

Tibet Brief

A report of the International Campaign for Tibet



January 2014

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ICT Appoints its New President

The **International Campaign for Tibet (ICT)** is honored to announce the appointment of **Matteo Mecacci**, a leading defender of human rights and democracy, as ICT's new President.



Matteo Mecacci and the Dalai Lama at a press conference in Assago, Italy in June 28, 2012

Richard Gere, Chairman of the **ICT** Board, said: "We are thrilled to welcome **Matteo** at an important and exciting moment for **ICT** and the Tibet movement worldwide. I've known and worked with **Matteo** for many years and know him to be an energetic, compassionate and creative leader with a solid track record in working with evolving democracies all over the world. **Matteo** has a deep connection to the **Dalai Lama** and Tibet,

*an awareness of the political, cultural and social dynamics within China and Tibet, and brings to **ICT** considerable experience in diplomacy, democracy and advocacy."*

Matteo Mecacci, a former Italian member of Parliament who advanced a human rights and democracy agenda both in Italy and globally, served as a member of both the Italian Chamber

of Deputies and the **Italian delegation to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)**.

Mr. Mecacci will lead implementation of a five-year strategic plan that will help **ICT** build on its successes of 25 years of advocacy and deepen the impact of its work for the Tibetan people.

Mr. Mecacci said: "As China grows more assertive on the world stage, the need to advance the struggle for the survival of Tibetan culture and freedoms becomes even more important, not only for Tibetans, but for the world. **ICT**'s work is essential in demonstrating that the power of truth and human values cannot be suppressed, and ensuring that the spirit and resilience of the Tibetan people will impact the capitals and societies of the free world."

Matteo Mecacci, who was born in Firenze (Florence), Italy, served as a member of the Italian Chamber of Deputies (on its Foreign Affairs Committee), and was an elected official of the **OSCE Parliamentary Assembly**.

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Just prior to taking over the **ICT** presidency, he led the election-monitoring mission of the **OSCE/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)** supervising the presidential elections in Georgia.

Matteo was elected Chairperson of the Italian **Parliamentary Intergroup for Tibet** after having been voted in as Deputy for the Radical Party on the Democratic Party lists during the 2008 general elections. In November 2009, he organized the 5th **World Parliamentarians' Convention on Tibet**, in Rome, which hosted the **Dalai Lama** and established the **International Network of Parliamentarians on Tibet (INPaT)**. He became Co-Chair of the network with Member of the European Parliament (MEP) **Thomas Mann** in June 2010. **Matteo** has played an active role in promoting Tibetan democracy in exile, and was a member of the Tibetan Election Observation Mission in March 2011 when the Tibetan community in exile undertook elections for the Central Tibetan Administration leadership.

Matteo served as the representative of the Transnational Radical Party and No Peace Without Justice at the United Nations in New York from 2000 to 2008, where he coordinated various campaigns to foster democracy and protect human rights. He was part of a coalition of international NGOs advocating the reform of the United Nations – in particular the United Nations Commission on Human Rights – and he was one of the promoters of the **International Steering Committee** of the Community of Democracies.

He also played an important role in the international campaign that led, in 2007, to the adoption of the first UN General Assembly resolution calling for a world moratorium of capital executions and the abolition of the death penalty, and for assisting various countries in adhering to the Rome Statute that established the ICC.

As a member of the **OSCE** Parliamentary Assembly, **Matteo** was elected as Rapporteur in 2009 and 2010, and as Chairman of the Committee on Democracy and Human Rights in 2011 and 2012. During that time, he took part in numerous electoral monitoring missions, including in Moldova, the United Kingdom, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Armenia, the United States, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Macedonia, Turkey, Tunisia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Serbia. In 2012, he was appointed by the Chairman in Office of the **OSCE**, the Irish Government, as Special Coordinator of the **OSCE** Short Term Election Observation Mission in Serbia and Belarus.

Matteo studied international law at the University of Firenze and was a keen soccer player before deciding to get involved in politics as a young activist.

