations that are “tasked with implementing the Party’s principles and policies, and participate in major school decisions” (Article 4). Private school teachers need to undergo training “to facilitate ideological and political training of the recruited teachers” (Article 35).

A notice issued on 8 July by the Chinese Ministry of Education and seven other government departments⁸ reinforced the new restrictions by requiring semi-private schools (jointly run by private and public schools or ‘social organisations’ and individuals) providing the ‘compulsory education’ curriculum to be converted into public schools if they did not meet the requirements of ‘six independences’: a set of conditions ranging from having independent legal person qualifications, separate campuses from public schools, basic education and teaching facilities, independent full-time teachers, independent accounting and students enrolment, and issuance of academic certificates. As always, these conditions are applied arbitrarily without any oversight or redressal mechanisms.

Another policy called ‘Double Reduction’ was introduced in the same month to “ease the burden of excessive homework and off-campus tutoring on students”.⁹

⁴ “Warm Project: National Common Language Training Base Unveiled in Qinghai”, China News, 27 September 2021, chinanews.com.cn/sh/2021/09-27/9575353.shtml.

⁵ “New Scoring System on Entrance Exams Raises Bar For Tibetans Pursuing Native Language Studies”, Radio Free Asia, 21 July 2021, rfa.org/english/news/tibet/scoring-0721202103026.html.

⁶ “In today’s China, Chinese is stepping on the head of Tibetan”, Human Rights Watch, 21 July 2021, hrw.org/zh-hans/news/2021/07/21/china-chinese-now-tops-tibetan.

⁷ “Implementing Regulations on the Private Education Promotion Law of China”, China Justice Observer, 10 September 2021, chinajusticeobserver.com/a/implementing-regulations-on-the-private-education-promotion-law-of-china.

⁸ “Relevant person in charge of the Ministry of Education answered reporters’ questions on the Notice on Regulating Public Schools Holding or Participating in Holding Private Compulsory Education Schools”, Ministry of Education People’s Republic of China, 25 August 2021, gov.cn/zhengce/2021-08/25/content_5633202.htm.

⁹ “Students have more sporting time from ‘Double Reduction’ policy”, Xinhua, 11 October 2021, chinadaily.com.cn/a/202110/11/WS6163a9e7a310cdd39pc6e159.html.

Instead of doing homework or spending their off-campus time on private pursuits of their choice, students are encouraged to join government-built facilities for “sports training and extra-curricular activities”.¹⁰ By early October, more than 33,000 ‘sports and art training enterprises’ had been built across the PRC, a year-on-year growth of 99 percent.¹¹ Chinese authorities claimed that the policy signifies a “shift towards making physical strength and ability a higher priority”, making the sports industry a lucrative business.

In Tibet, an early version of the ‘double reduction’ policy began in 2015 when the so-called ‘Children’s Palaces’ or ‘Youth Palaces’ were built in Tibetan areas outside TAR. By 2018, Chinese authorities had built 28 children’s palaces with more than 7000 children in Lithang (Ch: Litang) County, Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.¹² In 2019, Chinese state media reported the establishment of “Tibet Youth Palace” in Lhasa (TAR), citing government authorities that the facility would be “an important place for carrying out extracurricular activities, inheriting traditional culture and strengthening patriotism education, which provides scientific, cultural, artistic space with ethnic characteristics for youth in the whole southwest China’s Tibet Autonomous Region.”¹³

As restrictions increased on education and language rights, more Tibetan medium schools, both private and semi-private, and some of their staff members were targeted:

- Sometime in 2021, all Tibetan private schools were ordered to close and their students were sent to government schools by 20 April 2022 in Sershul (Ch: Shiqu) County, Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture..¹⁴ Those who failed to follow the order were threatened with imprisonment. Since then, six primary schools in Gemang, Bumser, Troshul, Asey, Warong and Phendey Chekyong in Tharshul village are known to have been closed.
- In July, Sengdruk Taktse School, a popular Tibetan language junior middle school with over 300 students in Darlag (Ch: Dari) County in Golok (Ch: Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, was closed without reason.¹⁵ Rinchen Kyi, 41, a long-term teacher at the school, was detained on 1 August on the charges of “inciting separatism”. Authorities took her away to a mental asylum in Xining after she was found to have not eaten for several days after the school closure. On 20 January 2022 that she had left Xining and her current whereabouts remain unknown.¹⁶
- In early November 2021, a private monastic school built by the Ganden Namgyal Ling Monastery in Drango (Ch: Luhuo) County, Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture was razed down, cutting short the futures of its more than 100 students. The school also used to hold coaching classes on Tibetan language and culture for lay students during winter breaks. The school’s principal Tsewang



Tibetan language advocate Tashi Wangchuk in front of Sengdruk Taktse School in Darlag, Golok Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Photo: Tashi Wangchuk

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²“28 children’s palaces established in Lithang, southwest China’s Sichuan”, China Tibet Online.

4 April 2018, m.eng.tibet.cn/life/health_education/152280871345.shtml.

¹³“New training camp for Party cadres in Tibet demonstrates tougher approach and challenges in ensuring loyalty”.International Campaign for Tibet, 14 February 2019.

savetibet.org/new-training-camp-for-party-cadres-in-tibet-demonstrates-tougher-approach-and-challenges-in-ensuring-loyalty/.

¹⁴“Tibetan Private Language Schools Closed Down in Sichuan”, Radio Free Asia, 3 June 2021.

rfa.org/english/news/tibet/schools-0603202116545.html.

¹⁵“China Closes Tibetan School in Qinghai, Leaving Many Students Adrift”, Radio Free Asia, 14 September 2021.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/school-09142021135447.html.

¹⁶“Rinchen Kyi has no symptoms of unsound mind but continues to be in detention”, Radio Free Asia, 25 January 2022.

rfa.org/tibetan/sargyur/rinchen-kyi-whereabout-still-unknown-01252022071540.html.

Namgyal and accountant Dralha had been detained in 2012 and sentenced to six years each on the charge of “inciting separatism”.

- In August, the Gyalten Private School¹⁷ founded by Gyalten Rinpoche in 1994 in Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture was threatened with closure if it did not adopt Chinese medium education.¹⁸ Some foreign donors have already found it impossible since 2019 to send contributions to the school, forcing them to discontinue support.¹⁹

Downgrading autonomy provisions

Chinese legislation appears to support the right to education for minority nationalities in their own languages and in line with their own culture and traditions. However, this is limited by their interpretation and application, as well as other contradictory legislative provisions. While Article 4 of the Chinese Constitution provides that “All nationalities have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages and to preserve or reform their own folkways and customs”, Article 19 stipulates that the state authorities will “develop socialist education to raise the scientific and cultural level of the whole nation” and also “promot[e] the nationwide use of Putonghua (common speech based on Beijing pronunciation).”²⁰ Article 46 further guarantees PRC citizens “the right as well as the duty to receive education”.

The Regional National Autonomy Law, which contains provisions for minority nationalities to use and develop their own languages and cultures, has long been diluted and downgraded as official policy began promoting Putonghua as the ‘national common language’. Although Article 10 of the law requires that “autonomous agencies in ethnic autonomous areas guarantee the freedom of the nationalities in these areas to use and develop their own spoken and written languages and their freedom to preserve or reform their own folkways and customs,” Article 37 obligates the state authorities to teach Han Chinese language and literature courses from the lower or senior grades of primary school in order to popularise Putonghua throughout the country.

The freedom to use and develop minority languages (Article 10) is also undermined by numerous other provisions that obligate the state authorities to introduce measures to promote Putonghua as the national common language, which have proved detrimental to the interests



Tibetan language advocate Tashi Wangchuk visiting several schools in Golok where Chinese medium education was imposed in 2021

of minority nationalities. Article 53, in particular, contains extensive provisions on the duty of state authorities to institutionalise Chinese Communist Party’s propaganda and political ideology in the state education system: “Autonomous agencies of an ethnic autonomous area shall promote the civic virtues of love of the motherland, of the people, and of socialism and conduct education among the citizens of the various nationalities in the area in patriotism, communism and state policies concerning the nationalities. The cadres and masses of the various nationalities must be educated to trust, learn from and help one another and to respect the spoken and written languages, folkways and customs and religious beliefs of one another in a joint effort to safeguard the unity of the country and the unity of all the nationalities.”

¹⁷ “Gyalten School: A true success story”, Tibet Foundation, 9 June 2018. tibet-foundation.org/success-stories/gyalten-school-a-true-success-story.

¹⁸ “Shut-Down Threatened For Tibetan School in Sichuan”, Radio Free Asia, 25 August 2021. rfa.org/english/news/tibet/school-08252021191209.html.

¹⁹ School Pro Tibet. Most Protibet. protibet.cz/en/projects-abroad/school-protibet/.

²⁰ The Constitution of the People’s Republic of China, 4 December 1982. npic.gov.cn/englishnpic/constitution2019/201911/1f65146fb6104dd3a2793875d19b5b29.shtml.

As Chinese authorities introduce a plethora of policies on education and language, many provisions of the ‘regional autonomy law’ have become meaningless, even though these have never been fully implemented. For instance, the provision on using textbooks in minority languages (Article 37) can no longer be enforced because of the establishment in 2017 of a National Textbook Committee under the Ministry of Education, which is responsible for compiling and vetting all the textbooks nationally. The decades-old practice of compiling textbooks in Tibetan language by local administrative authorities, for example, has been discontinued unilaterally by the central government authorities.

