



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Tibetan anti-corruption campaigner to appeal 7-year prison sentence

<https://savetibet.org/tibetan-anti-corruption-campaigner-to-appeal-7-year-prison-sentence/>

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Tibetan nomad and community leader Anya Sengdra, who fought corruption and stood up for poor local people, will appeal the seven-year prison sentence he was given earlier this month, according to his lawyer.

The lawyer further said Anya Sengdra was suffering from poor health.

Anya Sengdra, 47, was sentenced on Dec. 6 by the Gade (Chinese: Gande) County court in Golog (Guoluo), Qinghai province in the Tibetan area of Amdo.

Lin Qilei, Anya Sengdra's lawyer, told Radio Free Asia's Tibetan Service on Dec. 9 that the verdict will not be accepted and there will be an appeal. He said he was waiting to receive the written verdict in order to review the case and to decide on the path forward. According to Chinese laws, an individual has the right to file an appeal within 10 days from the day following receipt of the judgment.

Lin also spoke about Anya's health condition, saying that he has high blood pressure and the medical treatment given to him in the detention center has not been effective.

The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) calls for the immediate release of Anya Sengdra, as he has been detained solely for peacefully campaigning against corruption and expressing criticism with regard to government policies.

Anti-corruption campaigns

Anya Sengdra has been a staunch campaigner against government corruption since at least 2014, when he and other local Tibetan nomads founded a voluntary organization called "Mangdon Ling" ("Public Affairs Forum") to fight against local authorities' abuse of power.

He criticized local officials for siphoning off and misusing public money, notably from relocated nomads, and ran campaigns against illegal mining activities and the hunting and poaching of endangered animals.

Following his arrest on Sept. 4, 2018, Anya Sengdra was beaten and held without access to a lawyer for his first 48 days in detention. His wife and other family members were not permitted to see him.

The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD), an NGO based in the Tibetan exile capital of Dharamsala, India, described Anya Sengdra as a "shadow of his former self" because of the

way his health and physique have deteriorated in prison.¹ In the weeks following his arrest, nine other Tibetans from Golog were also detained, and eight have also been sentenced in recent weeks.

Lawyer's tweets

On Nov. 20, Lin posted on social media: "In September 2018 as Anya Sengdra's defender I got involved in an investigation by the Public Security Bureau of Gade County into a suspected case of provoking troubles. Anya Sengdra had been dissatisfied for years and accused the local government of violations, and led more than 200 Tibetans in suing the Provincial Discipline Inspection Committee.

"While the Gade County Procuratorate was reviewing and prosecuting the case, I was told that the case had been changed to involve evil. On Oct. 15, 2019, Gade County Court held a three and a half day pre-trial meeting, and then on the afternoon of November 18, 2019, a case officer at the Gade County Public Security Bureau named Dorje Tsering gave me a call from 15597572320. I rejected a request to take notes, but then this person called again and told me that Anya Sengdra was suspected of fraud and that the charges hadn't been brought to court by the prosecutor. He asked me about the details of the case, but I refused on the grounds of "defenders can't testify against parties."

"Out of the 10 accused during the pre-trial meeting, only my client, Anya Sengdra, refused to plead guilty. Our two defenders are also pleading not guilty, and it is our consideration that this case does not involve evil. Accordingly, I don't know what so-called evidence the Gade County Public Security Bureau is asking for. This is my record of this critical moment."

Lin also shared the news of Anya Sengdra's sentencing on Dec. 6 in a social media post.²

According to Lin, Anya Sengdra was accused of "the crimes of provoking troubles, forming a mob to disturb social order, and other evil cases." "Provoking trouble" is a vaguely worded offence under Article 293 of Chinese Criminal Law that has been increasingly used in recent years to persecute and launch reprisals against human rights defenders and other activists critical of government policies and practices.

Standing up for the poor

In sentencing Anya Sengdra, the court apparently invoked the Chinese government's politically motivated campaign against "black" and "evil forces." While this is a nationwide campaign, it has been intensified in Tibet with a strong emphasis on cracking down on "separatism in the name of religion" and loyalty to the Dalai Lama.