Matteo lives with his partner Barbara, an actress and award-winning documentary filmmaker who is also focused on human rights issues, and stepson Tommaso, who is a young musician, actor and singer. He loves traveling, reading, opera, music, art and theatre. ■

Update on Tibet Lawsuits in Spain

Senior lawyers and international law experts have commented on China's reaction to the recent Spanish criminal court rulings against China's former Party boss **Hu Jintao** and five other Chinese leaders. The lawyers and professors were speaking at a conference at the University of Valencia, Spain, following the order on November 18 for arrest warrants to be issued against five Chinese leaders, including former President and Party Secretary **Jiang Zemin**, for their policies in Tibet. This follows the news on October 9 of **Hu Jintao's** indictment for genocide in Tibet. The Confucian Institute at the University of Valencia sought to pressure the academic authorities by hosting a two-day event promoting officially-sanctioned Chinese culture on the same days as the conference, while the visa of one of the Tibetan witnesses due to speak at the event was denied by the Spanish embassy in India.

New developments in the groundbreaking Tibet lawsuits in Spain are the following:

• One of the key Tibetan witnesses in the case, monk **Palden Gyatso**, who served 33 years in prison and labor camps, was denied a visa by the Spanish embassy in India to travel to the conference on universal jurisdiction in Valencia on November 29, although he has traveled to Spain before. The reason for the denial of his visa was not clear but is being challenged by the University of Valencia's

hosts and the legal team behind the lawsuits.

• The Confucian Institute at the University of Valencia hosted an official exhibition promoting Chinese culture on the same two days as the conference on the Tibet lawsuits. Defending the need to expose crimes against humanity in Tibet through the lawsuits, leading Spanish Professor **Javier de Lucas** wrote in Spanish newspaper *El País* that this highlighted the dangers of a government vehicle for propaganda being hosted by an academic institution ([El País, Dos Chinas en Valencia](#))

• The Spanish legal team has submitted 48 questions addressed to former Party

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Secretary and President **Hu Jintao** about his policies in Tibet, to be forwarded to him by the court.

- Chinese official **Zhu Weiqun** referred to the rulings by the Spanish judges as “malicious persecution” that was probably “plotted by the Dalai clique.” Professor **Dr. Manuel Ollé Sesé**, a specialist in Criminal Law and lawyer in the universal jurisdiction cases for Tibet, Argentina and Guatemala, said: “The surprise would have been any other reaction. We must remind China of two things: one, that a long time ago the international community agreed to establish that the persecution of these crimes was an obligation of all the States and that they cannot be left unpunished. Second, it is not a legal case of Spain against China but a legal procedure of a court of law against particular Chinese defendants accused of the gravest international crimes.”

Dr. José Elías Esteve Moltó, main research lawyer and writer of both lawsuits, told **ICT**: “We hope that the indictment of Hu Jintao and the warrants of arrest of the other five defendants will serve to help the international community distinguish the red lines that should never have been crossed in international politics with respect to Tibet and China. Above the complicity with economic and geopolitical interests there will always be the truth, justice and human rights. We trust that this fight against impunity will benefit the Tibetan people and all the Chinese citizens persecuted by a government they did not choose.”

At the conference on universal jurisdiction in Valencia on November 28-29, **ICT** gave a presentation on the significance of the Tibet lawsuits and the current situation in Tibet. Organizers of the conference **José Elías Esteve**, lawyer and professor at the Institute of Human Rights at the University of Valencia, and Professor **Consuelo Ramón Chornet** were disappointed that Tibetan witness **Palden Gyatso**, who lives in exile in India, was denied a visa to travel to Spain. One of the reasons given by the Spanish

embassy in India was that he required a specific type of travel insurance not readily available in India due to his health condition. However, **Palden Gyatso** was told in person at the embassy in Delhi that they did not know anything about his application, despite Valencia University issuing formal invitations that had been acknowledged earlier.