Chinese central leaders appear to be making steady efforts to further downgrade the autonomous provisions

for minority nationalities. A proposal submitted in December 2021 by the State Council to the Legislative Affairs Commission of the National People’s Congress (NPC) Standing Committee called for a review of local educational regulations in minority areas that stipulate using minority language as medium of instruction. The proposal claims that the said regulations “failed to conform to the Constitution” and are not “conducive to promoting exchanges among ethnic groups.”²¹



Uniform national textbooks in Chinese, distributed in place of previous ‘Five Provinces and Region’ compiled Tibetan textbooks.

²¹ Cao Siqi. “Proposal For a Constitutional Review On Ethnic Education Regulations Submitted. No Harm To Freedom In Using Ethnic Languages”. Global Times, 23 December 2021. globaltimes.cn/page/202112/1243163.shtml.

IV. PERSECUTION OF WRITERS, SCHOLARS AND INTELLECTUALS

"Pondering generally on the contemporary situation of the Tibetans, we are going through the cataclysm of forced cultural integration, both intentionally and unintentionally. In this thick climate of cultural assimilation, the environment and the people, language and culture, traditional customs, and so forth are all subjected to acute destruction and decline. As a result, if we are to resist this historical situation, based on individual passion, talent, or ability, we must leave no stone unturned in gaining control over the reins of our future. There is nothing more important than that."

~ Go Sherab Gyatso²²

In December 2021, eminent Tibetan scholar Go Sherab Gyatso AKA 'Gosher' was sentenced to 10 years in prison on the charge of "inciting secession" at a secret trial in Lhasa (TAR).²³ Gosher's imprisonment was the culmination of a gloomy year marked by multiple accounts of arbitrary detentions involving Tibetan writers, scholars, and public intellectuals, all occurring in other Tibetan areas outside TAR.

The Chinese party-state considers the unvarnished views expressed by popular Tibetan writers, scholars and intellectuals as major hindrances to its forced cultural assimilation policy. Gosher had been forthright and vocal about his views of the damaging effects of Chinese policies on the individual as well as collective rights of the Tibetan people. In one of his online posts paying tribute to the late Tibetan writer and environmentalist Khawa Nyingchak who died in June 2015, Gosher laid bare Chinese government's environmental conservation policy on the Tibetan plateau:

"We hear this catchphrase of "environmental protection and conservation" almost like the mani mantra of our daily prayers. Despite all the mantra, I wonder why there are an increasing number of cases of environmental destruction and ecological disturbance across the plateau. In the midst of all the mantras and sloganised promotions of "environmental protection and conservation," our mountains and grasslands, our lakes and rivers, and our wildlife and forests are increasingly "illegally" demolished, defaced and decimated. When the hearts, eyes, and all parts of Mother Nature are sheared off in different regions of the Tibetan plateau, where are our "environmental protection laws"? Where did the Offices of Nature and Environmental Protection go? Where did the police and security personnel run away? No, they have not gone anywhere. When you observe it closely, it is the connivance of the local officials with wealthy businessmen engaged in the vicious activity of destroying the environment. As a result, even the most sacred lake of the Tibetan plateau (Tso-Ngonpo), the beautiful turquoise mirror smiling across the chest of the Plateau, is fraught with fishnets set "illegally" by greedy businessmen in collusion with local officials. The prevention of such illegal activities is not the responsibility of a writer who has nothing but a pen in his hand. It is the unavoidable responsibility of those Offices with elegant signboards hanging on their walls. Isn't it for that purpose and service we pay our taxes that feed and clothe them?"²⁴

²² "A Must-Know Person – Go Sherab Gyatso's Tribute to Dr Li Wenliang". High Peaks Pure Earth. 1 February 2022. highpeakspureearth.com/a-must-know-person-go-sherab-gyatso-s-tribute-to-dr-li-wenliang/.

²³ "Eminent Tibetan scholar Gō Sherab Gyatso sentenced to ten years in prison". Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy. 13 December 2021. tchrdd.org/eminent-tibetan-scholar-go-sherab-gyatso-sentenced-to-ten-years-in-prison/.

²⁴ "A Way to Remember – Tributes to the Late Khawa Nyingchak". High Peaks Pure Earth. 10 May 2022. highpeakspureearth.com/a-way-to-remember-tributes-to-the-late-khawa-nyingchak/.

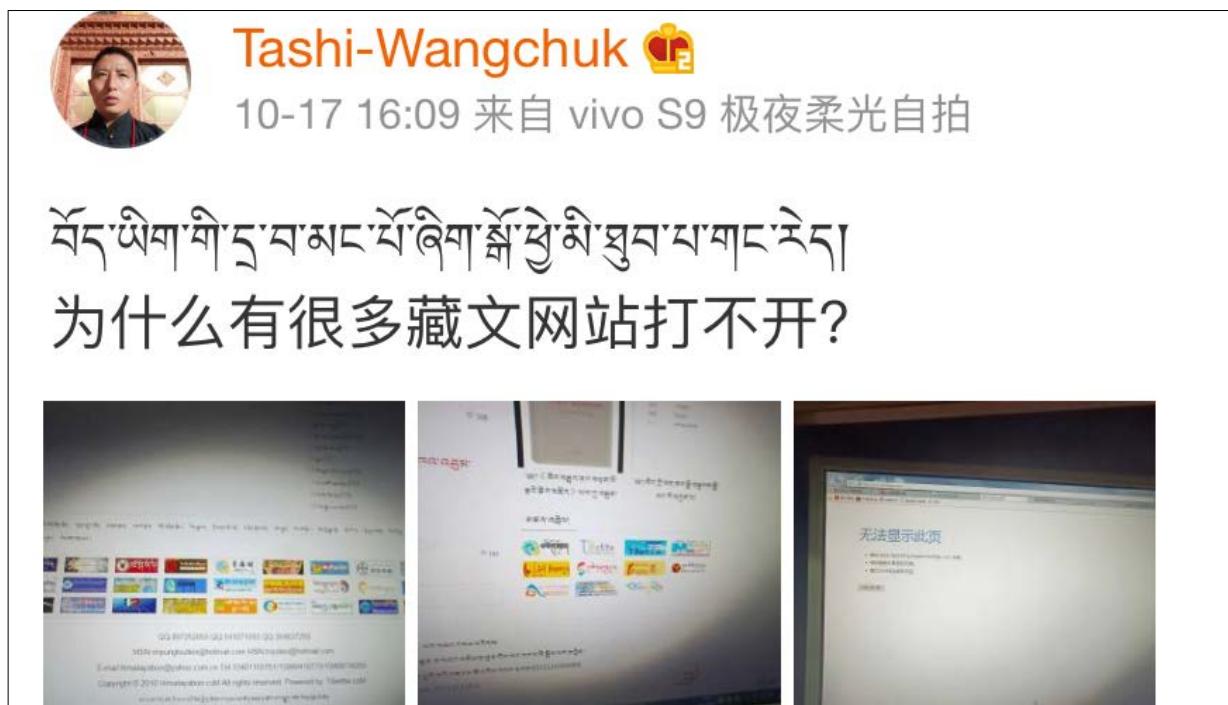
Like Gosher, Gendun Lhundup is an influential and courageous monk scholar. He had openly questioned Chinese policy on the ‘sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism’ at a public event in Rebkong County days before his detention in October 2020. Before that, he had been known for actively promoting the Tibetan language in his hometown of Rongwo in Malho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.²⁵

Silencing influential voices

This year, reports emerged of at least ten known Tibetans, including Gosher and writer Dhi Lhaden,²⁶ who had been sentenced to four to ten years’ prison terms following lengthy periods of detention in undisclosed locations. In most of these cases, information about the exact charges, sentencing dates, and current whereabouts remains unclear, raising fears for their security and well-being.

A common feature among those detained is their extensive scholarship on Tibetan language, culture, and literature that has captured the imagination of many young Tibetans. This appears to be the sole reason behind their detention because there is no instance of any of the ten detainees having violated any domestic laws.

The persecution of Tibetan writers, scholars, and intellectuals occurred alongside the shuttering of Tibetan language websites, such as the highly popular Emperor, administered by Rongwo Gendun Lhundup, and Bodh Du Ched Tawa, managed by another monk intellectual Rinchen Tsultrim. Other leading websites such as New Youth, Je Tsongkhapa, Wish-Fulfilling Snowflower, Sound of Dzachu’s Wave, Spiritual Friend, Sengdor, Tibetan Language, and Golok’s Website have also been closed down.



Tashi Wangchuk's post on Weibo asked "Why can't we access these Tibetan language websites?"

²⁵ “Further Details Emerge About Gendun Lhundup A Year After His Arrest”, Free Tibet, 26 January 2022, freetibet.org/latest/details-emerge-about-gendun-lhundup/.

²⁶ “Tibetan writer Dhi Lhaden sentenced to four years in prison”, Tibetan Centre For Human Rights and Democracy, 21 October 2021, tchrd.org/tibetan-writer-dhi-lhaden-sentenced-to-four-years-in-prison/.

Detention and sentencing



Rongwo Gendun Lhundup, 47, from Rebkong (Ch: Tongren) County, Malho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, was detained on 2 December 2020.²⁷ His family was informed on 27 September 2021 of his upcoming trial but his current status or whereabouts remain unknown.²⁸



Sabuchey, 33, from Sershul (Ch: Shiqu) County, Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, was arbitrarily detained on an unknown date in 2021. Current status or whereabouts unknown.³¹



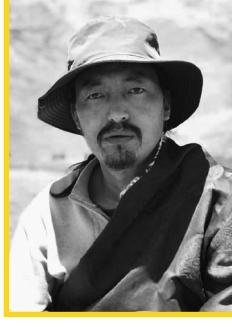
Rongwo Gangkar, 47, from Rebkong County, was arbitrarily detained on an unknown date in 2021. Current status and whereabouts remain unknown.²⁹



Gangbu Yudrum, monk and writer from Serthar (Ch: Seda) County, Kardze (Ch: Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, was detained on 22 March 2021. Previously arrested in 2008 on charges of participating in protests and sentenced to three years in prison. Again sentenced to two years in prison in 2012 and released in 2014.



