

Tibet Brief

A report of the International Campaign for Tibet



September 2011

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Monks imprisoned for 10-13 years following self-immolation by Kirti monk



Lobsang Tenzin



Losang Tsonдру



Lobsang Tenzin

Three monks at Kirti monastery have been imprisoned for between 10 and 13 years for "intentional homicide" following the death of a young monk called Phuntsog who set himself on fire earlier this year as an act of protest against the crackdown in Tibet. The sentencing appears to be purely political; there is no evidence that the three monks had any involvement in Phuntsog's solitary act of self-immolation or subsequent death, other than possibly seeking to protect him from further harm before he died in hospital. One of the monks sentenced, Losang Tsonдру, is the uncle of the monk who died.

On 30 August, Lobsang Tenzin, age 22, was sentenced to 13 years imprisonment, whereas his homonymous, known also as Nak Ten, was sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment.

The day before, 29 August, another Kirti monk, Losang Tsonдру (the uncle of the monk who set himself on fire), age 46, was sentenced to 11 years imprisonment.

All three sentences were reported in the Chinese state media, with Xinhua reporting that the three monks sentenced "plotted, instigated and assisted in the self-immolation of fellow monk Rigzin Phuntsog, causing his death" (Xinhua, August 31, 2011). Reports from Tibetans in exile in contact with people in the region indicated that due legal process was not followed in any of the three cases, with the Tibetans unable to choose their own lawyer and the whereabouts of all three prisoners being withheld from their families upon detention.

Ngaba (Ch: Aba) prefecture, Sichuan Province, has been the scene of numerous protests over the past several years against the Chinese government. Ngaba Kirti monastery, where the three monks were residents, is under tight control by security forces. The area is closed to foreign journalists. In June 2011, China rejected pressure from the United Nations Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances to disclose the fate and whereabouts of more than 300 monks from Kirti Monastery that were allegedly arrested and taken to unknown destinations in ten military trucks (see: <http://tinyurl.com/6g7dp8x>). ■

See also:

- ▶ ICT Report: <http://tinyurl.com/3ed2msy>



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New Chinese Communist Party Secretary for the TAR: Beijing Withdraws Hardliner Zhang Qingli



Zhang Qingli



Chen Quanguo

Party Secretary Zhang Qingli, known by Tibetans for his political extremism and continuous attacks against the Dalai Lama, has been replaced as Party Secretary of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) by Chen Quanguo, the former Governor and Deputy Party chief of Hebei Province. There was a “shift of power” between the two leaders as Zhang Qingli’s new post is as Party Secretary of Hebei. This new appointment will give Zhang an influential role in another sensitive religious issue as Hebei is home to about a quarter of China’s 8 million to 12 million Roman Catholics. He will have a special role in China’s relationship with the Vatican, which is in dispute with Beijing over control of church affairs, especially the appointment of bishops.

Unlike Zhang, who came to the TAR in 2006 after establishing his credentials as a hardliner in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, Chen has no experience in China’s “minority” areas or distinguishing career highlights to suggest a similarly zealous ideological bent. Chen’s appointment can be seen as a promotion because this post is often considered as a test for future leaders, as demonstrated by current Chinese President Hu Jintao who served as TAR Party Secretary from 1988 until 1992. However, some commentators speculate that Chen may only stay in office until 2012, when there will be a change in the Chinese leadership. The Chinese government is preparing for this shift of power to the fifth generation of leaders by working to polish its international public image. Distancing from Zhang Qingli’s hard policies in the TAR by appointing a new leader and suggesting a new moderate line to rule Tibet may be part of this shift. Chen Quanguo has an opportunity to set a more measured tone in the TAR, even if no policy shift is signaled by his appointment.

In a message conveyed on Twitter in Chinese, the well-known Tibetan writer Woesser made the wry comment: “Someone from Henan called Chen Quanguo replacing someone from Shandong called Zhang Qingli to come and rule the TAR. He was the Governor of Hebei before... It’s like a play where the main protagonists come and go, while Tibet is nothing more than their stage and Tibetans can do nothing but passively accept.” ■

See also:

- ▶ ICT report: <http://tinyurl.com/314kshe>
- ▶ Article by Kate Saunders: <http://tinyurl.com/3nrxr56>

China failed to get Tibetan refugees deported from Nepal

On 22 September 2011 Nepal’s Supreme Court ruled that 23 Tibetans held by the Department of Immigration should not be summarily returned to the People’s Republic of China. Earlier that day the group had been released to the care of the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR).

The 23 Tibetan refugees had been detained by Nepalese immigration authorities in Kathmandu since 11-13 September after they were arrested by police in border areas. Under normal procedures, the group would have been promptly handed over to the UNHCR for processing and onward transit to India. In this case, however, the Chinese Embassy intervened and demanded that the Tibetans be returned to Tibet.