After hearing about the latest rulings in the lawsuits, Tibetan monk **Palden Gyatso**, who is 80, said that he could “die happy”. **José Elías Esteve Moltó**, main research lawyer and author of both cases, and **Alan Cantos** from **Comité de Apoyo**

Professor of Philosophy of Law at the University, noted that in contrast to the Chinese exhibition run by the Confucian Institute, the Institute of Human Rights did not receive any assistance from the University of Valencia in the conference about universal jurisdiction cases. He wrote: “It appears that this critical view of the Chinese government and what many of us consider genocide in Tibet, is ill-timed. [...] Nevertheless, despite these absences and difficulties, the conference took place. There are many people – more than our prudent and realistic institutional authorities believe – who want the University to remain a place of



(From left to right) José Elías Esteve, Alan Cantos (CAT), Thubten Wangchen, Palden Gyatso, Tagna Jigme Sangpo, Tibet's longest-serving political prisoner, and Kalsang Phuntsok, then president of the Tibetan Youth Congress, filing the complaint that investigates the National Court against seven senior officials of the Chinese government, June 28, 2005.

Al Tibet (CAT) in Madrid, Spain's Tibet Support Committee, who have pioneered the two Tibet lawsuits, said: “With these verdicts we have kept our promise to the Tibetan victims and their families that we would not rest until one of the persons living who was most responsible for the brutal repression in Tibet was brought before the law.”

In an article published in *El País* on November 28, **Professor Javier de Lucas**,

critical knowledge and open debate, which should never be allowed to be replaced by propaganda. There are many people – myself among them – who believe that crimes against humanity (in Tibet, the Central African Republic or anywhere else) do not expire and should not be forgotten. This is the way in which relations with the unique Chinese people will be based on better mutual understanding.” ■

Translation from Spanish kindly provided by the Spanish Tibet Committee CAT

European Parliament Report Condemns Human Rights Abuses in Tibet



© European Parliament

MEP Eduard Kukan

A new report adopted by the European Parliament raises strong concern over the human rights situation in Tibet, detailing the high number of self-immolations, displacement of Tibetan nomads, religious repression, and the threats to the survival of the Tibetan language.

Although not binding, the European Parliament report sends a strong political signal to other EU institutions on what priorities they should adopt in their work on human rights issues.

The report, [an annual report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World 2012](#), was drafted by **MEP Eduard Kukan** (Slovakia, European

People's Party), a member of the **Committee of Foreign Affairs (AFET)**, and adopted by the Parliament on December 11, 2013.

Vincent Metten, EU Policy Director of the **International Campaign for Tibet (ICT)** in Brussels, said: *"The strong language in this report highlights the genuine concern among European Parliamentarians about the deteriorating and dangerous situation in Tibet, and merits serious consideration within the EU towards achieving meaningful progress on human rights. We particularly welcomed the focus on the issue of the settlement and displacement of nomads, following the concern expressed about this issue by the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Catherine Ashton in December 2012."*

The report reiterated the importance of mainstreaming human rights and democracy in all the EU's activities, and called upon the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security, as well as the EU Special Representative for Human Rights, to pursue the EU's commitment to place human rights at the center of all EU relations with third countries, including its strategic partners. It also stressed the crucial role played by civil society in the protection and promotion of democracy and human rights, calling on the EU to ensure a stronger cooperation with both civil society and human rights defenders. The **ICT** shares the EP's concerns regarding the lack of concrete

progress in several of the EU's human rights dialogues, specifically pointing at the failure of the EU-China dialogue on human rights to achieve significant and tangible results. In this context, the EP urged the EU to pursue a more determined, ambitious and transparent human rights policy. These dialogues should be accompanied by clear public benchmarks for measuring their success objectively and when they are not constructive, the EU should draw clear political conclusions.

This year's report saw the addition of a new section on Business and Human Rights, highlighting that European companies should respect human rights standards in all their business and trade activities, including when operating outside the EU in developing countries and when cooperating with authoritarian regimes.

This topic is becoming ever more important for **ICT's** work in light of the launch of the negotiations for a bilateral EU-China Investment Agreement and with China's plans for massive mining of mineral resources in Tibet, which will have devastating environmental and social consequences.