Goyon, 33, from Drango (Ch: Luhuo) County, Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, was arbitrarily detained for the second time in 2021. Current status or whereabouts unknown. Previously detained in Chengdu on 5 June 2010 and subjected to custodial torture.³⁰



Gangkye Drupa Kyab, 41, writer and father of two from Serthar (Ch: Seda) County. Arbitrarily detained on 23 March 2021.³² Current status or whereabouts remain unknown. Previously arrested and sentenced on 15 February 2012 and released on 16 September 2016.³³ Detained again two days later for 17 days for holding His Holiness the Dalai Lama's portrait on his head at the welcome feast held to celebrate his release from prison.³⁴

²⁷ "Tibetan Writer Arrested in Qinghai, Whereabouts Unknown". Radio Free Asia, 4 December 2020, rfa.org/english/news/tibet/writer-12042020164144.html.

²⁸ "Further Details Emerge About Gendun Lhundup A Year After His Arrest". Free Tibet, 26 January 2022, freetibet.org/latest/details-emerge-about-gendun-lhundup/.

²⁹ "China must end cultural assimilation campaign and crackdown on Tibetan intellectuals and cultural leaders". Tibetan Centre For Human Rights and Democracy, 27 December 2021, tchrd.org/china-must-end-cultural-assimilation-campaign-and-crackdown-on-tibetan-intellectuals-and-cultural-leaders/.

³⁰ "Chinese government cracks down on intellectuals and cultural elite leaders in campaign to destroy Tibetan culture". Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, 27 December 2021, tchrd.org/china-must-end-cultural-assimilation-campaign-and-crackdown-on-tibetan-intellectuals-and-cultural-leaders/.

³¹ Ibid.

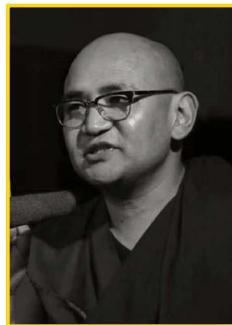
³² "Chinese Police Arrest Six Prominent Tibetans in Kardze". Radio Free Asia, 14 April 2021, rfa.org/english/news/tibet/arrest-04142021181927.html.

³³ "Tibetan writer and teacher Gangkye Drupa Kyab released before completion of prison term". Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, 20 September 2016, tchrd.org/tibetan-writer-and-teacher-gangkye-drupa-kyab-released-before-completion-of-prison-term/.

³⁴ Ibid



Senam, age unknown, Tibetan writer, educator and environmentalist from Serthar (Ch: Seda) County was detained on 2 April 2021. Previously detained in September 2020 for holding an ‘illegal’ meeting.³⁷ Current status and whereabouts unknown.



Go Sherab Gyatso, 46, monk and scholar from Kirti Monastery in Ngaba County, was detained on 26 October 2020 in Chengdu for “inciting secession” and sentenced to 10 years at a secret trial in November 2021.



Dhi Lhaden, 50, writer, intellectual and a former monk from (Ch: Baima) County, Golok (Ch: Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, sentenced to four years in prison in 2021 and detained in June 2019.³⁸



Rinchen Tsultrim, 31, a monk and writer from Nangshig Monastery, the largest Bon monastic institution in the world, in Barma (Ch: Waerma) Township, Ngaba (Ch: Aba) County, Ngaba Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Sentenced in March 2020 to four years and six months in prison for “expressing political views on his WeChat account and personal website.”³⁹ Arbitrarily detained and subjected to enforced disappearance on 26 July 2019.

V. SINICIZATION OF TIBETAN BUDDHISM

Tibetan monastic institutions and practitioners have faced intense restrictions on the right to freedom of religion and belief ever since Chinese president Xi Jinping emphasised ‘sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism’ as one of the top ten strategies for ‘governing Tibet in the new era’ at the high-level Seventh Tibet Work Forum in August 2020.⁴⁰

The party-state tightly controls all religions, especially Tibetan Buddhism, which is viewed not just as a threat to the one-party system but a major obstacle to the successful implementation of the ‘sinicization’ (Ch: zhongguohua) policy. Sinicization policy is a broad cache of practices designed to forcefully assimilate non-Han Chinese religions and other ancient belief systems

into the party’s version of traditional Chinese culture and national identity (Ch: zhonghua minzu).⁴¹ Regardless of how Chinese state propagandists define it, it is one of the party’s major policies “to sustain the legitimacy of its political control.”⁴²

Xi Jinping first called for the sinicization of all religions in the PRC at a meeting of the party’s United Front Work Department in 2015 and declared it an official policy at the National Conference on Religious Work in 2016.⁴³ In Tibet, repressive decrees to speed up the forced sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism have long been implemented, at least since 2011, in TAR and later in other Tibetan areas.⁴⁴

³⁵ “China: Tibetan monk jailed for online messages: Rinchen Tsultrim”, Amnesty International, 25 June 2021,[amnesty.org/en/documents/asa17/4339/2021/en/](https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa17/4339/2021/en/).

³⁶ “Tibetan writer Dhi Lhaden sentenced to four years in prison”, Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, 21 October 2021,www.tchrd.org/tibetan-writer-dhi-lhaden-sentenced-to-four-years-in-prison/.

³⁷ “Chinese Police Arrest Six Prominent Tibetans in Kardze”, Radio Free Asia, 14 April 2021,rfa.org/english/news/tibet/arrest-04142021181927.html.

³⁸ “China’s Seventh Tibet Work Forum August 29-30, 2020”, Centre for China Analysis & Strategy, 7 September 2020, ccasindia.org/chinas-7th-tibet-work.pdf.

³⁹ Huang, Weishan. “Chapter 3 The Sinicization of Buddhism and Its Competing Reinventions of Tradition”. *The Sinicization of Chinese Religions*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2021. doi.org/10.1163/9789004465183_005.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Madsen, Richard. “Introduction”. *The Sinicization of Chinese Religions*. Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2021. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004465183_002.



Seminar on the construction of national common language courses for Buddhist studies at Buddhist college in Qinghai Province. Photo: tibet.cn

Repressive Decrees

In September this year, Chinese authorities reinforced the party-state's ongoing campaign to promote the Putonghua curriculum for Tibetan Buddhist institutions by convening a seminar held at the Tibetan Language Department of Qinghai Buddhist University to review the Chinese textbooks for Tibetan Buddhist institutions.⁴³ as part of the 'sinicization' policy, all Buddhist colleges and relevant government agencies such as the United Front Work Department and Religious Affairs Bureau have been tasked to promote Putonghua curriculum. Tibetan experts have expressed concerns that such events will "pav[e] the way for the erasure of the Tibetan language" by forcing monks and nuns to study Buddhism in Putonghua.⁴⁴

In April, the "**Code of Conduct for Communist Party Members in the Tibet Autonomous Region for Not Believing in Religion**"⁴⁵ was circulated among party

members in the TAR. Bolstering long-existing restrictions on religious activities of Tibetan party members, the decree called on party members to not only refrain from observing religious practices in their private and public lives, but also 'advise' their family members and relatives to follow suit. This decree contains one of the most extensive and intrusive restrictions imposed on TAR party members regarding religious practice. Party members have been forbidden from wearing religious articles such as rosaries, engaging with religious information online, and making pilgrimages or holding religious rituals.

In September, similar restrictions were imposed on all former and current party members and cadres in Darlag County, Golok Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Engaging in religious rituals, such as going for kora (circumambulation of sacred structures) and using a

⁴² Religious Repression in Tibet: Special Report 2012, Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, 17 January 2013, tchrd.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/1930_1361275680_120759145-religious-repression-in-tibet-2012.pdf.

⁴³ "Seminar On The Construction Of National Common Language Courses For Buddhist Studies Was Held In The Buddhist College Of The Tibetan Language Department Of Qinghai Province", Buddhist College of Tibetan Language Department of Qinghai Province China Tibet Network, 15 October 2021, mtibet.cn/cn/news/zcdt/202110/f20211015_7078232.html.

⁴⁴ "Xi Jinping's War on Tibetan Buddhism", The Wall Street Journal, 18 November 2021, wsj.com/articles/xi-jinping-war-on-tibetan-buddhism-language-china-monks-education-unity-sixth-plenum-11637269866.

⁴⁵ "Code of conduct forbids religiosity by Tibetan CCP members" International Campaign for Tibet, 14 July 2021, savetibet.org/code-of-conduct-forbids-religiosity-by-tibetan-ccp-members/.

rosary, digital prayer beads, and other religious objects, was banned. The enforcement of the ‘code of conduct’ in Darlag was followed by local police conducting random home searches for photos of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and other religious articles.⁴⁶

In May, the ‘**Measures for the Administration of Religious Personnel**’ went into effect, imposing stricter controls over religious clergy who are obligated to “love the [Chinese] motherland, support the leadership of the Communist Party of China, support the socialist system, abide by the Constitution, laws, regulations and rules, practice the core socialist values, [and] safeguard national unity, ethnic unity, religious harmony and social stability” (Article 3).⁴⁷

Part of the burgeoning list of laws and regulations aimed at exercising complete control over religious sphere, the regulation, comprising seven chapters and 52 articles, mostly incorporates existing policies on sinicization of religions (Article 7) such as running mandatory political education campaigns and “resisting illegal religious activities and religious extremism, and resisting the infiltration of foreign forces using religion” (Article 6).

