



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Chinese court's decision to uphold Tashi Wangchuk's prison sentence is a travesty of justice, ICT says

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The International Campaign for Tibet today said that a Chinese court's decision to reject the appeal of Tibetan language rights advocate Tashi Wangchuk is a travesty of justice—and that Wangchuk should be released immediately.

On August 23, 2018, Wangchuk's lawyer, Liang Xiaojun, announced via social media that the Qinghai Higher People's Court had rejected "both the argument from Tashi Wangchuk himself and the defending statement from the lawyers."

The court document stating that Wangchuk's appeal had been denied is dated July 30, 2018. Xiaojun said the ruling was announced in the Yushu City Detention Center on August 13 and that Wangchuk's "family was not allowed to hear the sentence."

The court document says that Tashi Wangchuk "distorted the facts, attacking the state's policies on ethnic minorities, making remarks that undermine ethnic unity and national unity. His behavior violated the legal bottom line of citizen's freedom of speech, and was clearly subjective and deliberate. His reasons for appeal and the defense's opinion cannot be established."

Wangchuk, 33, had appealed the decision by the Yushu Intermediate People's Court on May 22, 2018 to [sentence him to five years' imprisonment on charges of "incitement to separatism."](#)

"It is clear that during the initial process in Yushu and the subsequent appeal process in the Qinghai Higher People's Court, Tashi Wangchuk did not receive a fair trial," said Bhuchung K. Tsering, Vice President of ICT. "Tashi Wangchuk is a prisoner of conscience, detained solely for his peaceful expression of opinion concerning the rights of the Tibetan people to study their own language, as guaranteed by the Chinese Constitution. This ruling shows that when it comes to Tibet, the Chinese authorities have systematically disregarded the rule of law and international human rights standards."

Tsering added: "The rejection of this appeal is a clear and chilling indication of the shift in Chinese policy towards criminalization of Tibetan culture itself - attacking individuals and groups who simply seek to promote their language. Tashi Wangchuk should be released immediately and unconditionally."

Wangchuk was arrested in early 2016, [two months after he was featured in a New York Times video and article about Tibetan language education](#). In the video, he can be seen requesting that Chinese authorities allow the Tibetan language to be taught in schools in Tibet.

Wangchuk stood trial in January 2018. In the first known instance of an international news story being used in a criminal prosecution against a Tibetan, the New York Times video was entered into court as evidence—despite Wangchuk’s clear disavowals of separatism and his stated intention to use Chinese laws to protect the Tibetan language.

Wangchuk pleaded not guilty to the charges against him. A verdict was not returned until the morning of May 22, 2018, when his lawyer announced that he had been given a five-year sentence.

Wangchuk is among a younger generation in Tibet who have prioritized protection of the Tibetan language, the bedrock of cultural and religious identity, framing their concerns in the context of Chinese law and regulations. In the New York Times video, Wangchuk is seen saying: “I want to try to use the People’s Republic of China’s laws to solve the problem.”

Governments and elected officials across the world have called for Wangchuk’s release. In February 2018, [six United Nations human rights experts condemned the “criminalization of linguistic and cultural rights advocacy”](#) and called for his release.

The denial of Wangchuk’s appeal should be of grave concern to foreign and independent media in China, who are already severely restricted in their activities. His imprisonment intensifies the dangers to Tibetans who engage in even harmless conversation with journalists visiting Tibet.