ICT joins the EP in its calls on the EU to challenge the Chinese government on its human rights performance in both China and Tibet, and to promptly implement the EP's recommendations in all its relations with China. ■

Screening of “*Leaving Fear Behind*” by Dhondup Wangchen in the European Parliament



On January 21, 2014 **MEP Leonidas Donskis** (ALDE, Lithuania) and the **International Campaign for Tibet (ICT)** screened an important documentary on Tibet in the European Parliament. *Leaving Fear Behind* is a rare film featuring interviews with Tibetans across Tibet boldly expressing their views to camera about the **Dalai Lama**, the 2008 Olympics in Beijing and human rights in Tibet. **Dhondup Wangchen**, who travelled across Tibet to record the interviews, was imprisoned for “*subversion*” for six years as a result of the film.

The screening in the European Parliament was followed by a debate about the situation of political prisoners and freedom of expression in Tibet since 2008, and the relationship of China and the EU. **MEP Donskis** observed that Tibetans face many obstacles; on the one hand that China is challenging Europe with its ‘authoritarian modernisation’, while on the other, Tibet is fighting “*our moral blindness*” when European democracies are celebrating the economic might of China.

Leaving Fear Behind is based on 35 hours of footage and 108 interviews conducted in the Amdo region at great risk before March 2008. Shortly after the film was distributed outside of China, **Dhondup Wangchen** was arrested and initially detained on suspicion of “*illegal journalism*”, which is not an offense under Chinese law.

The documentary was secretly shown to journalists in Beijing a few days before the start of the Olympics in 2008 and described by The New York Times as “*an unadorned indictment of the Chinese government*”.

In 2012, **Dhondup Wangchen** won the International Press Freedom Award of the Committee to Protect Journalists. The award recognizes journalists who show courage in defending press freedom despite facing attacks, threats, or imprisonment. He was honored in absentia due to his ongoing imprisonment. Wangchen’s sentence will end in 2014. However, the exact date of his release is currently unknown.

MEP Donskis pointed out how this documentary sent a message of courage to the world. Courage is usually expected to be a feature of few, selected heroes, whereas in *Leaving Fear Behind* it is manifested by all the people interviewed, by the ordinary people.

Guest speakers at the event were **Ms. Kate Saunders**, Communications Director at ICT, and **Ms. Gyaltsen Drolkar**, a Tibetan nun and former political prisoner currently living in Belgium.

Ms. Saunders gave a presentation focusing on the significance of the film, noting that **Dhondup Wangchen**’s last day of filming was on March 10, 2008, when protests broke out that swept across the Tibetan plateau. She spoke about the new strategies being used by Tibetans like **Dhondup Wangchen** to ensure the survival of their Tibetan national identity, and talked about new songs, literature, and blogs as a symbol of Tibetan people’s determination. **Ms. Saunders** gave further examples of courageous Tibetans currently imprisoned for the sole reason of exercising their right of freedom of expression, such as **Tashi Rabten**, a young student sentenced to four years in prison after publishing a collection of political articles on the 2008 protests in Lhasa.

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Ms. Drolkar talked about her personal experience in Drapchi prison, Lhasa, where she spent twelve years of her life. In 1990, at the age of 19, she was arrested for taking part in a peaceful demonstration calling for the **Dalai Lama's** return to Tibet and a few months later sentenced to 4 years in prison for "separatist activities". However, her sentence was extended by 8 years for taking part, while in prison, in the secret recording of songs calling for freedom and describing her loyalty and devotion to the **Dalai Lama**, and the conditions in Drapchi. The group of the 14 nuns involved in the recording and smuggling of the songs outside the prison was called "the singing nuns of Drapchi prison". Her presentation recalled painful memories of torture, beatings and solitary confinement in prison. **Gyaltzen Drolkar** was finally released in 2002 and was granted asylum in Belgium in 2004.

In his concluding remarks, **MEP Donskis** stressed that with China the EU is still hostage of old realpolitik dynamics and that Tibet is a litmus test case for the EU to prove what

values it stands for. History showed that success in the field of human rights is only possible when EU Member States speak united with one voice. ■



Screening of Leaving Fear Behind in the European Parliament

Controversial Visit to China by UK Prime Minister Cameron

Despite UK Prime Minister (PM) **David Cameron's** conciliatory approach to the Chinese authorities and assertions that he had no plans to meet the **Dalai Lama** again, as his Beijing visit ended on December 4, 2013, the Chinese state media characterised Britain as an insignificant old country useful only 'for travel and study'.