Religious personnel are forbidden from “using public welfare and charitable activities to preach, preaching in schools and other educational institutions other than religious institutions, and other acts of preaching in violation of state regulations (Article 12). At the same time, Article 35 calls for “the training of religious clerical personnel, strengthening political education, legal education, cultural education”, vague terms that allow party authorities to exercise total control over educational contents of religious institutions.

Article 15 of the regulation reasserts the sole authority of the Chinese party-state in determining the “inheritance and succession of Tibetan Buddhist Living Buddhas” in accordance with other repressive laws such as the ‘Regulations on Religious Affairs’ and ‘Administrative Measures for the Reincarnation of Tibetan Buddhist Living Buddhas’. Similar to the controversial Tibetan ‘Living Buddha’ database built in 2016, Chinese authorities will set up a public database updated with

the “basic information, rewards and punishments, and cancellation and record-keeping of religious personnel” (Article 33).

In December, yet another set of highly restrictive rules known as ‘**Measures for Administration of Internet Religious Information Services**’ was enacted by the State Administration on Religious Affairs, Cyberspace Administration of China, Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, Ministry of Public Security, and Ministry of State Security.⁴⁸ The enforcement of the new rules in March 2022 will “significantly restrict online activities such as religious training, publishing sermons, linking religious content, and broadcasting live or recorded religious events.”⁴⁹ All religious groups, religious schools, religious colleges/universities, monasteries and churches must first obtain the “Internet Religious Information Service Permit” (Article 6) as well as meet a set of conditions such as knowledge of official religious policies and regulations before publishing online religious information “that are conducive to social harmony and civilization, and guide religious people to be patriotic to the country and abide by the law” (Article 15).

The permit, valid for three years, imposes numerous restrictions on the religious content published online. Article 14 (1) bans contents that “[u]se religion to incite subversion of state power, oppose the leadership of the Communist Party of China, undermine the socialist system, national unity, ethnic unity and social stability, and promote extremism, terrorism, ethnic separatism and religious fanaticism.”⁵⁰ Other restricted contents such as “using religion to obstruct the implementation of the state’s judicial, educational, marriage, social management and other systems” [Article 14 (2)]; “engaging in illegal religious activities or providing convenience for illegal religious activities [Article 14 (7)]; and “inducing minors to believe in religion, or organising or forcing minors to participate in religious activities” [Article 14 (8)] can be used to violate religious freedom in Tibet.⁵¹

The regulation forbids all organisations and individuals from broadcasting or recording “religious ceremonies such as worshipping Buddha, burning incense,

⁴⁶ “China bans Tibetan Party members and cadres from engaging in religious activities in Golok”. Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, 29 September 2021, tchrd.org/china-bans-tibetan-party-members-and-cadres-from-engaging-in-religious-activities-in-golok/.

⁴⁷ Measures for the Administration of Religious Personnel, National Religious Affairs Administration, 9 February 2021, sara.gov.cn/bmgz/351322.jhtml.

⁴⁸ “Overseas organizations, individuals not allowed to operate online religious info services within the Chinese territory: regulations”, Global Times, 21 December 2021, globaltimes.cn/page/202112/1242971.shtml.

⁴⁹ “Preparing for the New Internet Religious Information Measures”, ChinaSource, 8 February 2022, chinasource.org/resource-library/chinese-church-voices/preparing-for-the-new-internet-religious-information-measures/.

⁵⁰ “Measures for the Administration of Internet Religious Information Services”, China Law Translate, 20 December 2021, chinallawtranslate.com/internet-religious-information/.

⁵¹ Ibid.

ordination ceremony, chanting, worshipping, mass, and baptism in the form of words, pictures, audio and video” (Article 17) or from establishing religious organisations, religious schools and religious activity sites, or develop believers online”(Article 18).

Seizure of Dalai Lama photos

Restrictions on the display of His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s photos and celebration of his birthday have intensified in recent years in Tibetan areas outside TAR, as witnessed again this year. Possession of photos of the Dalai Lama, the Tibetan spiritual leader and Nobel Peace laureate, have long been banned and punished with detention in TAR.

In March, Chinese authorities in Wonpo Township in Sershul County launched a campaign that criminalised the possession and display of the Dalai Lama’s photos, with immediate denial of financial support and other state welfare benefits.⁵² The campaign is aimed at replacing images of the Tibetan spiritual leader with that of the Chinese president Xi Jinping.⁵³

In late August, the campaign resulted in the detention of 60 known Tibetans, followed by the police conducting searches of Tibetan homes and personal phones for

more banned images in Wonpo.⁵⁴ By early September, the number of detainees had increased to 121.⁵⁵ Before being released from the Sershul County detention centre, the detainees were denied adequate nutrition and medical care in addition to undergoing forced political education sessions.

Earlier in July, two Tibetans, a man named Kunchok Tashi and a woman named Dzapo were detained in Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture after they were suspected of being part of a social media group whose members shared “images and information, and encouraged the reciting of Tibetan prayers on the birthday of His Holiness the Dalai Lama”.⁵⁶ Close to 30 unidentified local Tibetans were also detained for celebrating the Dalai Lama’s birthday, which falls on 6 July.

Reports also emerged in April of Chinese authorities announcing a ban on religious activities in all forms including wearing amulets or rosaries in schools across Sog (Ch: Suo) County, Nagchu Prefecture (TAR). Parents and other family members were ordered not to carry religious items or recite mantras while visiting their children in the schools.⁵⁷



“Schools are places to cultivate and produce socialist scholars, and should not be used as places in which to follow rituals and traditions” reads the blackboard of a classroom in Sog County, Nagchu City, TAR / Photo: RFA

⁵² “China in New Push Against Dalai Lama Photos in Kardze”, Radio Free Asia, 9 April 2021, rfa.org/english/news/tibet/photos-04092021131635.html.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ “60 Tibetans detained for keeping Dalai Lama photo after a sweeping crackdown in Dzachuka”, Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, 27 August 2021, tchrd.org/60-tibetans-detained-for-keeping-dalai-lama-photo-after-a-sweeping-crackdown-in-dzachuka/.

⁵⁵ “China detains 113 Tibetans in a week in expanding crackdown in Dzachuka”, Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, 1 September 2021, tchrd.org/china-detains-113-tibetans-in-a-week-in-expanding-crackdown-in-dzachuka/.

⁵⁶ “Two Tibetans Arrested For Celebrating Dalai Lama’s Birthday”, Radio Free Asia, 13 July 2021, rfa.org/english/news/tibet/birth-day-07132021190008.html.

⁵⁷ “No Religion in Tibetan Schools, China Tells Parents”, Radio Free Asia, 10 May 2021, rfa.org/english/news/tibet/schools-05102021144812.html.

Demolition and expulsion

In December, Chinese authorities destroyed two giant Buddha statues measuring 99 and 30 feet, respectively, within a week near Drango Namgyal Ling monastery (also known as Drango Monastery) in Drango County.⁵⁸ The Drango monastic school and a row of Buddhist prayer wheels had also been demolished earlier in November.⁵⁹ Affiliated to Drango Namgyal Ling Monastery, the school was established more than 20 years ago. At the time of demolition, It had about 100 students, more than 20 teaching and non-teaching staff, and 50 classrooms. The school prioritised teaching Tibetan cultural education alongside Tibetan, English, and Chinese languages. The school also offered coaching classes on traditional Tibetan subjects to lay students during winter breaks.



Drango Namgyal Ling Monastic School being demolished

In early August, the famous Kharmar Monastery (also known in Chinese as Hongcheng Temple or Yuling Pagoda Temple) in Xihe Town, Yongjing County, Linxia Hui Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu Province was forcibly closed. Monks and nuns were violently evicted.⁶⁰ Video footage leaked on social media showed monks sitting and weeping in front of the temple, holding a banner with the slogan: "Forcing monks to return to secular life violates national law!"⁶¹

Kharmar Monastery practises the Sakya school of Tibetan Buddhism and always had a Tibetan teacher as its abbot even though almost all its disciples were Chinese. The monastery was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution but was restored in 2011. The immediate cause for the monastery's closure was reportedly due to its refusal to give in to local authorities' pressure to share the monastery's income.⁶²

Detention and torture

- **Pelga**, the abbot and **Nyima**, the administrative head of Drango Monastery were arbitrarily detained in mid-October 2021, fifteen days ahead of the demolition of the religious structures, including the two Buddha statues and the monastic school in Drango County. Their current whereabouts remain unknown.
- **Tenzin Nyima** and **Tashi Dorje**, both monks from Drango Monastery, were detained on 1 January 2022. Both were held in a 're-education' facility and subjected to torture, with Tenzin Nyima suffering an injury to one eye.
- Seven Tibetans including **Tsering Samdup**, were detained on 4 January 2022 from Norpa village in Drango.
- A woman named **Lhamo Yangkyi** from Trolpa Village in Drango was detained in early January 2022.

⁵⁸ "The Chinese government destroys another Buddha statue in Tibet, and many Tibetans are arrested". Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, 12 January 2022. cn.tchrd.org/%e4%b8%ad%e5%9b%bd%e6%94%bf%e5%ba%9c%e5%9c%a8%e8%a5%bf%e8%97%8f%e5%8f%88%e6%af%81%e4%b8%80%e4%bd%9b%e5%83%8f%ef%bc%8c%e5%a4%9a%e5%90%8d%e8%97%8f%e4%ba%e8%a2%ab%e6%8d%95/

⁵⁹ "China heightens restrictions after demolishing giant Buddha statue and Buddhist school". Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, 30 December 2021. tchrd.org/china-heightens-restrictions-after-demolishing-giant-buddha-statue-and-buddhist-school/.