The teenagers were planning to visit India and were arrested for not having valid permits to travel inside Nepal, according to the District Deputy Superintendent of Police, Birkha Bahadur Rawal. They informed the police that they had been walking for 17 days through Tibet before entering Nepal at Humla, at the far western point of the Nepal-China border. The “Gentlemen’s Agreement” between the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Nepal government provides for cooperation in the safe transit of Tibetans from the border regions of Nepal and onward to India. However, Tibetan refugees escaping into Nepal have faced deportation back to Chinese authorities on earlier occasions. ■

See also:

- ▶ ICT report: <http://tinyurl.com/6gocjwq>
- ▶ Times of India news: <http://tinyurl.com/6ypzjmc>
- ▶ VOA news: <http://tinyurl.com/6kc2lyd>
- ▶ Phayul news: <http://tinyurl.com/6g8adsq>



New Kashag formed: Kalon Tripa's nominated ministers approved by the Tibetan Parliament in-exile

On 16 September 2011, Kalon Tripa Lobsang Sangay introduced six nominees of his Kashag (Cabinet) to the Tibetan Parliament in-exile. This was the first day of the inaugural session of the 15th Tibetan Parliament in-exile and parliamentarians were called to confirm nominated Kalons (ministers). The members of the Tibetan Parliament unanimously endorsed all nominations of the new Kalons. On the same day, the six confirmed Kalons had to swear in before the Justice Commissioner at the Tibetan Supreme Justice Commission office.



Credit: Tibetonline.tv

Dongchung Ngodup:
appointed Kalon of
Department of Security

Tsering Dhundup:
appointed Kalon of
Department of Finance

Pema Chhinjor:
appointed Kalon of
Department of Religion
and Culture

Gyari Dolma:
appointed Kalon of
Department of Home

Dicki Chhoyang:
appointed Kalon
of Department of
Information and
International Relations

Tsering Wangchuk:
appointed Kalon of
Department of Health

**Kalon Tripa Lobsang
Sangay:**
will chair the
Department
of Education

From left: Kalon Dolma Gyari, Kalon Dongchung Ngodup, Kalon Tripa Dr Lobsang Sangay, Kalon Pema Chhinjor, Kalon Dicki Chhoyang and Kalon Tsering Wangchuk, during their visit to receive blessings at the Tsuglagkhang, main temple, in Dharamshala, on 16 September 2011. The six Kalons nominated by Kalon Tripa Dr Lobsang Sangay were unanimously approved by the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile during its opening session on 16 September 2011.

The six appointed members include four men and two women: Mr. Dongchung Ngodup, former Kalon of Department of Security, Mr. Tsering Dhundup, former Kalon of Department of Finance, Mr. Pema Chhinjor, former MP and former Kalon for Department of Security, Ms. Gyari Dolma, former deputy speaker of the Tibetan Parliament in-exile, Ms. Dicki Chhoyang, Member of the Tibetan Parliament in-exile from North America, and Mr. Tsering Wangchuk, a senior medical officer at Tsojhe Khangsar Charity Hospital, Bylakuppe, South India. ■

See also:

- ▶ The Tibet Post International: <http://tinyurl.com/66xojme>
- ▶ New Kalons' biographies: <http://tinyurl.com/69d7z8u>
- ▶ Bhuchung K.Tsering's Blog: <http://weblog.savetibet.org>

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Tibetan writer Woese receives Prince Claus Award for outstanding cultural achievement and influence

On 5 September 2011 the well-known essayist and blogger Woese, who lives in Beijing, has been awarded a Prince Claus Award by the Netherlands-based Prince Claus Fund for her outstanding achievements in the field of culture.



The Tibetan poet and essayist, Woese

The Prince Claus Awards are presented annually to individuals, groups and organizations in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean for their outstanding achievements in the field of culture and development and the positive effect of their work on their direct environment and on the wider cultural or social field. A press release by the Prince Claus Fund yesterday announcing the news, stated: "We are delighted to honour Woese whose writings offer a unique perspective on the complexity of the current situation in Tibet." (see: <http://www.prinsclausfonds.nl>).

The news of the award coincided with the 18th International Book Fair in Beijing, of which the Netherlands is host country. Tsering Jampa, Executive Director of the International Campaign for Tibet in Europe, said: "We are working together with International PEN in the Netherlands and Amnesty International in raising awareness about Tibetan writers in prison. The Prince Claus Award for Woese draws attention to their importance as they seek to peacefully articulate their concerns, and voice the sense of anguish, loss and dispossession due to the repression in Tibet today. We have urged Dutch writers at the Book Fair to hold these individuals in their thoughts and to speak about them whenever possible."

See also:

- ▶ ICT report: <http://tinyurl.com/66e52se>
- ▶ Prince Claus Fund's on Woese: <http://tinyurl.com/5vrlzx5>
- ▶ This number's reading suggestion (below): *Tibet's True Heart*, by Woese

Propaganda and Journalism in Tibet

In an article published on the Central Tibetan Administration's website, Mark Johnston, well-known Canadian documentary filmmaker and expert on minorities issues, gives an overview of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)'s control of information in Tibet through an intricate system that censors sensitive information and restricts the spread of dissident ideas, replacing them with propaganda in accordance with party ideology. The lack of transparency and the limited capacity for local and foreign journalists to access information on certain sensitive topics make it difficult to report for instance on human rights abuses and Tibetan issues.

