

Human Rights Situation in Tibet under the People's Republic of China - December 2016

The human rights situation in Tibet continues to remain grim and Tibetans in Tibet are denied of all basic rights that enshrined in the UN's Universal Declaration for Human Rights. Therefore, International Communities should find out possible avenues to bring China accountable for its illegal activities in Tibet. Among many human rights abuses in Tibet, below are some of the most important issues that need concerted effort from all sides.

1. Demolition of Larung Gar, the largest Buddhist Institute in Tibet

Chinese authorities have announced the destruction of thousands of monastic dwellings and expulsion of monks, nuns and lay practitioners at Serthar Larung Gar Buddhist Institute, the famed Tibetan Buddhist religious encampment located in Serthar (Ch: Seda) County in Kardze (Ch: Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, in eastern Tibet.

An eight-point document issued by the Chinese authorities spells out the step-by-step guide to demolish housing facilities of thousands of monks, nuns and lay practitioners and their expulsion, so as to reduce the number of residents to government-set ceiling of 5000. Citing the decisions taken at the Sixth Tibet Work Forum Conference and the Second National Work Conference on Religion, the document stated that the demolition order was aimed at proper regulation and management of Larung Gar Buddhist institute. Mainly prefecture-level departments under the direction of mostly Han Chinese officials would carry out the demolition order. In 2001, Chinese authorities implemented similar crackdown on Larung Gar by destroying thousands of monastic dwellings and expulsion of monastic and lay practitioners, some of whom died of shock or resorted to suicide, while some were rendered mentally unsound. Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok, the charismatic founder of Larung Gar Buddhist Institute later died under mysterious circumstances at a Chinese government hospital in Chengdu.

The recent four-page demolition order requires relevant departments including the management and administrative bodies of Larung Gar to reduce the number of residents to 5000 before 30 September 2017. The order further requires that the number of demolished dwellings be equal to the number of expelled monastic or lay practitioners, and to ensure that both numbers are strictly compared and accounted for. The document then calls for clear separation between monastic and lay practitioners and between the monastery and the institute; and implementation of social management and provision of social services within the Larung Gar community.

Three Tibetan Nun Commits Suicide at Buddhist Complex in China's Sichuan Province¹:

- a) **Rinzin Dolma²** hanged herself on July 20 because she could not bear to see the government-ordered demolition of the Larung Gar Buddhist Academy in Serthar (in Chinese, Seda) county in Ganzi (Kardze) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture.
- b) **Tsering Dolma³**, aged about 20, hanged herself on Aug. 17 "when she could no longer bear the pain of seeing the destruction of Larung Gar. She left behind a note expressing her distress at the demolition and complaining that the Chinese will not let them live in peace.

¹<http://tchrd.org/nuns-continue-suicide-protest-against-demolition-of-buddhist-institute/>

²<http://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/tibetan-nun-commits-suicide-at-buddhist-complex-in-chinas-sichuan-province-08082016130313.html>

³<http://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/suicides-08292016143614.html>

- c) A nun named **Semga**⁴, a native of Dowa village in Ngaba's Dzamthang (Rangtang) county, also recently killed herself, though details on how and when she died were not immediately available, while a third nun attempted suicide "though others intervened in time and saved her.

Larung Gar Monks, Nuns Forced to Return to Their Family Homes⁵: As Chinese work crews continue to demolish dwellings at Sichuan's Larung Gar Buddhist Academy, authorities are forcing many monks and nuns living at the academy back to their family homes in the neighboring Tibet Autonomous Region.

Larung Gar Evictees Forced to Sign Pledges Never to Return⁶: As Chinese authorities continue to work to reduce the size of Sichuan's Larung Gar Buddhist Academy, evicted monks and nuns are being forced before they leave to sign documents vowing never to come back.

Distressing scenes at Tibetan Buddhist Academy Larung Gar as monks and nuns compelled to leave⁷: Distressing scenes of monks and nuns being forced to leave Larung Gar Buddhist Institute in the last few days have emerged on footage shared on social media. Many monks and nuns have been compelled to sign a document stating that they would not return to the globally renowned religious centre in Serthar (Chinese Seda) eastern Tibet (in present-day Sichuan province), where thousands of Tibetan and Chinese monastics have studied over the years.

2. Rising Number of Self-immolation Protests in Tibet

Since 2009, 145 Tibetans have self-immolated in Tibet. 126 of them have died on the spot or shortly thereafter. The whereabouts and condition of the surviving self-immolators remain unknown. All the self-immolators have unanimously called for 'freedom in Tibet' and 'return of their spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama.' According to the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), the self-immolation protests in Tibet are directly related to China's effort to control religious practice and culture of Tibetans.

However, instead of addressing the underlying grievances of Tibetans, Chinese authorities have responded to these tragic self-immolation protests with more repressive policies and dismissing the self-immolation as an "act of terrorism" instigated by so called the "Dalai Clique." China's prosecutions of Tibetan self-immolation protests, which China thinks is a preventive measures to stop such protests, is actually compelling Tibetans to stage more of such protests. When people voiced their truth and grievances to the superiors, instead of attending to them, they were met with further suppression and arrests.

