

Tibet Brief

A report of the International Campaign for Tibet



November 2011

Self-immolations continue in Tibet

They sacrificed their lives for Tibet



ལོབ་སངས་ཕུང་སྐོར་གྱི་མཚན་ལྷན་པོ་ལྷོང་ཕུང་སྐོར་གྱི་མཚན་ལྷན་པོ་
Lobsang Phuntsok (age 20)



མཚན་ལྷན་པོ་ལྷོང་ཕུང་སྐོར་གྱི་མཚན་ལྷན་པོ་
Tsewang Norbu (age 29)



མཚན་ལྷན་པོ་ལྷོང་ཕུང་སྐོར་གྱི་མཚན་ལྷན་པོ་
Lobsang Kelsang (age 18)



མཚན་ལྷན་པོ་ལྷོང་ཕུང་སྐོར་གྱི་མཚན་ལྷན་པོ་
Lobsang Kunchok (age 19)



མཚན་ལྷན་པོ་ལྷོང་ཕུང་སྐོར་གྱི་མཚན་ལྷན་པོ་
Kelsang Wangchuk (age 17)



མཚན་ལྷན་པོ་ལྷོང་ཕུང་སྐོར་གྱི་མཚན་ལྷན་པོ་
Khayang (age 18)



མཚན་ལྷན་པོ་ལྷོང་ཕུང་སྐོར་གྱི་མཚན་ལྷན་པོ་
Choephel (age 19)



མཚན་ལྷན་པོ་ལྷོང་ཕུང་སྐོར་གྱི་མཚན་ལྷན་པོ་
Norbu Damdul (age 19)

The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) has been reporting on the tense situation at Ngaba and particularly in the environs of Kirti monastery since the 16 March 2011 self-immolation by a Tibetan monk named Phuntsog. The Chinese authorities have since imposed a lockdown on the monastery and Chinese police and government authorities have reacted severely to the self-immolation, taking hundreds of monks into custody for so-called "legal education" (most of whom remain disappeared), killing two elderly Tibetans attempting to protect the monks, at times locking-down and occupying the monastery, installing police surveillance, and giving long prison sentences to monks allegedly connected to the monk who self-immolated.

There have been eleven cases of self-immolations in Tibet in 2011, twelve since February 2009. On 26 September 2011, Lobsang Kelsang and Lobsang Kunchok, both believed to be approximately 18-years old, set fire to themselves while shouting "Long live His Holiness the Dalai Lama," in a protest held in Ngaba county town. Also in Ngaba, on 3rd October, 17-year old monk Kelsang

Wangchuk immolated himself carrying a photo of the Dalai Lama while shouting slogans against the Chinese government along the main street of the town. Finally, on 7th October 2011 two former monks from Kirti again set fire to themselves in Ngaba county town and died. The two Tibetan teenagers, Choephel, age 19, and Kayang, age 18, staged their protest in the morning on the main street of the town.

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The two young men clasped their hands together and set fire to themselves before security personnel extinguished the flames and took the two to the county's government-run hospital, according to exile Tibetan sources. Likewise, in nearby Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province, a 29-year old monk named Tsewang Norbu died on 15 August 2011 after drinking petrol and setting fire to himself while calling for freedom and the return of the Dalai Lama to Tibet. Again, on 15th October a former Kirti monk, Norbu Damdul, 19-year old, set fire to himself in a protest on the main street in Ngaba just before noon. He called for the return of the Dalai Lama to Tibet. Norbu Damdul's current whereabouts and well-being are unknown. On 17

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October a nun from Ngaba Mamae Dechen Choekorling Nunnery, the largest nunnery in Amdo Ngaba, set herself on fire while shouting slogans such as "We want the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Tibet" and "We want religious freedom in Tibet". Tenzin Wangmo, 20-year old, was the first female to commit self-immolation and die. On 25th October, Dawa Tsering, 38, became the 11th Tibetan in 2011 to self-immolate as a form of political protest against the Chinese rule in Kardze Monastery in Eastern Tibet. His current condition and whereabouts are not known. On 3 November, another nun, Palden Choetso, from Tawu Nunnery in Tawu county, Kardze prefecture, Sichuan province, committed self-immolation.

