

Tibet Brief

A report of the International Campaign for Tibet



January 2012

Tibetan self-immolations spread into 2012



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On 6 January 2012 two Tibetans self-immolated in Ngaba (Chinese: Aba, the Tibetan area of Amdo), as confirmed by Xinhua, Chinese state media. According to information from Tibetan sources in exile, two Tibetans, Tsultrim and Tennyi, both around 20 years of age, set themselves on fire in the courtyard of a hotel in the center of Ngaba town and ran into the street shouting "His Holiness the Dalai Lama must return to Tibet" and "May His Holiness the Dalai Lama live for 10,000 years!" Tennyi, who is believed to be a monk from Kirti monastery, died on 6 January, and Tsultrim, a lay person who may have been a former Kirti monk, died on 7 January, according to the same sources.

Again, on 14 January, a young Tibetan layperson set himself on fire in the main town of Ngaba. To the horror of onlookers, he was subjected to violent beatings by police who were extinguishing the flames. This caused Tibetans to gather in protest, and some hours later police fired tear-gas and shot into the crowd, injuring at least two Tibetans. There are serious fears of repercussions for Tibetans involved, or suspected of being involved, in the protest at a time of escalating tension (see: <http://tinyurl.com/7u8upoo>).

Sonam Wangyal, a respected religious figure in his local area, drank kerosene and set himself on fire in the morning of 8 January, in Darlag county, Golog (Chinese: Guoluo) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai province (the Tibetan area of Amdo). He died shortly afterwards. The self-immolation in Golog significantly broadens the geographical spread of the Tibetan self-immolations into Qinghai, Sichuan, and the Tibet Autonomous Region.

Previously, on 1 December 2011 a former monk named Tenzin Phuntsog in his forties set himself on fire in Chamdo (Chinese: Changdu or Qamdo) prefecture in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). This was the first self-immolation to occur in the TAR. According to the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, Tenzin Phuntsog succumbed on 6 December in Chamdo Hospital in Tibet Autonomous Region. He was taken there by the Chinese police after they extinguished the flames. According to the same source, Phuntsok's wife Dolma went missing following her detention by police after Phuntsok's self-immolation. There is no information on Dolma's well-being and whereabouts.

The worsening 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, nuns and lay people space to practice their religion freely. The EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs

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EU goes public on China's failure to commit to human rights dialogue

The International Campaign for Tibet welcomed the public statement of concern released by the European Union's Delegation to China on 22 December 2011 over the absence of an answer by the Chinese side to its proposal for dates in order to hold the second session of the 2011 EU-China Dialogue on Human Rights before the end of 2011, as previously agreed. This statement was issued in agreement with the EU Heads of Mission in China and is remarkable because it witnesses a slight change of the EU towards the use of public statements on China when pertinent and desirable. Moreover, it is one of the few instances in which the EU Delegation to China publishes such a sensitive and critical statement in Chinese language.

In its statement, the EU reiterated that the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue was an essential component of the relationship between two strategic partners and it offered an invaluable platform to discuss mutual issues of concern and to foster mutual understanding. In a separate statement, the Head of the EU Delegation to China, Markus Ederer, added that the EU should continue to engage the Chinese side to enhance the quality and format of the Dialogue.

The Dalai Lama during his visit to Prague (Czech Republic) on 12 December had urged HR/VP Catherine Ashton to keep pressing China to allow EU diplomats to visit Tibet. In written remarks sent to the European newspaper EU Observer he said: "The situation in Tibet is very desperate. It is urgent that the international community sends fact-finding delegations to the Tibetan area to investigate the situation on the ground. This will have a restraining influence on the Chinese authorities" (...) "Should the Chinese side reject the request, the EU could issue a strong statement of deep concern and raise the issue at international fora, such as the United Nations Human Rights Council." (see: <http://euobserver.com/24/114612>) ■

See also:

- ▶ Original EU statement in English: <http://tinyurl.com/88owweek>
- ▶ Original EU statement in Chinese: <http://tinyurl.com/6pa9s73>

