

Tibet Brief

A report of the International Campaign for Tibet



March 2015

New ICT report: “Torture and Impunity: 29 Cases of Tibetan Political Prisoners”

On February 26, 2015 the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) published its new report which documents a pattern of torture and mistreatment of Tibetans by Chinese prison officials, including 14 of them who have died, as a consequence, between 2009 and 2014.



Torture and impunity: 29 cases of Tibetan political prisoners

2008-2014

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The report, “[Torture and Impunity – 29 Cases of Tibetan Political Prisoners](#)”, details specific cases of 14 **Tibetans**: from an educated Tibetan in his early forties to a Buddhist teacher, who died as a result of torture in custody as well as 15 others who survived but are still suffering. It also details the impact of imprisonment – whether extra-judicial, interrogation or a formal sentence – on the lives of Tibetan political prisoners released over the past two years whose ordeals have become known to the outside world, despite rigorous controls on information flow.

Matteo Mecacci, President of the International Campaign for Tibet, said:

“This report documents that since the

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unrest and crackdown in 2008, torture appears to have become more widespread and directed at a broader sector of society in Tibet. In particular, a younger generation of Tibetans is paying a high price with their lives for peacefully expressing their views about the oppressive policies implemented by the Chinese Government. Almost any expression of Tibetan identity not directly sanctioned by the state can now be characterized as 'reactionary', 'splittist', and therefore 'criminal.'

Torture is endemic in Tibet's judicial and law enforcement system, a result both of political emphasis on ensuring 'stability' and a culture of impunity imposed from the highest levels of the Chinese leadership.

For **Tibetans**, it is important that these shocking accounts are known outside their country. Before he died following

torture and malnourishment in prison, 43-year old Goshul Lobsang expressed his wish for a blessing from the **Dalai Lama**, and also said that he wanted to let the outside world know about the lives of Tibetan political prisoners under Chinese oppression. He passed away in March 2014; Tibetan sources said that: "[At the end] he could not say anything, but simply folded his hands and died."

ICT is deeply concerned about the spike in imprisonments and the endemic torture of **Tibetans** in contravention of both Chinese and international law. While there are legal safeguards in Chinese law against enforced disappearances, torture and medical access for detainees, these measures are routinely ignored by the Chinese authorities.

The report asks **China** to conduct an

inquiry into the cases of custodial deaths and extrajudicial killings detailed in this report and bring those responsible to justice. It also calls on **China** to:

- enforce Articles 7 and 14 of the Prison Law of the People's Republic of **China** which stipulate that guards cannot humiliate detainees or violate their personal safety, use torture or corporal punishment, "beat or connive at others to beat a prisoner," or "humiliate the human dignity of a prisoner."
- release all Tibetan prisoners detained for religious beliefs or practices, or peaceful expression of views;
- address the underlying grievances of **Tibetans** by respecting their universal rights and by entering into meaningful negotiations with the **Tibetans**. ■

First Self-Immolation of 2015

A woman in her late 40s called Norchuk set fire to herself and died on the night of March 5, in the first self-immolation in Tibet this year. Norchuk was from Dowa village in the Trotsik area of Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) county, Ngaba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan (in the Tibetan area of Amdo). Unusually, her body was not taken by the authorities but local people cremated her remains the next morning in order to pay their respects.



Norchuk

It is the 137th known case of self-immolation by a **Tibetan** in Tibet and **China** since 2009, the 37th in Ngaba county. Norchuk leaves her husband, a son and two daughters. A few years ago, according to the Kirti monks, she began practicing vegetarianism in dedication to the long life of the Dalai Lama. Security in the area has now been intensified.

is known as "Heroes" or "Martyrs" street because of the number of self-immolations and protests that have occurred here. He walked along the main street in Ngaba, carrying a portrait of the **Dalai Lama** wrapped in a yellow offering scarf, and shouting: "His Holiness the Dalai Lama must be allowed to return! Tibet must have freedom and equality!" The Kirti monks in exile said: "Before long the police came and took him away, and nothing more is known."

The Ngaba protests took place in the context of a charged political environment in the tense build-up to March 10, the sensitive **anniversary of Tibet's national** uprising in 1959 and an unprecedented wave of mostly peaceful protests that swept across the Tibetan plateau in 2008. Across Tibet, security was intensified; the authorities in the Tibet Autonomous Region announced a strengthening of 'counter-terrorist' measures, while police in other areas were equipped with fire extinguishers in case of self-immolations. ■

Tibet Brief

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March 2015

“Europe Stands with Tibet” Rally in Paris

The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) co-organized a major rally for Tibet in Paris on March 14, 2015, to demonstrate solidarity with the Tibetan freedom struggle and the Dalai Lama in his 80th year. Approximately 8,000 Tibetans and their supporters from across Europe gathered in Paris for this event.