⁶⁰ "Tibetan Monastery ordered to be closed". Tibet Times, 3 August 2021. tibettimes.net/2021/08/03/214243/.

⁶¹ Gansu authorities seal the Tibetan Sakya monastery to "force monks to return to secular life". Bright Times, 21 August 2021. mingdemedia.org/raigouajiaoaimindecangchuansajapaidaochangbeifeng-gansudangjubisenghaiyu/.

⁶² Ibid.

- Three Tibetan pilgrims - **Asang, Dorta** and **Nortso** – were detained on an unknown date in January 2022 in Drango while on their way back to their hometown in Chamdo (TAR) after visiting the Larung Gar Buddhist Academy in Serthar County in Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. Police had found images of the demolished Buddha statues on their phones. They were handed over to the Drakyab County police in Chamdo.
- **Lobsang Choephel**, 34, was detained on an unknown date in October 2021 along with other unidentified monks from Kirti Monastery in Ngaba County.⁶³ No reason has been given for his latest detention. He was detained previously in Lhasa in 2008 and in Ngaba in 2011, resulting in four months of detention without trial.
- **Konmey**, 45, head disciplinarian of Trotsik Monastery, was detained around 20 July 2021 in Ngaba County.⁶⁴ The immediate cause of his detention was that he had “performed prayers on his WeChat group, but he only talked about the number of prayers he had accumulated”.⁶⁵

VI. CENSORSHIP AND SURVEILLANCE



Police in Lhasa keeping tabs on the city through surveillance technology monitoring system
Photo: tibet.cn

Chinese authorities have always exercised tight controls over all communications in Tibet through highly sophisticated censorship and surveillance tools to block local Tibetans from sharing information with the outside world. At the same time, Tibetans are banned from accessing information from sources other than those approved by the Chinese government.

⁶³ “Award-winning photographer among other Tibetan monks detained from Kirti Monastery in Ngaba”, Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, 25 October 2021, tchrd.org/lobsang-choephel-and-other-kirti-monks-detained/.

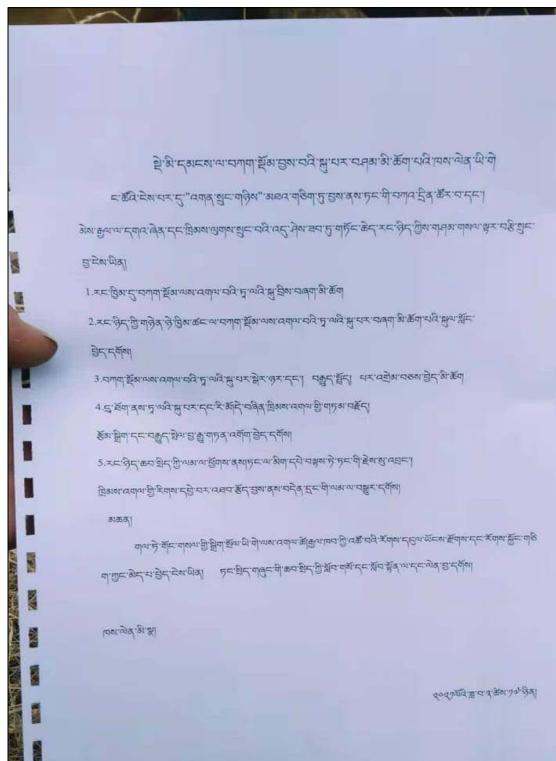
⁶⁴ “Tibetan monastic disciplinarian goes missing after arbitrary detention in Ngaba”, Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, 5 August 2021, tchrd.org/tibetan-monastic-disciplinarian-goes-missing-after-arbitrary-detention-in-ngaba/.

⁶⁵ “Tibetan Monk Held in Sichuan’s Ngaba County on Unknown Charges”, Radio Free Asia, 5 August 2021, rfa.org/english/news/tibet/monk-08052021144926.html.

In 2021, Chinese authorities primarily targeted social media and messaging applications widely used by local Tibetans, such as WeChat and Weibo. Mass raids were conducted in Tibetan homes in Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture and Nagchu Prefecture (TAR). Mobile phones were subjected to thorough searches for so-called illegal content such as photos of the Dalai Lama and other information that criticises Chinese government policies. Tibetans were also detained for sharing unapproved contents during anniversaries deemed sensitive by the Chinese authorities.

Forced to self-censor

In August, more than 100 Tibetans were detained during an extensive crackdown on the so-called illegal online contents in the Dzachuka area of Wonpo township in Sershul County.⁶⁶ Local Tibetans above the age of 17 were detained for political education and given stern warnings against keeping the Dalai Lama's photo or contacting outsiders.⁶⁷



The document that local Tibetans were made to sign in Wonpo Township in March 2021

Below is a translation of the five-point document that the villagers were made to sign:

Guarantee Letter by the villagers on prohibition of the display of banned portraits

We must resolutely safeguard “two responsibilities” and feel gratitude to the Party, love for the motherland and deepen our sense of adherence to law, and abide by the following:

1. Prohibited portraits of the Dalai Lama must not be kept in homes.
2. One must ensure that such prohibited portraits are not kept in homes of one’s relatives.
3. Prohibited portraits of the Dalai Lama must not be kept privately, shared or printed.
4. Prohibited portraits and paintings of the Dalai lama or other illegal contents must not be made or distributed over the web.
5. One must move towards the right political path by following the Party, identifying illegal activities, and striving on the path of truth.

If the undersigned is found engaging in any of the prohibited activities mentioned above, then all state welfare benefits, financial or otherwise from the government shall be revoked.

The undersigned must follow the political education guidelines of the Party.

Signed

⁶⁶ “Tibetans subjected to extrajudicial detention, random home inspections and seizure of cell phones under China’s social media purge in Dzachuka”, Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, 29 October 2021. tchrd.org/tibetans-subjected-to-extrajudicial-detention-random-home-inspections-and-seizure-of-cell-phones-under-chinas-social-media-purge-in-dzachuka/.

⁶⁷ “60 Tibetans detained for keeping Dalai Lama photo after a sweeping crackdown in Dzachuka”, Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, 27 August 2021. tchrd.org/60-tibetans-detained-for-keeping-dalai-lama-photo-after-a-sweeping-crackdown-in-dzachuka/.

⁶⁸ “China detains 113 Tibetans in a week in expanding crackdown in Dzachuka”, Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, 1 September 2021. tchrd.org/china-detains-113-tibetans-in-a-week-in-expanding-crackdown-in-dzachuka/.

About 40 monks above the age of 18 from Wonpo Monastery were rounded up for political education for many days. They were forced to sign a five-point document that banned the display of the Dalai Lama's photo and required expression of gratitude to the Chinese party-state.⁶⁸

This crackdown aggravated an already oppressive situation in Dzachuka following the November 2019 protests by local Tibetans and the custodial death of a 19-year-old monk named Tenzin Nyima, AKA Tamey, in January 2021.⁶⁹ Tamey's death sparked a widespread expression of solidarity among local Tibetans, who shared tributes to the young monk in their online posts. All of the online writings on Tamey have since been censored or deleted.

Videos and photos of the November 2019 protests had been widely shared outside Tibet, leading to tightened controls over social media activities and random searches of personal phones for contents deemed illegal by Chinese authorities.

Censoring dissent

On 9 August, police in Nagchu City detained and interrogated 110 Tibetans from Janglam township in connection with images shared online showing the preliminary preparations for the famous Nagchu Annual Horseracing Festival. The detainees were told that it was illegal to share images of the festival because such images also showed government officials, security forces, and major roads in the area. Those who had shared such images were released before each being fined 5000 yuan and made to report to the local police station every week. However, 30 detainees were still being held in detention.

The demolition of religious structures in Drango County was succeeded by severe restrictions on online communications resulting in the detention of about a dozen Tibetans accused of sharing "politically sensitive" photos online and contacting outsiders⁷⁰ The crackdown on social media in Drango was aimed at stopping information about the destruction of religious structures, including a school, from being shared with the outside world.

On 8 August, three Tibetans identified as Rinchen Dorje and Kalsang from Dhomda Town, Trindu County, Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture and Lhundup from Sershul County, Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture were detained⁷¹ for sharing pictures of the

70th founding anniversary celebration of Yushu prefecture on a 200-member online chat group that also included some Tibetans living outside Tibet. Contrary to glowing reports in the Chinese state media on the 70th founding anniversary of Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture,⁷² large numbers of police and security officials were deployed and police check posts erected to restrict the movement and conduct random searches of Tibetan travellers and their phones.⁷³



Police detaining local Tibetans in Janglam Township in Nagchu. City Photo: RFA

⁶⁸ "Young Tibetan monk dies from beatings in Chinese custody, six others sentenced in Dza Wonpo, Tibet". Tibet.net.23 January 2021.tibet.net/young-tibetan-monk-dies-from-beatings-in-chinese-custody-six-others-sentenced-in-dza-wonpo-tibet/.

⁶⁹ "China subjects Tibetan detainees to 're-education' and tightens restrictions on social media after destroying Buddha statues in Drango". 23 February 2022, tchrd.org/china-subjects-tibetan-detainees-to-re-education-and-tightens-restrictions-on-social-media-after-destroying-buddha-statues-in-drango/.