> Continued from page 1

and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton, has made a strong statement about the self-immolations of Tibetans in a response to concerns raised by two European Parliamentarians, Barbara Lochbihler, Chairwoman of the Sub-Committee of Human Rights, and Laszlo Tokes, the Vice-President of the European Parliament. In the letter, a copy of which was obtained from the MEPs by ICT, Baroness Ashton states that she fully shares their concerns "over these shocking events." In the letter, dated October 25, Baroness Ashton writes: "The fact that so many Tibetan monks have chosen to take such tragic steps demonstrates the profound and continuing depth of feeling among many Tibetans that their rights are not being respected. [...] [The EU] urges [the Chinese authorities] to address the root causes of the self-immolations – in particular the lack of genuine participation by the Tibetan population in the development policy of the region." ■

See also:

- ▶ ICT Report: <http://tinyurl.com/823mudm>
- ▶ Self-immolations fact-sheet: <http://tinyurl.com/3zaoerv>

Czech President Václav Havel passed away



The Dalai Lama presents ICT Light of Truth Award to Václav Havel in 2004.

Václav Havel, the Czech playwright who spent three-quarters of his life under conditions of dictatorship or totalitarianism, led a political revolution and held four presidencies in two countries for 13 years, died on 18 December 2011 at the age of 75. Only days earlier, on 10 December, Havel had met the Dalai Lama who was visiting Prague at his invitation to mark International Human Rights Day. Upon their meeting, the Dalai Lama presented Havel with a traditional

Tibetan khata or welcome scarf and a small statuette of a golden wheel, the Buddhist symbol representing knowledge, protection, and the ability to overcome obstacles.

In a condolence letter to Havel's wife, Mrs. Dagmar Havlova, the Dalai Lama, who considered Havel a 'dear friend,' wrote: "the world has lost a great statesman whose steadfast and unflinching determination played a key role in bringing freedom and democracy to the then Czechoslovakia" and he recalled that he had had the privilege of first meeting President Havel in February 1990, months after the Velvet Revolution, "which he had led with an extraordinary display of people power." (see: <http://tinyurl.com/7393v7s>)

Havel's writings continued to inspire political thinkers and provoke harsh responses long after his own battle against communism was won when Czechoslovakia reclaimed its independence in 1989. In 2008, inspired by Havel's Charter 77, more than 250 Chinese intellectuals and human rights activists, including Liu Xiaobo, released Charter 08, a manifesto calling for an independent legal system, freedom of association, and the elimination of one-party rule in China. Liu Xiaobo was imprisoned as a result in December 2008 and awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2010, a nomination that had been supported by Havel, who took every opportunity to call for Liu's release. Signers of Charter 08 have released a tribute to President Havel where they say: "The loss of Mr. Havel is not only a severe loss to the Czech Republic. It is a loss that extends through the world, a loss to all defenders of freedom, democracy, and human rights." ■

See also:

- ▶ Tribute to President Havel by signatories of Charter 08: <http://tinyurl.com/89qdoeq>

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Kalon Tripa Lobsang Sangay's first official visit to Europe

On 29 November 2011, despite various Chinese attempts to prevent the event, the European Parliament hosted the "Tibet Conference on Genuine Autonomy", co-organized by the President of the European Parliament's Tibet Intergroup, Thomas Mann, and the International Network of Parliamentarians on Tibet (INPaT).



Kalon Tripa Lobsang Sangay with ICT staff and Reed Brody, Counsel and Spokesperson for Human Rights Watch in Brussels.

Keynote speaker was Kalon Tripa Lobsang Sangay who was on his first journey to Europe as Kalon Tripa (Prime Minister). He visited Switzerland, Denmark, Norway, Germany, France, Belgium/EU, and the UK. Lobsang Sangay was accompanied by Kalon Dicki Chhoyang, Department of Information and International Relations, and by the Envoy of the Dalai Lama Kelsang Gyaltzen. More than 300 people from different horizons took part in the conference: members of the European Parliament, officials from the European Commission and other EU institutions, the Tibetan Community in Belgium, NGOs.

Dr. Lobsang Sangay praised the European Parliament for its long-standing support to Tibet and explained how Tibetans had been investing in human rights and democracy for the last 50 years and stressed the important transition to a secular and democratic leadership as a result of the Dalai Lama's transfer of political powers to an elected leadership.