Cartoon: London Times

From December 2 - 4, Prime Minister **Cameron** headed a British trade delegation on a visit to China from December 2-4, the largest following a period of diplomatic chill in UK-China relations, which the Chinese authorities blamed on a meeting in May 2012 between the **Dalai Lama** and UK Prime Minister **David Cameron** and his deputy Nick Clegg. But there was no evidence of an adverse impact on trade ties, and some figures showed an increase in trade with the UK since the meeting. **Cameron** was strongly criticised in the British press for his approach to China, which several correspondents described as 'humiliating', with strong concerns being raised about his focus on trade to the detriment of core European values of human rights and democracy.

Even despite the PM's eagerness to please in order to gain more trade deals for austerity-hit Britain, the state-controlled media outlet Global Times warned that while the Chinese welcome the Prime Minister, "His visit this time can hardly

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be the end of the conflict between China and the UK." The Global Times, reflecting the leadership's anger at comments by the British Royal Navy's Chief of Staff about current tensions in the East China Sea following Beijing's attempt to grab control of the air space above the Japanese-administered Senkaku Islands, continued: "The Cameron administration should acknowledge that the UK is not a big power in the eyes of the Chinese. It is just an old European country apt for travel and study. This has gradually become the habitual thought of the Chinese people." (Global Times, [China won't fall for Cameron's 'sincerity'](#)).

Analysts have observed that going to great lengths to accommodate the Chinese leadership's sensitivities undermines European values and interests, and ultimately weakens EU leverage rather than contributing to the development of strong EU-China relations that encourage China to become a better global citizen.

During a debate entitled 'Is the **Dalai Lama** bad for the West?' in London in the week prior to PM **Cameron's** visit to China, scholar **Dr. Martin Mills** argued that the real questions are not about the **Dalai Lama**, but about Britain. "It's a question of how we feel about ourselves and what we want our moral and political culture to be." **Dr. Mills** pointed out that in terms of trade figures, even with a 20% annual expansion rate, it would take five years before British exports to China caught up with those to Belgium, and more than 15 years before they equalled British exports to Germany. **Dr. Mills** said that this raised the question of whether China is worth the compromises, saying that an authoritarian power should "not have the freedom to come and speak to us on issues of Britain's civilisation and political culture."

ICT has urged European countries to develop a common position that it is the right of all European Union

Member States leaders to welcome and meet with the **Dalai Lama** in whatever manner they deem appropriate, in order to counter attempted interference or threats from the Chinese government. This would demonstrate solidarity within the EU, protect individual Member States from Chinese pressure, and send a message that it is not up to the Beijing leadership to dictate a political agenda to democratic European countries.

Downing Street officials in London denied any policy change on Tibet: "Our position on Tibet is long-standing and there's been no change," the Prime Minister's official spokesman said. "We want strong commercial and diplomatic ties with China, We want to continue to strengthen those, and that's at the heart of the visit to China that you've seen the chancellor making this week." (The Herald, [Downing Street denies Tibet policy change](#)). ■

Two Further Self-immolations in December 2013

Two more self-immolations took place in Tibet in December 2013, bringing the number of Tibetan self-immolators since February 2009 to 125.



Kunchok Tseten

A Tibetan father of two, called **Kunchok Tseten** set himself on fire on December 3 in Meruma township, Ngaba County (Chinese: Aba), sparking protests as local people tried to stop police from taking him away after he collapsed in the road in flames. **Kunchok Tseten's** wife and some relatives have disappeared and are

believed to have been taken into custody, according to Tibetan exile sources.

Kunchok Tseten was heard shouting loudly as he ran down the road ablaze, calling for the long life of the **Dalai Lama**, for His Holiness to return to Tibet and for Tibetans to be reunited both inside Tibet and in exile.

Armed forces arrived on the scene quickly and attempted to take away **Kunchok Tseten** as he was still burning, according to exile Tibetan sources. Local people gathered and attempted to prevent him from being taken away. According to some sources, the standoff lasted up to an hour.