The United States and Germany have released public statements on the self-immolations expressing concern over their rising number since March 2011 and

asked China to address counterproductive policies in Tibetan areas that have created tensions. Unfortunately, a comprehensive EU public statement is still missing. Likewise, many members of parliaments in Italy, Germany, UK, Australia, and different members of the European Parliament raised parliamentary questions and motions to their respective governments and institutions seeking further information on the situation in Tibet following the self-immolations and calling on their leaders to engage in dialogue with the Chinese authorities on this issue.

In a press release in response to the German public statement on self-immolations, Mr. Kelsang Gyaltzen, Special Envoy of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Europe, clarified that: "The Dalai Lama is deeply shocked and worried about the recent cases of self-immolations in

Tibet. He continuously and unambiguously has made his position clear on such protest actions that can lead to physical harm to oneself or others. In the past, on occasion of protests of Tibetans in exile against the Chinese repressive policies, such as 'hunger strikes to death', he has continuously urged and asked the Tibetans to refrain from such desperate acts and to stop them." (<http://www.tibet-envoy.eu/content/?p=550>)

The International Campaign for Tibet has compiled a detailed fact-sheet with information about self-immolations: <http://tinyurl.com/3zaoerv> ■

See also:

- ▶ Bhuchung K.Tsering's Blog: <http://weblog.savetibet.org>
- ▶ ENOUGH CAMPAIGN: Sign the pledge "Stand up For Tibet": <http://standupfortibet.org>

The European Parliament urges China to respect religious rights in Tibet

On Thursday 27th October 2011, the European Parliament discussed the situation of human rights in Tibet at its Strasbourg Plenary session, in particular self-immolation by nine monks and a nun that have occurred in Tibet since March 2011. The Plenary voted and adopted an urgent human rights resolution that condemns the continued Chinese crackdown on Tibetan monasteries (see: <http://tinyurl.com/67dx5gg>).

MEPs condemned the crackdown on Tibetan Buddhist monasteries in the Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture in

Sichuan province, and in other parts of the Tibetan plateau, including brutal security raids, arbitrary detention of monks, and a permanent police presence inside the monasteries. In a press release, Thomas Mann MEP, Chairman of the European Parliament's cross-party Intergroup on Tibet, said: "The situation in the Kirti monastery is alarming. Nine monks and one nun have seen no other way in their desperation but to resort to self-immolation. They wanted to make sure that we look at what is happening."

Vincent Metten, EU Policy Director for International Campaign for Tibet in Brussels says: "We applaud the European Parliament for this initiative, which reflects once again the serious concerns that citizens in Europe have about the situation in Tibet and about the desperation of Tibetan monks and a nun who decided to commit this extreme act of protest and desperation." He adds: "The resolution addresses recommendations towards other EU bodies in particular on the need to adopt an EU public statement on this issue, which unfortunately is still missing so far. We hope that these messages will be heard both in Brussels and in Beijing."

It is the second resolution adopted by the European Parliament this year on the issue of Tibet (in April 2011 it passed a resolution on the ban of the elections for the Tibetan government in exile in Nepal, <http://tinyurl.com/6x5lr7t>). This time the European Parliament calls on the Chinese authorities to respect the rights of Tibetans in all Chinese provinces and to take proactive steps to resolve the underlying grievances of the Tibetan population. The resolution states that the Chinese authorities should cease promoting policies that threaten the Tibetan language, culture, religion, heritage and environment, in contravention of the Chinese constitution and the Chinese law granting autonomy to ethnic minorities.

Furthermore, the Parliament called on the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, to raise human rights issues at the next EU-China Summit, and urged the presidents of the European Commission and European Council to press China to protect Tibet's unique religious, cultural and linguistic identity in their official speeches at the summit, should this issue not be on the agenda. ■



Statement on the self-immolations by the 17th Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje, 9th November 2011

Since March this year 11 brave Tibetans have set themselves on fire while calling for freedom in Tibet and the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to his homeland. These desperate acts, carried out by people with pure motivation, are a cry against the injustice and repression under which they live. The situation is unbearably difficult, but in difficult situations we need greater courage and determination.