On December 8, 2016, Tashi Rabten⁸ (31) died after a self-immolation protest in Machu county of Tibet's Amdo region. He is the 145th Tibetan to self-immolate since 2009. All the self-immolators have called for freedom in Tibet and the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama back to Tibet. Tashi Rabten's wife and two daughters were taken into police custody and asked to sign a document declaring that Tashi Rabten set himself alight because of domestic problems and in

⁴<http://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/suicides-08292016143614.html>

⁵<http://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/return-08112016152026.html>

⁶<http://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/pledges-10312016140418.html>

⁷<https://www.savetibet.org/distressing-scenes-at-tibetan-buddhist-academy-larung-gar-as-monks-and-nuns-compelled-to-leave/>

⁸<http://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/burns-12082016120643.html>

<http://tchrd.org/tibetan-monk-likely-detained-in-connection-with-recent-self-immolation/>

protest against China's policies. In refusing to comply with the demand, they were subjected to beatings and torture in detention.

3. Enforced disappearance of the 11th Panchen Lama: Since the Panchen Lama case is one of the UN Working group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearance's publicly acknowledge cases, we would consistently need to press UN bodies and its expert groups to be able to verify the well-being and whereabouts of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his family. China has been sticking to an unverifiable response claiming he is doing well.

"The reincarnated child Panchen Lama you mentioned is being educated, living a normal life, growing up healthily and does not wish to be disturbed", September 2015, is China's latest response to a media. Available at <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/09/06/uk-china-tibet-idUKKCN0R605R20150906>

4. Political Prisoners in Tibet: There are large number of Tibetans who continue to be under China's captivity. China recently has denied existing of political prisoners, available at <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-11-19/china-tells-un-torture-review-has-no-political-prisoners-torture/6953580>

There are cases of more than 120 Tibetans who have been sentenced to imprisonment for more than 10 years since 2008. According to the Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) there are more than 2000 known cases of Tibetan political prisoners who are still in Chinese prison since 1992. In many cases, Tibetans are forced to undergo forced confession and following which they are charged and sentenced to imprisonment. <http://www.tchrd.org/annual-report-2015/>

Annexure one shows the detail list of Tibetan died due to torture in and outside prison since 2008

5. Environmental Protest in Tibet

On 5 June 2016, thousands of Tibetans living in eight villages within Amchok town, Sangchu County of Kanlho northeastern Tibet incorporated into China's Gansu Province are involved in a series of anti-mining protests that entered its sixth day. To deter these protests, Chinese security forces including the police, armed police and the military have launched a violent crackdown on peaceful anti-mining protesters. The protestors were beaten and detained.

The "Gong Ngon Lari" sacred mountain site has a special place in the history of local Tibetans who believe that the mountain is home to their protector deity. Years of open-pit gold mining at this sacred mountain has destroyed the natural environment, violated the belief system of local Tibetans and harmed social harmony of the local community. Using the 'divide and rule' tactic, Chinese authorities had bribed some villages and families living close to the mining site to disrupt Tibetan unity.

For years, local Tibetans have staged numerous peaceful protests including self-immolations and submitted petitions but local authorities failed to act on their requests to cease mining activities.

Similarly, over 100 women from Gachoe village in the Tibet Autonomous Region's Lhundrub (in Chinese, Linzhou) county protested in front of county offices on June 13. Tibetan farmers have been driven to desperation by authorities' confiscation of their land, with amounts paid in compensation far less than the amounts originally offered.

The Chinese authorities had promised to compensate the farmers at the rate of 200,000 yuan [U.S. \$30,352.] for each mu of land, but they have only been given about 20,000 yuan [U.S. \$3,035] per mu, adding that the farmers are now demanding at least 180,000 [U.S. \$27,316] yuan per mu.

Officials in an eastern county of China's Tibet Autonomous Region are confiscating land at a low price from local Tibetans for re-sale at a profit to Chinese developers, meanwhile threatening to jail all those who refuse to sell. The move by authorities in Riwoche (in Chinese, Leiwuqi) county in the TAR's Chamdo (Changdu) prefecture is being made with the excuse that the land belongs to local government and the ruling Chinese Communist Party. They offer compensation at a nominal rate of 25 yuan [\$ U.S. 3.74] per square meter of land, with anyone refusing to sign on these terms threatened with jail time, as per sources. The same piece of land could easily bring from 1,500 to 2,000 yuan [\$ U.S. 224.57 to 299.42] in the current market.

Land taken from Tibetans at the low rate is then sold to Chinese developers at a profit, the source said, adding that newly built apartments are being sold back at high prices to the Tibetans from whom the land was first taken.

In conclusion, we urge the government of Czech Republic to ask Chinese President Xi Jinping to:

- To end all its repressive policies and practices in Tibet that drive Tibetans into tragic act of self-immolation protests,
- To stop collective punishment on the villagers and family members of the self-immolators,
- To provide verifiable and genuine information on the whereabouts and well-being of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his family,
- To release all the political prisoners of Tibet,
- To implement all the recommendations made by the UN mandate holders and treaty bodies on all issues pertaining to Tibet and respect human rights of the Tibetan people.
- Early resumption of dialogue with the Representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama which is stalled since January 2010 for peaceful solution of the issue,
- Immediate cease of demolition work for world largest Buddhist academy Larung Gar in Tibet and stop forced eviction.