Afterwards, a security clampdown was imposed in Meruma, Ngaba County, Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province. Shops and restaurants were closed and some

people's mobile phones were confiscated in an attempt to prevent news of the self-immolation from spreading.

According to information received from Tibetans in exile, **Kunchok Tseten** died soon after his self-immolation. His body has not been returned to his family. According to new information from the same sources, **Kunchok Tseten** had participated in a protest in Lhasa during the wave of unrest that spread across Tibet in 2008, and was sent back to his home area of Machu by the authorities at that time.

Two weeks later, on December 19, 2013, a respected Tibetan monk called **Tsultrim Gyatso** set himself on fire and died in Amchok township, Sangchu County (Chinese: Xiahe), Gansu Province.

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Tsultrim Gyatso

According to Tibetan exile sources, monks gathered in Amchok to pray for him, and tried, later in the evening, to take his remains for a sky burial at Labrang monastery in Gansu Province.

A handwritten note signed by **Tsultrim Gyatso** was received by Tibetans in exile. The note explains that the self-immolation is a sacrifice towards ensuring the return of the **Dalai Lama** to Tibet. It is a strong statement of endurance and despair, written in religious language and asserting the core values of Tibetan Buddhism, as well as the importance of its survival. According to one source cited by Radio Free Asia (RFA): "Before his self-immolation at a cross-section in Sangchu, he went to his room after lunch break, lit a lamp, opened a book on the teachings of Buddha and wrote his one-page suicide note," a Tibetan lecturer at the Dalai Lama Institute for Higher Education (DLIHE) in Bangalore, India, told RFA's Tibetan Service. [December 19, 2013].

The note, written as a poem, with a title, 'Golden Tear Drop', opens with an expression of anguish that the suffering of Tibetans are not being heard and addressed ('To whom should the suffering of the six million Tibetans be conveyed?') It refers to oppression in Tibet and the exploitation of its natural and mineral resources. The note states that the self-immolation is an "offering" for the return of the Dalai Lama to his homeland, for the release of the young Panchen Lama (held in custody by Chinese authorities since 1995) and for the welfare of the Tibetan people: "My body has been offered to the fire for these." ■

Rare Vigil Outside Prison to Support Popular Tibetan Monk

Around 60 to 70 monks and several hundred laypeople gathered in front of the county jail in the Tibetan town of Nangchen (Chinese: Nangqian), Yushu, on Wednesday in a silent vigil in support of Khenpo Kartse, who was detained in Chengdu, Sichuan, on December 6 (2013). Although the rally took place in Nangchen, **Khenpo Kartse** is imprisoned in Chamdo (Chinese: Qamdo or Changdu), according to Tibetan sources.



Silent vigil outside Nangchen prison for Khenpo Kartse on January 15, 2014

Images sent from Tibet show the crowd gathering in front of the prison walls, topped by a watch-tower, while another picture shows a silent crowd gathered in a circle, sitting on the ground, outside the prison. According to information from Tibetan exile sources, the crowd dispersed after a senior official from the security bureau in Nangchen came out to speak to them, saying that monks who had been detained would be released, and that information about Khenpo Kartse's case would be given to them.

Khenpo Kartse is a respected abbot (Khenpo) at the Gongya Monastery in Nangchen, Kyegudo (Yushu) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, in Qinghai Province. According to Beijing-based Tibetan writer **Tsering Woesser**, **Khenpo Kartse's** lawyer has been told by Chamdo police that the case involves endangering state security. Tibetans in the area have expressed fears that his continued detention and conviction could spark unrest and a further crackdown. "If he should be convicted, it would be like the sky falling," Woesser said (Associated Press, January 17, 2014).