The 17th Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje

Each report of self-immolation from Tibet has filled my heart with pain. Most of those who have died have been very young. They had a long future ahead of them, an opportunity to contribute in ways that they have now foregone. In Buddhist teaching life is precious. To achieve anything worthwhile we need to preserve our lives. We Tibetans are few in number, so every Tibetan life is of value to the cause of Tibet. Although the situation is difficult, we need to live long and stay strong without losing sight of our long term goals.

As His Holiness the Dalai Lama has said, the Chinese leadership should face up to

the real source of these tragic incidents. Such drastic acts have their origin in the desperate circumstances in which Tibetans find themselves living. A ruthless response will only make things worse. Where there is fear, there can be no trust.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has stressed that the use of force is counter-productive; repressive measures can never bring about unity and stability. I agree with him that the Chinese leadership needs seriously to review its policies towards Tibetans and other minorities. I appeal to right-thinking, freedom-loving people throughout the world to join us in deploring the repression unleashed in the monasteries in Tibet, particularly in the Tibetan region of Sichuan. At the same time I appeal to the Chinese leaders to heed Tibetans' legitimate demands and to enter into meaningful dialogue with them instead of brutally trying to achieve their silence.

Because the Tibetan issue involves truth and justice, people are not afraid to give up their lives, but I request the people of Tibet to preserve their lives and find other, constructive ways to work for the cause of Tibet. It is my heartfelt prayer that the monks and nuns, indeed all the Tibetan people, may live long, free from fear, in peace and happiness. ■

Ogyen Trinley Dorje
17th Gyalwang Karmapa

UN experts warn of severe human rights restrictions on Tibetan Buddhist monasteries

On 1 November 2011, a group of United Nations independent experts voiced grave concern over the heavy security measures, in and around the area of the Tibetan Buddhist Kirti monastery and other monasteries in Ngaba (Ch: Aba) County. The UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Mr. Heiner Bielefeldt, said that intimidation of the lay and monastic community must be avoided, and the right of members of the monastic community, and the wider community to freely practice their religion, had to be fully respected and guaranteed by the Chinese Government. Similarly, the Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Mr. Maina Kiai, warned that measures put in place by the Chinese government seriously impeded the exercise of the right to association of members of the monastic community. Finally, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression, Mr. Frank La Rue, added that there was deep concern about allegations of restrictions to Internet access and mobile messaging services within Aba County, as well as journalists' lack of access to the region. He explained that rather than taking such measures, the Chinese Government instead had to listen to and address the legitimate grievances of the monastic community.

Their voices were echoed by the Chair of the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, Mr. Jeremy Sarkin, who expressed concern that a proposed revision to the Chinese Criminal Procedure Law will legalise enforced disappearances in the country. In addition, the Chair-Rapporteur of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, Mr. El Hadji Malick Sow, warned that no individual could be arrested on the ground of peacefully exercising the rights and freedoms guaranteed under international human rights law. Finally, the Independent

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Expert on Minority issues, Ms. Rita Izsák, called on the Chinese authorities to fully respect and uphold the rights of minorities including their rights to freely practice their religion and culture. ■

See also:

- ▶ UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights: <http://tinyurl.com/6ew3gvp>

Political prisoners highlight: Losang Tenzin, Nak Ten and Losang Tsonдру

Kirti monk Losang Tenzin, age 22, was sentenced to 13 years imprisonment, and a Kirti monk also called Losang Tenzin (known too as Nak Ten) was sentenced to 10 years in prison by the Barkham (Chinese: Ma'erkang) County People's Court, Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan province on 30 August 2011. On 29 August 2011, 46-year old Kirti monk Losang Tsonдру (named in the state media as Drongдру), who was detained on 12 April, was sentenced to 11 years imprisonment by the same court. All three sentences were reported in the Chinese state media, with Xinhua reporting that the monks sentenced "plotted, instigated and assisted in the self-immolation of fellow monk Rigzin Phuntsog (the monk who self-immolated in March 2011), causing his death" (Xinhua, August 31, 2011). The same article stated: "Drongдру was given the sentence because he hid the injured monk and prevented emergency treatment, causing delayed treatment and the subsequent death for his disciple and nephew, according to the verdict."