Furthermore, the Kalon Tripa was invited to address the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament at its extraordinary meeting on the same day. He reiterated his commitment to the Middle Way Policy of His Holiness the Dalai Lama for resolving the issue of Tibet. He also spoke of the recent wave of self-immolations in different areas of the Tibetan plateau. Lobsang Sangay emphasised the importance for international bodies such as the European Parliament to support those following non-violence and democracy and thus sending the right message to the authoritarian regimes.

This Conference has served both as a venue to discuss the issue of genuine autonomy and as a stage to introduce the new CTA leadership to the European public. As a counter-reaction to the journey of Dr. Lobsang Sangay to Brussels and to his participation in different official and non-official events, Zhu Weiqun, the Deputy Director of the United Front Work Department (UFWD) visited the EU capital few days after (12 December). He met with EU officials and participated to a closed-door event at the Chinese Mission to the EU with a selected number of participants including some researchers and journalists of European media. ■

See also:

- ▶ Press release: <http://tinyurl.com/7lh4bza>
- ▶ Interview of Dr. Lobsang Sangay in the Belgian newspaper La Libre Belgique (in French): <http://tinyurl.com/76fgbyw>

China, Tibet & Nepal: article on Nepalese newspaper Republica by Arun KR Shrivastav

Writer Arun KR Shrivastav, an editor for one of Nepal's most popular English-language newspapers, Republica, writes boldly about the need for Nepal to develop a position independent to China's and in the nation's interests on the Tibet question. On 2 January 2012, KR Shrivastav comments on the postponed visit of Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao in December (2011), saying that it was "the last masterstroke by the outgoing leadership in China to link its relations with Nepal firmly and solely with the Tibet issue".

Until that happens by Arun KR Shrivastav Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's upcoming visit to Nepal purportedly to put bilateral relations irreversibly in the perspective of Tibet is the last masterstroke by the outgoing leadership in China to link its relations with Nepal firmly and solely with the Tibet issue. The current leadership is scheduled to demit office in less than a year. Nepal has adopted a One-China Policy that accepts both Tibet and Taiwan as integral parts of China—a Chinese claim that rest of the world perceives as its insatiable aggrandizement boosted by its sheer size of population, geography and now the economy, ranked number two in the world. So, when it comes to bilateral relations or its worldview, Nepal has no opinion on any of the matters that the world finds wrong with China. And, with a Maoist-led government in power, the differences between the two nations on issues of ideology and therefore, the worldview, perhaps do not exist at all. (...) ■

Continue reading at <http://tinyurl.com/6q8h74k>

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Tibetan becomes new Lhasa Party Secretary

The appointment of a Tibetan, Che Dalha (Chinese: Qizhala), to the politically important position of Party Secretary of Lhasa Municipality (Xinhua, 16 November 2011) re-establishes a convention of ethnic Tibetans holding this post although it is unlikely to signal any broader shift in policy. While Che Dalha's entire career has been spent in a Tibetan region of Yunnan Province and he is regarded by some in Yunnan as alert to issues facing Tibetans, there are no expectations among sources that he has any intention of championing Tibetan grievances.

Lhasa Municipality is a jurisdiction of seven county-level administrations an entire Party and governmental tier below the TAR; therefore, while Che Dalha is the Party Secretary of Lhasa Municipality, he is still significantly junior in status to the recently appointed TAR Party Secretary, Chen Quanguo, who is ethnic Chinese. Nevertheless, given the cultural and political importance of Lhasa to all Tibetans, it is notable that a Tibetan official should be appointed to the top Party position there.

Prior to November 2010, Che Dalha's entire career was spent in Dechen (Chinese: Diqing) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (TAP) in Yunnan Province, part of the Tibetan region of Kham. Che Dhala was head of the Dechen TAP government when the Dalai Lama's Special Envoys visited the region in 2003, and is therefore likely to be aware of the Dalai Lama's aspirations for the Tibetan people. According to a source close to ICT with strong family ties to the area, Che Dhala is well-regarded in Dechen for his successes in overseeing rapid economic development in the region while also remaining an advocate for the promotion of the Tibetan language and other facets of Tibetan culture. ■

2012 Kalachakra for World Peace

In the beginning of January thousands of devotees from around the world, including pilgrims from Tibet, gathered in Bodh Gaya (India) to attend the 32nd Kalachakra teachings presided by His Holiness the Dalai Lama.