⁷⁰ "Three tibetans arrested in Kyegudo". Tibettimes. 9 August 2021. tibettimes.net/2021/08/09/214355/.

⁷² "China marks 70th anniversary of founding of Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture". Global Times. 5 August 2021. globaltimes.cn/page/202108/1230628.shtml.

⁷³ "China launches campaign to crack down on 'illegal' online activities and 'fake' news". Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy. 12 August 2021. tchrd.org/china-launches-campaign-to-crack-down-on-illegal-online-activities-and-fake-news/.

Silencing WeChat groups

On 24 August, **Yangrik** and **Gyuldrak**, both 19-year-old students at the Darlag County Middle School in Golok Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, were detained for commenting critically on the replacement of Tibetan language education by Chinese in a WeChat group.⁷⁴ Since September, Putonghua has been made the medium of education in all schools in the county, triggering widespread concerns among local Tibetans about the future of Tibetan language education.

On 12 December, **Loten**, 23, graduate student from Matoe (Ch: Maduo) County, Golok Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, was detained and taken to Xining City. He had reportedly expressed concerns in a WeChat group about the ongoing spread of Chinese medium education in the prefecture and its impact on the ability of future generations to learn Tibetan language. On 20 January 2022, Loten's family was notified about his location in Xining and told that they may deliver food and other necessities. They were also ordered to reimburse the authorities 200 yuan incurred in escorting him to Xining.⁷⁵

Three Tibetan teenagers - **Dadul**, **Sangye Tso**, and **Kansi** - were detained on 17 February for failing to register their WeChat group with the authorities in Domda township in Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.⁷⁶ Later on an unknown date, police informed Dadul's family about his broken legs, a result of the torture he suffered in detention, and ordered them to bring 40,000 yuan for his treatment in Xining city. Sangye Tso was later released in poor health. The status and condition of Kansi remained unknown since the teenagers' detention in Kyegudo. In mid-July, Kunchok Tashi, 40, a former political prisoner, and a woman named Dzapo were detained in Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture for sharing photos and videos of the Dalai Lama and encouraging others to recite prayers on his birthday in a WeChat group.⁷⁷

In August 2020, two Tibetan students named **Jampa Tsering** and **Dugkar Tsering** were convicted for "inciting separatism" for sharing photos and images of



Jampa Tsering, a Tibetan student from Gome at the Tsolho Intermediate Court
Photo: Rights Protection Network

a self-designed flag and logo of their football team on WeChat and QQ.⁷⁸ Jampa, sentenced to one year and six months, was held guilty for "publicly displaying the flag and logo of the football team and sharing the images on QQ", and for contacting Dugkar Tsering to obtain "illegal pictures" and design the flag and logo, which the court also equated with the crime of "undermining ethnic unity". The Chinese court also charged Jampa of "creating a bad political impact" by sharing on his WeChat account photos and videos of the team flag and logo displayed at the 6th "Holy Lake Cup" football match in Chabcha (Ch: Gonghe) County, Tsolho (Ch: Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.

⁷⁴ "Two Tibetan Students Detained for Opposing Chinese-Only Instruction in School", Radio Free Asia, 27 August 2021, rfa.org/english/news/tibet/students-08272021182339.html.

⁷⁵ "Arbitrary Detentions in Xiling", Tibet Times, 24 January 2022, tibettimes.net/2022/01/24/217499/?fbclid=IwAR2dS94-IPSWQrEBhFXe6UEkx-LErL-Faa2XzDpC5daPHDfUM4uZkgZL9_44.

⁷⁶ "Three Tibetan Teens Arrested. One Put in Hospital. Over Failure to Register Chat Group", Radio Free Asia, 3 March 2021, rfa.org/english/news/tibet/teens-03032021205631.html.

⁷⁷ "Two arrested over 86th birthday celebration of Dalai Lama in Kardze", Phayul, 15 July 2021, phayul.com/2021/07/15/45890/.

⁷⁸ "The so-called "illegal team flag and team emblem" was publicly displayed at a football match, and two Tibetan students in Qinghai and Hainan were punished by the authorities", Rights Protection Network, 23 February 2021, www2010.blogspot.com/2021/02/blog-post_52.html.

Retrospective imprisonment

Tashi Gyal, 50, a nomad from Ragya Town in Machen County, was retrospectively sentenced to one-year imprisonment on 13 October 2020 for allegedly “inciting separatism” five years ago.⁷⁹ Mr Gyal was detained on 16 May 2020 and later charged with downloading and sharing four sets of the Dalai Lama’s lectures in his group chat on 19 May, 12 October, and 14 October in 2014. On 1 January 2015, Mr Gyal shared photos of the Tibetan national flag and Lobsang Sangay, the then president of the Central Tibetan Administration,⁸⁰ in his group chat whose members liked and commented on the photos. The same year on 1 March, he posted a “New Year greeting video” that the authorities decided was related to “Tibetan independence”. Then on 2 November, he shared a message expressing hope for “the return of the 14th Dalai Lama to Tibet”, as well as images and videos of the Dalai Lama and Lobsang Sangay.⁸¹



Tashi Gyal during his trial

VII. ARBITRARY DETENTION AND TORTURE

Arbitrary detention and torture remain two of the most urgent human rights issues in Tibet. Chinese police and state security agents exercise discretionary powers in detaining and disappearing Tibetans merely on suspicion of committing national security crimes with no legal basis or due process. Tibetans suspected of committing perceived political crimes are mostly detained incommunicado in secret locations without the knowledge of their family members, leaving them vulnerable to torture and ill-treatment.

In 2021, reports emerged of Tibetan detainees dying in police custody due to excessive torture and maltreatment. Many were detained without charge or trial in extrajudicial detention facilities in the name of political education in different parts of Tibet. The continued practice of illegal ‘re-education’ facilities legitimises widespread concerns that the PRC’s claim of abolishing the dreaded “Re-education Through Labour” (RTL) in 2013 was never true.

Death in detention



Tenzin Nyima AKA Tamey, 19, died on 19 January 2021 due to excessive torture and maltreatment in police custody in Wonpo Township in Sershul County.⁸² A monk from the local Wonpo monastery, Tamey had been detained along with other monks in November 2019 for taking part in a peaceful protest calling for Tibetan independence.⁸³ He was briefly released in May 2020 but detained again on 11 August for sharing news of his detention online.

⁷⁹ “Tashijia, a herdsman in Guoluo, Qinghai, was retrospectively sentenced to 1 year in prison for posting on WeChat 5 years ago”, Rights Protection Network, 18 March 2021, wqw2010.blogspot.com/2021/03/51.html?m=1&fbclid=IwAR0onbQ4hUtUxov5Papjl1EhgIHg29AW1aVGw7JrBta09ZQRGIM9FcIGw.

⁸⁰ Official Website of the Central Tibetan Administration, tibet.net/.

⁸¹ “China imprisons Tibetan nomad for ‘illegal contents’ he had shared online five years ago”, Tibetan Centre For Human Rights and Democracy, 22 March 2021, tchrd.org/china-imprisons-tibetan-nomad-for-illegal-contents-he-had-shared-online-five-years-ago/.

⁸² “China: Tibetan Monk Dies from Beating in Custody”, Human Rights Watch, 21 January 2021, hrw.org/news/2021/01/21/china-tibet-an-monk-dies-beating-custody.

⁸³ “Chinese Authorities Still Holding Five Tibetan Monks Arrested in November”, Radio Free Asia, 6 January 2020, rfa.org/english/news/tibet/tibet-monks-still-detained-since-november-01062020170841.html.

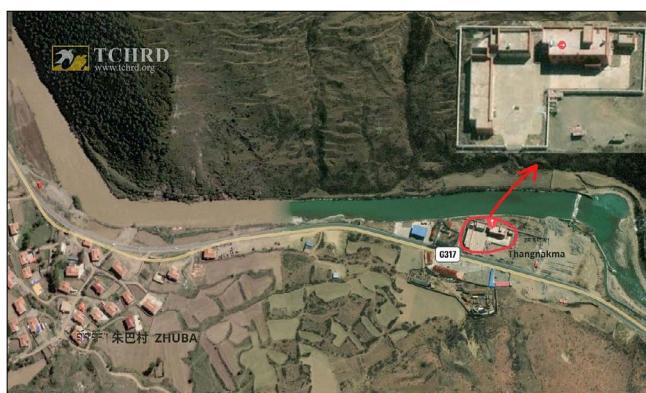
Tamey's health had deteriorated by early October, and his parents were asked to collect him from the prison. He was "unable to speak or move" and "suffering from serious injuries and an acute respiratory infection".⁸⁴ On 9 October, he was admitted to a hospital in Chengdu in critical condition for 10 days, according to a hospital report obtained by Human Rights Watch.⁸⁵ He later returned home, where he died shortly after.



On 6 February 2021, **Kunchok Jinpa**, a Tibetan political prisoner serving a 21-year prison term, died less than three months after being admitted to a hospital in Lhasa, TAR.⁸⁶ At the time of hospitalisation, he was paralyzed and suffering from brain haemorrhage. He had been detained on 8 November 2013 and sentenced in secret for "leaking state secrets", a common charge used to imprison Tibetans who share information about human rights violations with the outside world. He had been imprisoned at Chushur Prison near Lhasa before he was moved to the hospital in November 2020. His family learned about his condition on 29 January 2021.⁸⁷

Extrajudicial detention facility

In February 2022, TCHRD learned about yet another extrajudicial detention facility at Thangnakma near Dropa (Ch: Zhuba / 朱巴村) Village, about 5 km from Drango (Ch: Luhuo) County town. Satellite imagery and a photo of the so-called 're-education' facility showed that the façade was built to resemble a traditional Tibetan house or a temple.⁸⁸



Satellite image of Thangnakma "re-education" facility



Thangnakma "re-education" facility

⁸⁴ "China: Tibetan Monk Dies from Beating in Custody", Human Rights Watch, 21 January 2021, [hrw.org/news/2021/01/21/china-tibetan-monk-dies-beating-custody](https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/01/21/china-tibetan-monk-dies-beating-custody).