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. ■

See also:

- ▶ U.S. State Department Press Briefing: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2011/08/171224.htm>

The Dalai Lama releases a statement on the issue of his reincarnation

On 24th September 2011, the Dalai Lama made an important statement on the evolution of the Dalai Lama institution and the reincarnation system.



His Holiness's statement on the issue of his reincarnation was released as part of the 11th Biannual Conference of Tibetan religious leaders on September 24, 2011 in Dharamsala, India.

The Dalai Lama outlined his decisive role in the recognition of the next Dalai Lama. The Chinese government promptly reacted, issuing a statement on 26th September that only the government of the People's Republic of China has the authority to recognize the next Dalai Lama. In general, recognition of reincarnation is a spiritual process in which temporal leadership has had, at best, only a marginal role. Yet, due to the current crisis in Tibet, the recent statement issued by the 14th Dalai Lama has to be looked at from a broader context such as the future of Tibetan Buddhism and the role of the Dalai Lama in it.

The Dalai Lama made it clear that "If it is decided that the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama should continue and there is a need for the Fifteenth Dalai Lama to be recognized, responsibility for doing so will primarily rest on the concerned officers of the Dalai Lama's Gaden Phodrang Trust." The Gaden Phodrang Trust is a reference to the formalization of the office that is currently the "Office of H.H. the Dalai Lama." What is relevant about this statement is that the Dalai Lama put forward the idea that the institution of the Dalai Lama could come to an end, if there are no more the conditions for its existence. The 14th Dalai Lama is thus preparing the path for a revolutionary discussion about one of the fundamental institutions of the Tibetan Buddhism.

However, the statement categorically says: "Bear in mind that, apart from the reincarnation recognized through such legitimate methods, no recognition or acceptance should be given to a candidate chosen for political ends by anyone, including those in the People's Republic of China." China needs to understand that the recognition of reincarnation in Tibetan Buddhism is different from selecting any kind of political role or even an abbot for a Buddhist monastery. Although China has rejected this statement as an abuse of "historical conventions as well as laws and regulations", actually there are no known Tibetan Buddhist laws or regulations about succession system. Tibetan Buddhist tradition has always relied on the flexibility of lamas to adapt customary practices. The 24th September statement is an example of this adaptation, which seeks to adjust religious and cultural traditions to suit contemporary conditions. ■

See also:

- ▶ Dalai Lama's statement: <http://tinyurl.com/62co8te>
- ▶ Bhuchung K.Tsering's Blog: <http://tinyurl.com/5susktj>
- ▶ Article by Robert Barnett: <http://www.thechinabeat.org/?p=3873>

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Tibetan scholar monk who gave torture testimony detained for fourth time

Jigme Guri, a Tibetan scholar monk from Labrang monastery was taken into police custody on 20 August, and there are serious fears for his welfare among those who know him. This is his fourth detention. After release from an earlier detention, Jigme Guri recorded a video testimony in Tibet, complaining of racist treatment and torture in custody, which has been circulated on Youtube with English subtitles (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ac-V82xAaUg>).



Jigme Guri, known as Labrang Jigme, was detained on August 20. His current whereabouts are not known.