His Holiness the Dalai Lama during the long life offering ceremony at the conclusion of the Kalachakra for World Peace in Bodh Gaya, India, on January 10, 2012.

The Dalai Lama had audiences with westerners (see: <http://tinyurl.com/87lrb7j>) as well as Chinese and new Tibetan arrivals. Particularly, responding to a question on the issue of Tibet and China, the 76-year old Tibetan leader said "truth is always more powerful" while affirming that truth is on the side of the Tibetans. He added that in the last 10 years many Chinese intellectuals and religious people were increasingly supporting and understanding about the Tibet issue and the reality inside Tibet; therefore, he continued, Tibetans should stay in calm and peace once back home because the Tibet issue would be solved. His Holiness the Gyalwang Karmapa, Ogyen Trinley Dorje, spoke to a large group of 8,000 Tibetans, urging them to unite and preserve Tibetan culture and religion within Tibet. He acknowledged the arduous journey the Tibetans had undertaken to reach India.

Kalachakra means Time-Wheel, as "Kala" is Sanskrit for Time and "Chakra" (or Cakra) is Wheel in Sanskrit. It is also translated as Time-Cycles. Much in this tradition revolves around the concept of time and cycles: from the cycles of the planets, to the cycles of our breath and the practice of controlling the most subtle energies within one's body on the path to enlightenment. The Kalachakra deity represents omniscience as everything is under the influence of time; he is time and therefore knows all. Similarly, the Wheel is beginning-less and endless (for further information about the Kalachakra initiation see <http://www.kalachakra2012.org/index.html>). ■

See also:

► Pictures gallery: <http://dalailama.com/gallery>

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Political prisoners focus

Samdrup brothers

The Samdrup brothers are known for their important work on environmental protection in Chamdo area of eastern Tibet. They set up a grassroots environmental organization, the Snowlands Great Rivers Environmental Protection Association, engaging local villagers with initiatives of litter collection, monitoring of illegal hunting, and the planting of thousands of trees.

Charges against the three brothers, whose environmental work was acclaimed both within China and internationally, are widely regarded to have been rigged after their efforts to stop the poaching of endangered animals in their home area in the Tibet Autonomous Region clashed with the local authorities. Rinchen Samdrup, 44, was sentenced to five years in prison in July 2010. His younger brother, 42-year-old Karma Samdrup, was sentenced to 15 years and was severely tortured in detention. Their disabled brother Chime Namgyal, serving 21 months in a labour camp, can no longer walk or eat without assistance after being tortured. Karma Samdrup's situation is particularly worrying as local sources reported to ICT that he was seriously ill but was not given medical parole. He is believed to be held in the same place as the lawyer Gao Zhisheng at Shaya prison in Xinjiang. ■



Karma Samdrup



Chime Namgyal



Rinchen Samdrup

This number's reading suggestion

Open Letters: Selected Writings by Václav Havel

This historic collection of writings shows Vaclav Havel's evolution from a modestly known playwright who had the courage to advise and criticize Czechoslovakia's leaders to a newly elected president. Some of the pieces in Open Letters, such as "Dear Dr. Husak" and the essay "The Power of the Powerless," are by now almost legendary for their influence on a generation of Eastern European dissidents. All of them show the unmistakable imprint of Havel's intellectual rigor, moral conviction, and great eloquence, while standing as important additions to the world's literature of conscience. ■

Upcoming Events

► 2 February 2012:

Launch of the EU-China Year of Intercultural Dialogue

► 27 February 2012:

Foreign Affairs Council will cover EU-ASEAN Ministerial Preparation

► 23 April 2012:

Foreign Affairs Council will cover EU-China relations

See also:

- Article by Kate Saunders: <http://tinyurl.com/7nfvshv>
- ICT report: <http://tinyurl.com/244pyas>