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ "China: Tibetan Tour Guide Dies from Prison Injuries", Human Rights Watch, 16 February 2021, [hrw.org/news/2021/02/16/china-tibetan-tour-guide-dies-prison-injuries](https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/02/16/china-tibetan-tour-guide-dies-prison-injuries).

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ "China subjects Tibetan detainees to 're-education' and tightens restrictions on social media after destroying Buddha statues in Drango", Tibetan Centre For Human Rights and Democracy, 23 February 2022, tchrd.org/china-subjects-tibetan-detainees-to-re-education-and-tightens-restrictions-on-social-media-after-destroying-buddha-statues-in-drango/.

⁸⁹ "Twelve known Tibetans missing after Drango crackdown", Tibetan Centre For Human Rights and Democracy, 26 March 2012, tchrd.org/updated-twelve-known-tibetans-missing-after-drango-crackdown/.

⁹⁰ "Second Buddha statue torn down and dozen Tibetans detained in Drango", Tibetan Centre For Human Rights and Democracy, 12 January 2022, tchrd.org/second-buddha-statue-torn-down-and-dozen-tibetans-detained-in-drango/.

⁹¹ "Tibetan monk's account reveals rampant use of torture and sexual abuse in China's 'political re-education' centres", Tibetan Centre For Human Rights and Democracy, 28 May 2018, tchrd.org/tibetan-monks-account-reveals-rampant-use-of-torture-and-sexual-abuse-in-chinas-political-re-education-centres/.

Thangnakma used to be a flat, barren land in early 2002 but, after the 2008 uprising, a police station was built there. Following protests by local Tibetans in 2012,⁸⁹ the police station was expanded into a ‘re-education’ facility to punish dissenters outside the domestic legal system.

Many Tibetans detained during the crackdown in January 2022 on suspicion of sharing information about the demolition of religious structures in Drango County were held in the Thangnakma ‘re-education’ facility.

In recent years there have been many cases of Tibetans detained in ‘re-education’ facilities where the conditions are deplorable, with inadequate diets, beatings, maltreatment and sexual abuse.⁹¹

Extrajudicial detention exists in various forms, such as being held in guest houses and hotel rooms, used by the police and security agents to detain Tibetans in secret locations and obtain forced confessions. On 17 February 2021, a Tibetan high school student named Sangye Tso was detained along with two others⁹² in Tridiu (Ch: Chenduo) County and taken to the Yushu City Detention Center. On 15 December, almost ten months into detention, the Yushu City police called her father asking him to collect his daughter from a hotel room in Kyegudo.⁹³ Her father found her alone in the hotel room in poor condition: she had lost weight and was unable to walk. She was later hospitalised but there have been no updates on her condition since then.



Sangye Tso / Photo: Exile Tibetan media

In 2013, Chinese authorities announced the abolition of the RTL (Ch: laojiao) system claiming that the “historical mission of laojiao has been completed” making the system “redundant”. This reasoning ignores the fundamental problems inherent in RTL, an illegal system of arbitrary detention, forced labor, and torture. While the abolition of the system itself showed that Chinese authorities recognized its illegality, the statement that it had become “redundant” gave ample evidence that the authorities were committed to preserving the abuses related to RTL in other forms.⁹⁵

⁹² “Three Tibetan Teens Arrested, One Put in Hospital, Over Failure to Register Chat Group”, Radio Free Asia, 3 March 2021, [rfa.org/english/news/tibet/teens_03032021205631.html](https://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/teens_03032021205631.html).

⁹³ “College Student Sangye Tso in critical condition after release”, Tibet Times, 18 December 2021, tibettimes.net/2021/12/18/216903/.

⁹⁴ “China abolishes reeducation through labor”, China Economic Net, 28 December 2013, en.ce.cn/National/govt/201312/28/t20131228_2012734.shtml.

⁹⁵ “Extrajudicial detention still a major issue despite RTL abolition”, Tibetan Centre For Human Rights and Democracy, 29 December 2013, tchrd.org/extrajudicial-detention-still-a-major-issue-despite-rtl-abolition/.

Torture testimony

Dorje Tashi, 48, is a Tibetan businessman and philanthropist currently serving life imprisonment in Chushur Prison near Lhasa after being detained on 10 July 2008. Evidence has emerged in recent years that his life imprisonment, along with deprivation of political rights for life for financial crimes, was politically motivated and grossly disproportionate.⁹⁶ His imprisonment was part of the systematic crackdown launched against influential and educated Tibetans in the aftermath of the 2008 uprising.⁹⁷



Dorje Tashi

Tashi's testimony about the torture and ill-treatment he suffered during his pretrial detention in 2008 provided further evidence that the security agents had surveilled him and recorded his phone conversations for years before his detention. The testimony translated by the International Campaign for Tibet details the various torture methods he was subjected to, such as sleep deprivation, poor diets, beatings with electric batons, prolonged stress positions, and denial of medical care.⁹⁸

Four months of brutal physical and psychological torture, including threats of harming his 70-year-old mother, failed to implicate Dorje Tashi in political crimes and he was eventually charged with 'loan fraud' – a pretext for imprisonment. Tashi had appealed against his unfair detention at least two times, one of which took the authorities six years to reject. He has exhausted all domestic remedies and the authorities have pressured his lawyers against representing him. Since December 2019, his wife, Sonam Choedon, has not been allowed to see him.

⁹⁶ "China: Release Tibetan businessman unjustly imprisoned for life and reverse discriminatory verdict". Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, 16 March 2020. tchrd.org/china-release-tibetan-businessman-unjustly-imprisoned-for-life-and-reverse-discriminatory-verdict/.

⁹⁷ "Dissenting Voices (2010): Targeting the Intellectuals Writers and Cultural Figures". Tibetan Centre For Human Rights and Democracy, 13 August 2010. tchrd.org/dissenting-voices-2010-targeting-the-intellectuals-writers-and-cultural-figures/.

⁹⁸ "Testimony reveals pre-trial torture of Tibetan businessman-philanthropist". International Campaign For Tibet, 16 August 2021. savetibet.org/testimony-reveals-pre-trial-torture-of-tibetan-businessman-philanthropist/.

An excerpt from the testimony reads as follows:

“Although I had not slept for more than 70 hours, I persevered in giving my answers courageously. Liu [lead interrogator] became angry. He dragged a wooden chair and asked me to stand on it. He handcuffed me at my back and tied me to the top of the interrogation cell’s iron bar. He then pulled the chair beneath my feet. My body weighing 95 kilograms was hung like an object. The hard iron handcuff pierced through my skin and flesh. The pain was excruciating. Tired from the days and nights of interrogation, I passed out.”

In the testimony, Tashi quoted Liu (刘), a plainclothes police officer from the central government’s Ministry of Public Security sent to “tame the Tibetans”:

“Dorje Tashi, Your case is political, and the Ministry of Public Security has taken charge of your case. You should tell us the truth and only the truth. We are neither from the ordinary public security bureau nor the state security bureau. We are public security officers with a special mandate and special powers. The National People’s Congress cannot interfere in our work as our mandate is specially empowered. To tell you in simple words, even if we kill or handicap you, we are not liable under the law. No leader in the Tibet autonomous region can protect you. We have been tapping your phone for many years now. We have all the documentary proof of your crime. You should cooperate with us fully. If you do not cooperate, we will take you to Beijing and make your life miserable.”



Incommunicado detention

Another routine practice of arbitrary detention employed by Chinese police and state security agents is the incommunicado detention of individuals for prolonged periods without disclosing their whereabouts. A large majority of cases involving Tibetans constitute enforced and involuntary disappearance, of which the practice of “Residential Surveillance at Designated Location” has been highlighted by UN human rights experts as particularly concerning.⁹⁹ Tibetan detainees are almost always held in secret locations without trial or access to due process. In September, family members of a monk named Lobsang Thinley from Ngaba County were informed that he had been sentenced to five years in prison and that he was serving the term at Mianyang Prison near Chengdu.¹⁰⁰ It was the first time the family had heard about Thinley since his detention on 1 July. The authorities provided no details about the purported trial or whether Thinley was allowed to hire legal representation of his choice. The family members were not even invited to observe the trial – if it ever took place. Thinley had been sentenced for “disseminating teachings by the Dalai Lama and sharing books about him”.¹⁰¹

Earlier in April, Tsering Dolma, 24, former political prisoner and mother of two from Serthar County, was detained and, since then, her status and whereabouts have remained unknown. She had been detained previously with her father during the 2008 uprising and although both of them were released, she was detained several times later that same year. Due to torture suffered during frequent detention, she sustained a fractured hip bone and suffers from severe seizure disorders.¹⁰²

VIII. CONCLUSION

The human rights situation in TAR and other Tibetan areas in Qinghai, Sichuan, and Gansu continued to deteriorate even as Chinese authorities claimed to uphold and fulfill its human rights obligations in the international arena. Despite pandemic lockdowns and extreme government censorship, numerous accounts of arbitrary detention and torture, religious repression, and forced language assimilation emerged. Arbitrary detention and torture were used to silence dissenting views as Tibetans continued to die in police custody or were imprisoned in extrajudicial detention facilities outside the protection of law. Tibetan writers, public intellectuals, and cultural leaders were silenced and imprisoned for criticising Chinese policies. Unprecedented controls on online communication ensured that Tibet remains an information black hole. On top of existing restrictions on freedom of religion and belief, new regulations restricted religious institutions, clergy, and general practitioners from fully practising their religion or following the traditional Buddhist educational system. These restrictions, like all other restrictions extended to the online space as Chinese authorities specifically targeted online chat groups and detained their founders incommunicado.