According to Tibetan sources, on 21 August, the day following his arrest, around 20-30 armed police and Public Security Bureau officials raided his quarters at Labrang (Chinese: Xiahe) monastery and confiscated his computer, books and documents. The reason for this latest detention is not known. There are serious fears for his welfare because of the security crackdown in the area, his three previous detentions within the last five years, and his determination to make the truth of the situation in Tibet known publicly. He is the only known Tibetan to record on video in Tibet an account of his own imprisonment and views on Chinese policies against the Dalai Lama in which he gave his full identity. ■

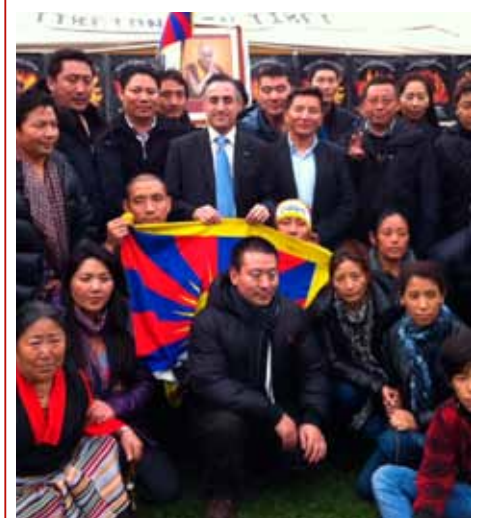
See also:

► ICT report: <http://tinyurl.com/64mhdu3>

The Tibetan Community in Belgium's fasting demonstration in front of the European Parliament

On 6 October 2011 the Tibetan Community in Belgium and other Tibet Support Groups organized a demonstration in front of the European Parliament to raise awareness on the deepening climate of fear in the Tibetan areas of Sichuan province as a result of the self-immolation of monks, former monks and two nuns since March 2011.

Due to the tense situation in Tibet, the Tibetan Community in Belgium with the support of other Tibet Support Groups launched a solidarity sit-in and fast for the martyred monks and nuns. In the beginning of November 2011, Tibetans living in Belgium stayed for one week in Place du Luxembourg in Brussels, just in front of the European Parliament, to show solidarity to the monks who died as a result of a self-protest against the situation in Tibet. The escalating situation in Sichuan is an indicator of the deeply repressive climate in Tibet today, and points to the need for the international community to make robust representations to China to address their failed policies, and to urgently allow monks and nuns space to practice their religion. Demonstrators called on the European Union to adopt a public statement on these events urging the Chinese authorities to respect human rights in Sichuan province as in all other Tibetan areas to prevent an escalation of similar acts. Similarly, they called on worldwide leaders to raise Tibet at the G20 in Cannes (France) and at the next EU-China Summit. Finally, they urged the Chinese government to resume dialogue with the envoys of the Dalai Lama and to guarantee economic, social, cultural and religious rights to the Tibetan people. ■



The Tibetan Community in Belgium with Spanish MEP Ramon TREMOSA i BALCELLS.

See also:

► Vincent Metten's Blog: <http://tinyurl.com/cdvclta>

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NGOs appeal to UN Human Rights chief over Tibetan self-immolations protests

On the occasion of the United Nations Day on 24th October 2011, 27 NGOs from 17 countries submitted the an urgent appeal to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights seeking intervention with the Chinese authorities regarding the recent self-immolation protests by Tibetans in Tawo and Ngapa.

24 October, 2011

Your Excellency,

We, the undersigned non-governmental organisations (NGOs) from various parts of the world, seek your immediate intervention with the Chinese authorities in view of the alarming and very disturbing news that has emerged from Tibet about the tragic self-immolation protests by nine Tibetans in Tawo and Ngapa, notably monks and one nun, which resulted in several of them dying. We believe these acts of desperation are the direct results of the heightened intensity of China's control and constraints on fundamental freedoms in Tibet.

While being gravely concerned about these new developments as well as by the overall deplorable human rights situation faced by the Tibetan people, we in particular request the High Commissioner to intervene by calling upon the Chinese authorities to immediately:

- Withdraw military and other armed personnel from Kirti Monastery, Ngapa and hand over the entire day-to-day management of the monastery to the monks and allow unhindered atmosphere of religious activity at the monastery for both the monks and lay people.
- Put an end to the so-called "patriotic education campaign" currently imposed on the monks of Kirti Monastery who have been compelled to follow communist ideology indoctrination sessions since April, 2011.
- Provide a full clarification on the status of the 300 monks who were taken away from Kirti Monastery in April, 2011 about which several Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, including the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances have intervened.
- Release information on all those detained in Ngapa since 16 March, 2011, especially about their current whereabouts and well-being.
- Release all Tibetan political prisoners.
- Account for the status of those Tibetans who have been "hospitalised" after their self-immolation protests, including their access to adequate medical treatment.
- Lift the military siege in Ngapa, Sichuan Province and allow independent observers to the region.