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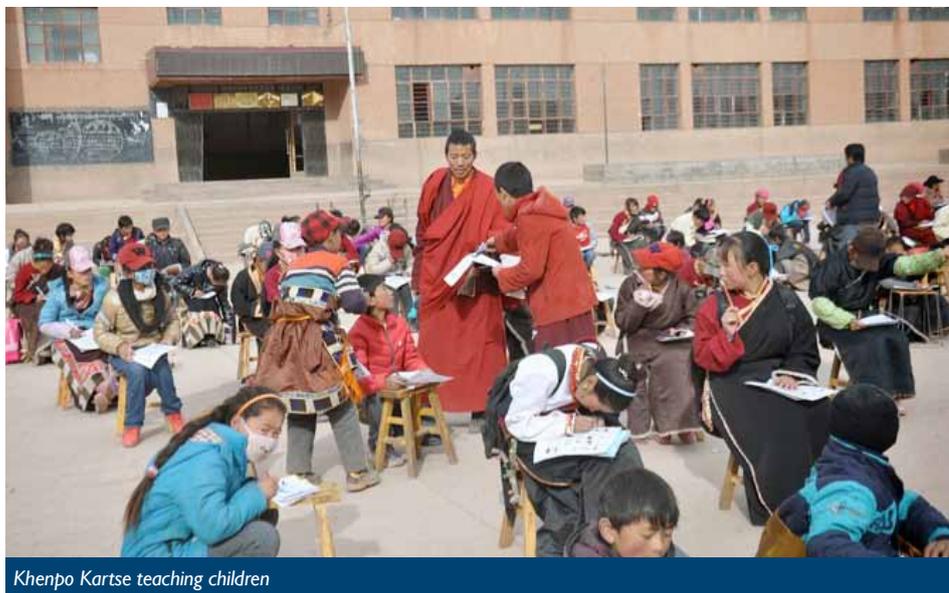
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Khenpo Kartse teaching children

Khenpo Kartse is well known for his community initiatives to preserve Tibetan language, including teaching the language to young Tibetans. He was also involved in leading teams of monks to rescue victims and provide relief to survivors during recent disasters in Tibetan areas, including the earthquake in Kyegudo (Yushu) in 2010, and the landslide in Drukchu (Chinese: Zhouqu). After the earthquake in Yushu, Khenpo Kartse interviewed a number of eyewitnesses and made a film about it that was later banned from circulation by the authorities.

Distressed at his detention in early December, hundreds of monks joined by local people gathered to call for his release on December 12 (2013). Monks with white headbands held hand-made banners with wording in Tibetan and Chinese characters proclaiming messages including: 'Please release **Khenpo Kartse**' and 'Understand the difficulties of students separated from their teacher'.

Although the demonstrators stopped, on December 20 and 21, 16 monks were detained, and their current whereabouts

and safety is not known.

According to news circulating on social media, several thousand Tibetans also signed a petition calling for **Khenpo Kartse's** release.

In a handwritten letter dated December 27 and apparently written in prison, Khenpo Kartse called on his "sincere followers" not to worry about him and to forbear from any actions that might cause them harm. It was not possible to fully confirm the authenticity of the note, which was circulated on Tibetan social media.

In a translation from the Tibetan, the note stated: "On account of my current situation, I remain in prison in Chamdo, but I have not suffered any beatings or harm; I, therefore, hope that the monastic and the lay communities will not be too worried. In particular, I strongly appeal to my sincere followers that not one of you should suffer for my sake; it is in the long-term interest that the monk disciples should devote themselves to the monastery's spiritual activities and the lay community should devote themselves to their regular activities.

"It seems there was some confrontation recently between the public security personnel and the monastic and lay communities; such incidents should not take place at all. Forbearance should be shown and good relations maintained with the concerned leaders and offices so that the current situation can be resolved quickly and all the spiritual activities can be resumed." The Khenpo added an instruction for his supporters and followers to offer prayers, writing: "In the meanwhile, the monastic and lay communities should recite prayers to Tara and the refuge practice; the deity chapels and the monasteries should conduct whatever possible prayer ceremonies."

The detention of **Khenpo Kartse**, who has been under the scrutiny of local officials for some time, is consistent with the authorities' attempts in Tibet to silence and suppress individuals with a positive influence in their community, often monks, scholars, writers who seek to protect the values of Tibetan cultural and religious identity.