The PRC's 'sinicization' policy is a form of 'Han chauvinism', identified in the preamble of the Chinese constitution as a major enemy of ethnic unity. In the name of 'sinicization' policy, Chinese authorities are implementing a raft of policies and practices designed to undermine and marginalise Tibetan religion, culture, and language to promote the Chinese party-state's version of traditional Chinese culture and national identity.

⁹⁹ “China: UN experts gravely concerned by enforced disappearance of three human rights defenders”, 23 March 2020, United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2020/03/china-un-experts-gravely-concerned-enforced-disappearance-three-human-rights.

¹⁰⁰ “Tibetan monk given 5-year prison term for sharing teachings by Dalai Lama”. Radio Free Asia. 13 December 2021. rfa.org/english/news/tibet/prison-12132021163528.html.

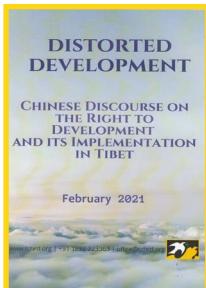
¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² “Tibetan writer Gangkye Drupa Kyab detained”. Tibet Times. 14 April 2021. tibettimes.net/2021/04/14/212039/.

IX. TCHRD ANNUAL REVIEW 2021

This section provides a summary of the activities carried out by TCHRD in 2021. Despite the persistence of Covid-19 pandemic in India and elsewhere in the world, TCHRD continued to monitor and document human rights abuses in Tibet; empower human rights defenders by organising awareness and educational programs in the exile Tibetan community; and launch advocacy actions to bring justice and accountability for human rights violations and political repression in Tibet.

Research and Publications



'Distorted Development: Chinese Discourse on the Right to Development and its Implementation in Tibet': Released in February 2021, the report highlights how Tibet offers important lessons on the limitations of the Chinese model of development. By examining China's development policies applied to Tibet, the report warns against the adoption and acceptance of China's development model globally and provides Tibetan perspective and approaches to development, and thus dismisses official Chinese rhetoric that portrays Tibetans as uninterested, or apathetic to developing themselves.¹⁰³



'Unsustainable Futures: China's Eco-compensation Policy on Tibetan Grassland': Released ahead of the 26th UN climate change conference (COP26), the report provides evidence that although China uses the Tibetan Plateau to offset its carbon footprints, it has not translated into eco-compensation for rural Tibetan landholders for their provisioning of ecosystem services.¹⁰⁴ China distorts the concept of payment for ecosystem services by dislocating Tibetan nomadic communities, and forcibly removing them off their lands. The report discusses how China's eco-compensation policy impacts human rights and sustainable development, and of nature's contribution to humanity, with global impacts and consequences.

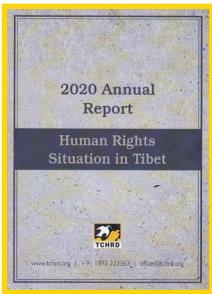


Tibetan Political Prisoners' Database: Launched on the Human Rights Day on 10 December, this updated database on Tibetan political prisoners, developed with technical support from the Geneva-based HURIDOCS, is a secure and user-friendly tool using the Uwazi software to more efficiently document human rights violations in Tibet.¹⁰⁵ The database was compiled after reviewing TCHRD's archive and cross-checking with other similar databases. At the time of writing this report, the database has 5566 known former and current political prisoners, which is a fraction of the actual number. The database is updated as and when new or old cases become known.

¹⁰³ "Distorted Development: Chinese Discourse on the Right to Development and its Implementation in Tibet", Tibetan Centre For Human Rights And Democracy, 24 February 2021, tchrd.org/distorted-development-new-report-critiques-chinese-model-of-development-in-tibet/.

¹⁰⁴ "Unsustainable Futures: China's Eco-compensation Policy on Tibetan Grassland", Tibetan Centre For Human Rights And Democracy, 11 October 2021, tchrd.org/new-report-warns-of-unsustainable-future-for-traditional-land-managers-under-chinas-eco-compensation-policy/.

¹⁰⁵ "Newly updated Tibetan political prisoners' database released on Human Rights Day 2021", Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, 10 December 2021, tchrd.org/newly-updated-tibetan-political-prisoners-database-released-on-human-rights-day-2021/.



'2020 Annual Report on Human Rights Situation in Tibet': Launched on 26 April, the report provides analysis of the most pressing human rights issues that occurred in 2020 in Tibet such as cases of arbitrary detention, extrajudicial killings, and torture committed in a wide-ranging and systematic manner, as well as mass surveillance policy, which remains a significant part of the PRC's 'stability maintenance' operations. Accounts of Tibetans prosecuted for exercising the right to freedom of expression and information are provided, as well as consistent attacks on their right to freedom of religion and belief as Chinese authorities speed up its 'sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism' policy.

Education and Awareness

Annual Human Rights Workshop: From 8 to 10 April, 23 Tibetans studying law, politics, journalism and sociology at different universities and colleges in India took part in the online workshop on 'International Human Rights Principles and Enforcement Mechanisms'.¹⁰⁶ The workshop provided a virtual space for young Tibetans to engage in and reflect upon various pressing issues of human rights confronted by Tibetans inside Tibet. Participants learned about the UN human rights system and its protection mechanisms and ways to protect and promote human rights in everyday life. Guest speakers at the interactive sessions were Mr Apar Gupta, executive director of the Internet Freedom Foundation and Ms Kirti Jayakumar, peace educator, security and peace practitioner, lawyer and writer.



Gender Sensitization Workshop: From February to April, a series of workshops on "Understanding Gender and Gender-Based Violence" was conducted for 168 Tibetans of all genders from ages 6 to 30.¹⁰⁷ Young Tibetans studying in schools, colleges and institutions around Dharamshala (India) such as the Tibetan Career Centre, Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts, Norbulingka Creche, – Sarah College for Higher Tibetan Studies and Tibetan Day School. The sessions were carried out in a participatory approach aimed at creating greater understanding of gender and gender-based violence. The topics discussed included gender, sex and sexuality, consent, power, unconscious bias, gender-based violence, restorative justice and bystander interventions.



¹⁰⁶ "Tibetan college students participate in TCHRD's online workshop on human rights". Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy. 16 April 2021. tchrd.org/tibetan-college-students-participate-in-tchrd-s-online-workshop-on-human-rights/.

¹⁰⁷ "TCHRD Conducts Series of Trainings on Gender-Based Violence". Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy. 30 April 2021. tchrd.org/tchrd-conducts-series-of-trainings-on-gender-based-violence-to-build-capacity-for-change-among-tibetan-youth/.



Building Capacity of Tibetan Journalists: A three-day workshop was held from 22 to 24 November in conjunction with the Association of Tibetan Journalists (ATJ) in Dharamshala to build the capacity of Tibetan journalists working in multiple languages in the exile Tibetan community. Around 30 participants including reporters and editors from Phayul, Tibet Times, Voice of Tibet, Voice of America, Radio Free Asia, Tibet.net, Tibet Express and Tibet Post International took part in the workshop. Topics covered include 'Fundamentals of Journalism,' 'Post-Truth Journalism,' 'Ethics of Investigative Journalism,' 'Truth-telling, Repression and Democracy,' and

'People, Power and Public Interest'. Participants discussed the unique challenges faced by exile Tibetan journalists in representing the community vs. reporting the community, striking a balance between public interest and privacy and the global phenomenon of extreme polarisation, among others. The workshop sessions were led by Mr Amitava Sanyal, writer, editor, and journalist and the award-winning journalist, editor, and curator Ms Shoma Chaudhury.

Advocacy and Campaigns

Video campaign to End Enforced Disappearance of Panchen Lama: To mark the 26th anniversary of the enforced disappearance of Tibet's Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, a video campaign featured powerful messages from prominent human rights researchers, journalists, and activists on China and Tibet calling upon the Chinese government to provide credible evidence on the Panchen Lama's whereabouts and to release him immediately. The campaign also served as a reminder to the Chinese government that advocacy actions for the Panchen Lama's release will continue until he is released and his human rights restored.



Engaging UN Human Rights Mechanisms: For more than two decades, TCHRD has actively engaged with the UN human rights mechanisms such as submitting reports to treaty bodies, participating in the human rights council sessions and Universal Periodic Review, as well as making case submissions to the Special Procedures division of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. This year, TCHRD submitted nine cases to various Working Groups and Special Rapporteurs after obtaining requisite consent from victims/survivors and their family members.





Lobbying and Briefings: In November and December, TCHRD launched the 'Decoding CCP' project at a press conference in New Delhi, where other promotional and lobbying activities related to the aforementioned project and the 'Unsustainable Futures' report were also conducted. During in-person meetings with relevant officers of the embassies of Canada, Japan, Taiwan, United States of America and Switzerland, TCHRD team submitted briefing papers on the significance of the 'Decoding CCP' project and the findings of the report on China's eco-compensation policies in Tibet. A series of briefing sessions, both virtual and physical, were held for major Indian

think tanks including the Vivekananda International Foundation, Takshashila Institute, Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, Gateway House, Foundation for Non-Violent Alternatives and Chennai Centre for Chinese Studies.

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