Sincerely,

See the appeal online: <http://tinyurl.com/67w4npu>

Signed by:

1. Mahatma Gandhi International, Belgium
2. Mouvement contre le racisme et pour l'amitié les peuples (MRAP), France
3. International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), France
4. Forum Human Rights, Germany
5. Society for Threatened Peoples, Germany
6. World Uyghur Congress, Germany
7. Marangopoulos Foundation for Human Rights, Greece
8. Asian Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Network (AITPN), India
9. Banglar Manabdhikar Suraksha Mancha (MASUM), India
10. South Asia Network against Torture & Impunity (SANTI), India
11. No Peace Without Justice, Italy
12. Nonviolent Radical Party, transnational and Transparty, Italy
13. Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation (UNPO), Netherlands
14. International Campaign for Tibet-Europe, Netherlands
15. Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), Nigeria
16. Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, Poland
17. Law and Society Trust, Sri Lanka
18. Saami Council, Sweden
19. World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), Switzerland
20. Rencontre Africaine de Défense Pour les Droits de l'Homme (RADDHO), Switzerland
21. Forum Asia for Human Rights and Development, Thailand
22. Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), UK
23. Mapuche International Link, UK
24. International Educational Development, USA
25. Association of Humanitarian Lawyers, USA
26. Human Rights in China (HRIC), Hong Kong SRA and USA
27. World Sindhi Institute, Canada-USA

See also:

- ▶ Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch's open letter to Chinese President Hu Jintao: <http://tinyurl.com/d5hruoc>



This number's reading suggestion

VIDEO SUGGESTIONS!

Stand Up for Tibet (<http://standupfortibet.org/>) is a campaign launched to raise awareness on the serious situation in Tibet. The campaign aims at asking to the international community, both citizens and governments, to "Stand Up for Tibet" by signing an online pledge. Among prominent signatories: Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Nobel Laureate for peace work in the struggle against apartheid; Radiohead, Rock Band & Activists; Jody Williams, Nobel Prize winner & Founder of International Campaign to Ban Landmine; and many members of the European Parliament as well as of other parliaments around the world. Watch the following videos to learn more about the lives of those Tibetans who committed an extreme act of self-protest to call for human rights and religious freedom in Tibet:

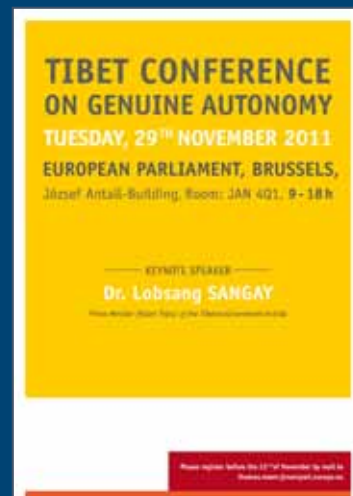
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QYbwNwc9xlc>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gysAsNMCqRc>
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qsQCIGDkjGk>

The videos were produced by Tell Your Story Media, a group of aspiring filmmakers who want to give back to the community by telling their story through media. Tell Your Story Media (TYSMedia) is a collective of passionate and inspired artists and filmmakers who strive to build and enhance their community through the preservation and propagation of real life stories recorded as documentary films. The Campaign video is a collaborative work of Tibetan community in the San Francisco Bay Area and TYS media. The idea of this project came from Lobsang Nyima (lnysang@gmail.com). ■

Upcoming Events

► 29 November 2011:

"Tibet Conference on Genuine Autonomy", European Parliament, Brussels, József Antall-Building, Room: JAN 4Q1. For more information and to register contact: thomas.mann@europarl.europa.eu



► 5 December 2011:

Hearing of the EP's Sub-Committee on Human Rights (DROI):
"The situation of Human Rights in China", European Parliament, Brussels