On Sept. 8, 2018, four days after his arrest, Anya Sengdra's wife Yangkyi wrote a petition to authorities accusing the Gade county government of making baseless charges against her husband, whom she described as a law-abiding citizen, and describing the arrest as a reprisal for his activities to defend the rights of local Tibetan nomads. In her petition, she explained that over the years, local authorities had introduced numerous welfare schemes to rehabilitate and compensate for the forced

¹ "China Detains Tibetan Anti-Corruption Activist on Politicised Charge of Provoking Trouble," *Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy*, <https://tchrd.org/china-detains-tibetan-anti-corruption-activist-on-politicised-charge-of-provoking-trouble/>. When Anya Sengdra's lawyer Lin Qilei managed to see him more than a month after his initial detention in October, 2018, he said that he was in very poor health and had lost a lot of weight.

² "Tibetan Nomad And Environmental Activist Sentenced To Seven Years In Prison," *International Tibet Network*, <https://tibetnetwork.org/tibetan-nomad-and-environment-activist-sentenced-to-seven-years-in-prison/>. The names of the nine other Tibetans detained are as follows: Sothor, Asho, Dosang, Wanggyal, Gyaltsen, Abhi, Ugen Tsering, Wanchen and Jimtri, who was Anya Sengdra's brother.

relocation and settlement of nomads such as grassland and forestry subsidies, low-income household benefits and other poverty alleviation schemes, but that much of the relief funds never reached the targeted beneficiaries.

Anya Sengdra—who was a leader in his hometown of Kyangche (Chinese: Jiangqian), Gongmey (Xiazangke) and also Ganglung (Ganglong) in Gade County, Golog—and 10 other members of the “Public Affairs Forum” filed a petition in 2014 calling for an investigation into the activities of Gade County authorities in their home area, listing seven issues related to the mismanagement of public funds meant for the local nomads, including the question: “Why are there no housing facilities for relocated nomads in Kyangche Township? The County government used poverty alleviation funds worth 18,000,000 RMB to buy a 720 sq. ft. shopping complex, which has not been handed over to the poor. Why was housing subsidy for nomads discontinued? The issue of government compensation for grassland and forestry [seized from nomads].”

In three petitions calling for his release published by the TCHRD, local Tibetans pointed out that many of the issues raised by Anya Sengdra during his appeals to higher authorities have been resolved since his detention. For instance, residents of one township reported in their petition that after his arrest, local authorities began paying housing subsidies and minimum livelihood allowances to local people. Other residents began receiving compensation for appropriated grassland and forest after Anya Sengdra launched his campaign.

All the petitions, which were signed by citizens in Kyangche, called for Anya Sengdra’s immediate release with some specifically mentioning Chinese Chairman Xi Jinping’s slogans on eliminating corruption.

Anya Sengdra’s brother Jimtri, who was arrested on Dec. 16, 2018, was also due to stand trial on the same day after spending almost a year in detention. According to new reports, Jimtri died in November or December after being taken from his detention center to the hospital. No further information is known about the circumstances of his death.

Petition

The petition from Gongmey township, translated by TCHRD, stated:

“To the Golok Prefecture People’s Procuratorate and Other Relevant Offices

Anya Sengdra has been detained for [appealing for] the wellbeing of the ordinary masses and not for any personal reasons. He stood up in support of the livelihood of the ordinary people, the law of the Chinese Communist Party, and Comrade Xi Jinping’s legal system. He had no political intentions and has never done or said anything to protest against the government.

Since his arrest, our collective mind has not been put to rest. The reason is he was arrested for [supporting] the people. Since his arrest, the government has provided to the people numerous [facilities] that he had demanded. For instance, earlier poor households had to pay 10000 yuan per house to the government. Moreover, they had no choice but to build their houses on the plot selected by the government.

These days, all poor households in Gongmey Township have been provided about 50 houses and no one had to pay anything. Also the masses now have the right to build their houses wherever they like. And with much haste, the government has provided money to repair houses and minimum livelihood compensation. The masses know that it was Anya Sengdra who made all this possible.”

The petition letter from Kyanche Township stated simply: “Anya Sengdra is highly respected in Kyangche Township. He only appealed on behalf of the ordinary masses demanding the payment of various funds such as housing funds for the local people. Therefore, we urge that he is not subjected to torture and beatings and that he is released from detention at the earliest.”