Tibet Rally in Paris – 14 March 2015

Cartoonists and artists, including the famous Swiss artist **Cosey**, provided powerful images for the Paris rally, reflecting values of freedom of speech, and political expression through the medium of cartoons. [The Paris Declaration](#) was presented at the rally – which was attended by **Mr. Robert Badinter**, former French Minister of Justice and



Tibet Rally in Paris – 14 March 2015



former President of the Constitutional Council – calling upon European leaders to support the Tibetan people against oppression.

Swiss artist Cosey, who has provided one of the drawings displayed during the rally, said: “I’m very concerned by the degradation of human rights in Tibet, the absence of freedom of expression, the threats against freedom of religion and fundamental rights of Tibetan people. This must be denounced forcefully by our political leaders. I salute the courage of all Tibetan artists, whether musicians, painters, writers or poets, who use their art to resist the oppression of their people and defend their cultural identity. Their struggle is our struggle.”

March 10, 2015 was the 56th anniversary of the Tibetan Uprising leading to the **Dalai Lama’s** flight into exile in 1959, and the seventh anniversary of an unprecedented wave of protests, which swept through Tibet, only to be met by a violent crackdown. This year’s March 10 anniversary had a particular resonance as the **Dalai Lama** will turn 80 this year, a moment of particular significance to **Tibetans**. ■



Tibet at the Human Rights Council's 28th Session

The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) actively participated in the 28th session of the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) in Geneva, which took place from March 2 – 27, 2015.



Side event on the human rights situation of minorities in China at the UN HRC – 16 March 2015

Elena Gaita, took part in a side event organized at the UN HRC by the Society for Threatened Peoples. The topic of the event was “Human Rights Situation of Minorities under the People’s Republic of **China**”. The other speakers on the panel were Ven. **Golog Jigme Gyatso**, a former political prisoner in Tibet; Mr. **Peter Irwin** from the World Uyghur Congress; and Mr. **Enghebatu Togocho**, Director of the Southern Mongolian Human Rights Centre.

ICT’s presentation focused on the criminalization of self-immolations, the ‘counter-terrorism’ campaign and the use of torture in Tibet.

Matteo Mecacci, President of ICT, delivered a statement on behalf of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights at the interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief on March 11. He said “*The Chinese government adopted a more pervasive approach to “patriotic education”, including measures to micromanage Tibetan Buddhist monastic affairs; “legal education” programs for monks and nuns; and a ban on images of the **Dalai Lama**.*”

While in Geneva, Matteo Mecacci asked for support among the diplomatic community on Tibet-related issues. He was accompanied by the ICT Head for UN Advocacy, Kai Müller.

The Chinese government gave a direct response to ICT’s statement, defending its policies on religion in Tibet by saying that “*all types of religious activity proceed normally in Tibet*” and that religious freedom was fully respected.

To see the video and read ICT’s full statement, click [here](#)

On March 16, 2015 ICT’s Policy and Advocacy Officer

Some Chinese representatives participated in the event and made statements regarding laws on self-immolations in Tibet, the territorial integrity of **China**, terrorism and deprivation of political rights for former prisoners. ■



Matteo Mecacci at the UN HRC – 11 March 2015

European Parliament Adopts Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World

On March 12, 2015, the **European Parliament (EP)** adopted its Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World 2013 and the European Union's policy on the matter by Rapporteur Pier Antonio Panzeri (S&D, Italy).

This year the **EP** chose to adopt a thematic approach rather than the usual geographic one. However, the discussions among members revealed that the **EP** was split and there was no consensus on this issue. The **International Campaign for Tibet (ICT)** raised its concerns about this new approach throughout the process, as the decision not to name countries where human rights violations occur, considerably weakened the report. Due to this reason, this year's report did not specifically mention the human rights situation in Tibet, which represents a step backwards compared to last year's report.

However, the text mentioned the situation in two of the **EU's** key strategic partners – Russia and **China**. The report referred to the "failure of the **EU-China** human rights dialogue" to achieve tangible results and urged the **EU** to adopt a more coherent, unified and strategic approach to human rights in **China**. Moreover, it called on the High Representative Federica Mogherini to prioritise human rights in **China** during her tenure by clarifying that gross human rights violations are a threat to bilateral relations between the **EU** and its strategic partners. **China** was also mentioned in the section regarding the

death penalty as one of the countries with the highest rate of executions. The report called for the systematic inclusion of "binding, enforceable and non-negotiable" human rights clauses in the **EU's** international agreements, including trade agreements with third countries, whilst ensuring that these agreements facilitate the economic and social development of the countries concerned. This is particularly relevant for **ICT's** work in the light of the ongoing negotiations between the **EU** and **China** regarding their first bilateral Investment Agreement. ■

Lobby Days 2015 in Brussels

The third European Lobby Days, organized by the **International Campaign for Tibet Brussels (ICT)**, were held in Brussels on March 2 and 3, 2015.



