



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Fears for health of Tibetan monk jailed for celebrating Dalai Lama's birthday

<http://www.savetibet.org/fears-for-health-of-tibetan-monk-jailed-for-celebrating-dalai-lamas-birthday/>

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There are growing fears about the welfare of a Tibetan monk who was released from prison this month after spending three-and-a-half years in jail for wearing a t-shirt that celebrated the Dalai Lama's birthday.

The monk named Choekyi (Chinese: Queji), who was the subject of a European Parliament emergency resolution [calling for his release last year](#)¹ is suffering from serious ill-health and pain that was exacerbated by hard labor and solitary confinement in prison. He was denied health care in custody, and, even since his release, he has not been allowed to receive medical treatment.

Choekyi was detained in June 2015 after he wore a t-shirt with Tibetan writing celebrating the Dalai Lama's 80th birthday that year and posted messages of good wishes on social media.

Choekyi was accused of being part of an 'anti-Communist Party' group.² He was released late at night on Jan. 18, 2019 under tight security. Due to his poor health, he was let out of prison five months before the end of a four-year sentence, which may indicate that prison authorities did not want him to die while still in jail.

Choekyi was suffering from a kidney ailment and other health issues prior to his detention, and torture and ill-treatment in Mianyang Prison near the Sichuan provincial capital of Chengdu, made his condition worse. He was confined to a solitary cell and forced to carry out hard labor, including digging rocks, possibly for road construction, and cleaning the prison.

In December 2017, concerns were raised about Choekyi's health. According to a Tibetan source speaking to Radio Free Asia, family members and other relatives were initially allowed to visit Choekyi twice a month, but in October 2017, orders were passed to prison authorities saying that family meetings would be limited to five to ten minutes, and visitors would not be allowed to bring food or medicine for him.³

¹ European Parliament, "European Parliament resolution on the cases of the human rights activists Wu Gan, Xie Yang, Lee Ming-che and Tashi Wangchuk, and the Tibetan monk Choekyi", January 18, 2018, <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=MOTION&reference=P8-RC-2018-0043&format=XML&language=EN>; in the resolution, members of the European Parliament called on the Chinese authorities to "release the Tibetan monk Choekyi immediately and unconditionally" and urged "the Chinese Government to allow his relatives and the lawyers of his choice to visit him and, in particular, to provide him with adequate medical care". International Campaign for Tibet report, January 18, 2018, <https://www.savetibet.org/european-parliament-adopts-an-urgency-resolution-calling-for-the-immediate-and-unconditional-release-of-tashi-wangchuk-and-tibetan-monk-choekyi/>

² According to ICT sources.

³ Radio Free Asia, 27 December 2012, 'Tibetan Monk Who Celebrated Dalai Lama's Birthday Now in Failing Health in Prison', <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/health-12272017131425.html>.

The emergency resolution by the European Parliament in January 2018 drew attention to Choekyi's failing health, recommending that he be released and provided with medical care, particularly after learning that family members were not allowed to take medicine to him in prison.

While it used to be common practice in Tibet for family and friends to welcome home respected prisoners with *khatags* (Tibetan greeting scarves), more recently authorities in Tibet have imposed bans on such greetings and have often released political prisoners in the middle of the night without warning. Choekyi's case was no exception; he was released late at night, and Serthar county authorities told his family that large gatherings of people to welcome him would not be permitted.

Choekyi is now based in his family home in Nyitod (Chinese: Niduo) township, Serthar (Chinese: Seda) County (the Tibetan area of Kham) in Sichuan. He is believed to be suffering from serious pain in his spine, head and legs. However, he has struggled to obtain adequate medical treatment because of security cameras that are believed to have been set up on buildings close to his home to monitor, track and deter visitors. According to Tibetan sources, he is not allowed to go to a hospital or see a doctor without permission from the county authorities in Serthar. Choekyi is also not allowed to visit his monastery, Phugu (Chinese: Puyu), in Nyitod township in Serthar county.

Choekyi's case and harsh sentence for celebrating the Dalai Lama's birthday is not unique. In December 2016, nine Tibetans, including four Kirti monks and five laypeople, were handed sentences ranging from five to 14 years in prison for celebrating the Dalai Lama's birthday.⁴

⁴ ICT report, 15 December 2016, 'Tibetans sentenced to long prison terms for involvement in Dalai Lama's 80th birthday celebration', <https://www.savetibet.org/tibetans-sentenced-to-long-prison-terms-for-involvement-in-dalai-lamas-80th-birthday-celebration/>.