Johnston considers different aspects of the CCP's propaganda on Tibet: internal propaganda in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), external propaganda on Tibet, journalism in the TAR and foreign journalism in the TAR. He comes to the conclusion that the CCP has many methods of control at its disposal that it uses to restrict the freedom of information. By controlling journalism, the CCP and the Chinese government are able to manipulate public discourse and control the spread of alternative political ideas. One of the main targets of this form of control is to eliminate dissenting opinions within the media, filling the news space with ideals that reflect the rigid dictates of the Party.

Particularly interesting is Johnston's analysis on foreign journalism in the TAR. Johnston explains how many foreign journalists are only allowed access to the TAR through structured tours or government organized press visits where they can be monitored. Normally, foreign correspondents based in Beijing are not allowed to visit the TAR. In addition, Tibetans who have been accused of speaking to foreign reporters were subject to detention and criminal persecution. ■

To read the full report:
<http://tinyurl.com/63soxa4>

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Political prisoners highlight: Tenzin Choedrak

There is no recent news about the status and health conditions of Tenzin Choedrak, alias Tenchoe, aged 23, arrested by the Chinese Public Security Bureau in 2009 in connection with the peaceful protests in Lhasa, capital of the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), in March 2008.

Tenchoe was sentenced to 15 years in jail for participating in riots, although external reports say there is no mention of participation in violence. The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) and the US Congressional Executive Commission on China (CECC) suggest that he received such a long sentence because his father is known to have participated in the Lhasa protests of 1987 before leaving for India, and also possibly because Tenzin Choedrak himself went to school in India for a number of years before returning to Tibet.

Since 2003, Tenzin Choedrak was working for the EU-China funded project Panam Integrated Rural Development Project (PIRDP) located in the Panam County of Shigatse Prefecture in the TAR. Tenzin Choedrak is currently serving his prison term in Chushur Prison, Lhasa (TAR). He is due to be released in 2024. ■



Tenzin Choedrak

See also:

- ▶ CTA's report: <http://tinyurl.com/6alz6we>
- ▶ TCHRD's report: <http://tinyurl.com/62jz415>

The European Parliament's Human Rights Subcommittee elected MEP Barbara Lochbihler as its new chairwoman.



Barbara Lochbihler,
Chairwoman-elect
of EP's DROI Subcommittee

On 15 September 2011 the European Parliament's Human Rights Subcommittee (DROI) appointed German MEP Barbara Lochbihler (Greens/EFA) as its new chairwoman, replacing Finnish Green MEP Heidi Hautala, who resigned in June to serve as Finland's Minister of Development. Ms. Lochbihler has an outstanding background working in the field of human rights and was Amnesty International's Secretary General in Germany before being elected to the European Parliament. She has supported the adoption of EP resolutions on Tibet and ICT appreciate her commitment towards human rights issues, also with regard to the People's Republic of China and Tibet, especially reflected in her capacity as former Secretary General of Amnesty International Germany. ■

This number's reading suggestion

Tibet's True Heart

By Woesser

Woesser was born in Lhasa, but grew up speaking Chinese after her father, who served in the People's Liberation Army, was transferred to a Tibetan area in Sichuan Province. It was only when she moved back to Lhasa, where she worked as an editor for the Tibetan literary magazine, that she began to discover the reality of Tibet's past and to learn about Tibetan Buddhism. Here, she began to document the effects of religious repression, massive immigration of Chinese and unbalanced economic development. In 2004, after her book Notes on Tibet was banned, she was informed that all her working hours would be devoted to political re-education. Woesser has published almost daily updates and comments online since March 2008, when an overwhelmingly peaceful uprising across the Tibetan plateau transformed the political landscape. At the height of the protests, more than 3 million internet users visited Woesser's blog, and her daily updates were translated into numerous languages.

Robert Barnett, Director of the Modern Tibetan Studies Program at Columbia University, described Tibet's True Heart as a collection of poems (translated by A. E. Clark) that allows outsiders for the first time to hear a Tibetan voice speaking eloquently from inside Tibet about such forbidden subjects as imprisonment, injustice, and Tibetan history, as well as about life, love, memory, faith, and loss. ■

See also ▶ <http://tinyurl.com/42wjss4>

Upcoming Events

- ▶ 26 September 2011: "When China Rules the World", Lunchtime Lecture organized by Madariaga – College of Europe Foundation
- ▶ 28-29 September 2011: "Law and Justice: China's Practices in a Global Context", conference organized by The European China Law Studies Association, Paris (France)
- ▶ 19 October 2011: European Parliament's EPP Group Hearing on Totalitarian Regimes (Brussels)
- ▶ 30 October to 6 November 2011: His Holiness the Dalai Lama to give teachings in Japan