Matteo Mecacci, President of the **International Campaign for Tibet**, said: "The detention of Khenpo Kartse, like those of other Tibetans who are working peacefully to preserve their culture and identity, should be of great concern for the international community. First of all, because these detentions take place without following due process and without any evidence that can justify a grave decision such is the deprivation of personal freedom of any individual; secondly, because the continuing harassment by the Chinese authorities of respected leaders of the Tibetan communities further alienates Tibetans who live already in a very oppressive environment. This is a dangerous trend that needs to be addressed urgently and the international community should call for Khenpo Kartse's immediate release from prison". ■

Political prisoners focus

Gedun Gyatso

According to the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD), a Tibetan monk from Bora Monastery was sentenced to six years in prison over self-immolation protest, more than a year after his arrest in Sangchu (Chinese: Xiahe) County in Kanlho (Chinese: Gannan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu Province. The sentence, based on "intentional homicide" charges, was announced on December 10, 2013.

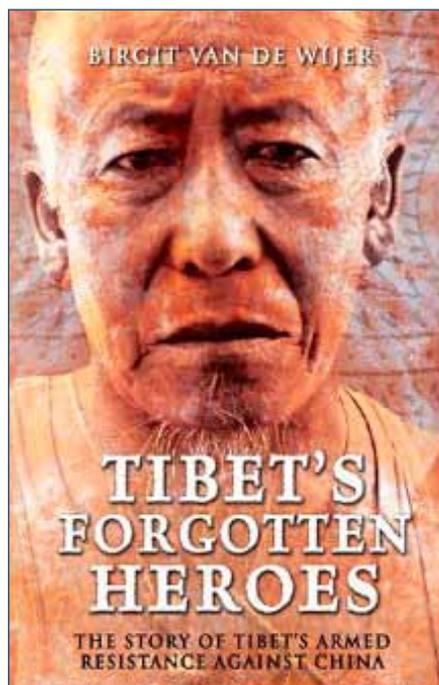
Gedun Gyatso was arrested in December 2012 along with four other monks from Bora Monastery, a day after Sungdue Kyap committed self-immolation in Bora. Except for Gedun Gyatso, the four other monks were released separately after being held for months.

Chinese authorities kept Gedun Gyatso in custody for over a year before his sentencing. Gyatso refused to accept the charges imposed on him and even during the trial, he stood adamant that he was not guilty of "intentional homicide".

Gedun Gyatso was born in Lhabun Thangri Gapma village in Bora Township. His mother Sonam Tso is over 80 years old and had waited for over a year for news about her son. "No one has the heart to tell her the truth about her son. She still thinks that her son had gone for a long journey and would be back someday," a source told TCHRD. ■

This number's reading suggestion

Tibet's Forgotten Heroes by Birgit Van De Wijer



In 1949, the People's Liberation Army of China sent troops into Tibet. At first, Chinese soldiers behaved respectfully towards the local people, distributing clothes, blankets, tools, medicine and even money. Soon, however, it became clear that a new era in Tibetan history had begun, namely one of oppression, atrocities and resistance.

Tibet's Forgotten Heroes is a unique historical document on Tibetan resistance to Chinese oppression. For the very first time since the events, forty-eight stories by Tibetan warriors involved in the struggle for freedom are given unabridged, creating a vivid and emotional spectrum of events in Tibet since 1949.

Birgit van de Wijer provided an honest transcription of the interviews, acting only as a 'service hatch'. Native Tibetans conducted the first-hand interviews and translated them into English. The book is the result of two years of work involving dozens of Tibetans.

Birgit van de Wijer has an MA in Archaeology and a BA in Oriental Studies. Her former works include *Child Exodus from Tibet* and *Escape to Freedom: The Dangerous Trek of Tibetan Youth*. She lectures in Belgium on the subject of her first book and carries out educational workshops on Tibet in primary and secondary schools in Belgium. She has made several keynote speeches on the situation in Tibet, including a speech for the Tibet Intergroup of the European Parliament (Strasbourg, April 2007). ■

10. Upcoming Events

- ▶ 19 FEBRUARY 2014: 100th meeting of the European Parliament's Tibet Intergroup
- ▶ 10 MARCH: Anniversary of the Tibetan Uprising (1959)
- ▶ MARCH 2014: First official visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to Europe (including to Brussels)
- ▶ 3 – 28 MARCH: 25th session of the UN Human Rights Council and adoption of the report of China's Universal Periodic Review (UPR)