Lobby Days 2015 participants and ICT Brussels staff with MEP Tunne Kelam in the EP

Tibetan activists and European citizens involved in the Tibet movement from Belgium, Finland, Germany, Lithuania and the Netherlands participated in the program. The objective of the Lobby Days was to train activists

to become effective advocates of the Tibetan cause at European level in their respective countries of residence. The training included a theoretical part on **EU** policies towards **China** and Tibet, human rights, recent developments in Tibet, advocacy and communications techniques. **ICT** Brussels also provided participants with meaningful exposure to the **EU** political scene and the discourse around **EU-China** relations and Tibet's role in it by organizing meetings with a representative of the European External Action Service and with Members of the European Parliament Bart Staes (Belgium, Greens), Hilde Vautmans (Belgium, ALDE) and Tunne Kelam (Estonia, EPP). Participants of the 2015 European Lobby Days had the opportunity to engage in discussions with distinguished professionals working in different fields, such as **EU-China** relations, human rights advocacy and the Tibetan movement. Moreover, they could enhance their understanding of the role of activists, lobbyists, NGOs and the media in influencing foreign policy at European level. ■

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March 2015

Political prisoners focus

Gedun Phuntsok



Gedun Phuntsok

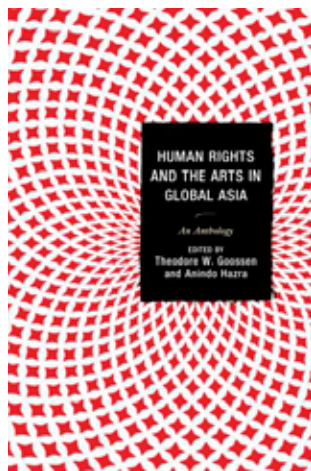
On March 8, 2015, 18-year old Kirti monastery monk **Gedun Phuntsok** staged a solo protest on the main street in Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) town, Ngaba county. This location, near Kirti monastery, is known as “Heroes” or “Martyrs” street because of the number of self-immolations and protests that have occurred here.

He walked along the main street in Ngaba, carrying a portrait of the **Dalai Lama** wrapped in a yellow offering scarf, and shouting: “His Holiness the **Dalai Lama** must be allowed to return! Tibet must have freedom and equality!” The Kirti monks in exile said: “Before long the police came and took him away, and nothing more is known.”

The monk’s whereabouts and condition remain unknown. ■

Reading suggestion

“Human Rights and the Arts in Global Asia – An Anthology”



This anthology of literary and dramatic works introduces writers from across Asia and the Asian diaspora. The landscapes and time periods described are rich and varied: a fishing village on the Padma River in Bangladesh in the early twentieth century, the slums of prewar Tokyo, Indonesia during the anti-leftist purge of the 1960s. Even more varied are the voices these works bring to life, which serve as testimony to the lives of those adversely impacted by poverty, rapid social change,

political suppression, and armed conflict. In the end, the works in this anthology convey an attitude of spiritual and communal survival and even of hope.

It includes a section on Tibetan poems by Ju Kalsang, translated by Françoise Robin, professor of Tibetan language and literature at Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (Inalco, France).

This anthology presents the complex dynamic between a diversity of Asian lives and the universalized concept of the individual “human” entitled to clearly specified “rights.” It also asks readers to think about what standards of analysis we should employ when considering a historical period in

which universal human rights and civil liberties are considered secondary to the collective good. This has so often been the case when nation states are undergoing revolutionary change, waging war, or championing so-called Asian values.

This book’s use of the term Global Asia reflects an interest in rethinking “Asia” as more than an area determined by national borders and geography. Rather, this book portrays it as a space of movement and fluidity, where societies and individuals respond not only to their local frames of reference, but also to broader ideas and ideals. ■

Upcoming Events

- ▶ **30 JUNE 2015 :**
EXHIBITION IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ON THE OCCASION OF THE DALAI LAMA’S 80TH BIRTHDAY – CO-ORGANIZED BY THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET (ICT), THE OFFICE OF TIBET AND THE OFFICE OF MEP CSABA SOGOR (ROMANIA, EPP)
- ▶ **END OF JUNE/BEGINNING OF JULY (TBC) :**
EU-CHINA SUMMIT IN BRUSSELS