



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Larung Gar abbot's international centers closed under suspected pressure from China

<https://savetibet.org/larung-gar-abbots-international-centers-closed-under-suspected-pressure-from-china/>

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One of the leading Tibetan Buddhist voices within the People's Republic of China has made a surprising announcement about the closure of his Bodhi Institute of Compassion and Wisdom, which has locations throughout the world.

The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) has learned that some of Khenpo Sodargye's followers suspect there is more to the closure than the reason he cited in his announcement on Dec. 30, 2019.

The announcement, which was written in Chinese and posted on Larung Gar's website on Dec. 30, 2019, states that some people have "undertaken different activities in the name of the Institute," adding that Sodargye finds it disheartening that some of them are engaged in "illegal activities."

A Chinese disciple of Sodargye residing in the West told ICT's source that while the announcement of the closure is true, the reasons provided were "clearly" written by Sodargye under the direction of Chinese authorities.

The disciple said he received information from inside China stating that Sodargye and the other abbot of Larung Gar, Khenpo Tsultrim Lodro, were separately interrogated by Chinese authorities in November 2019, and that the closure is related to these interrogations. The word "Khenpo" is a Tibetan term that refers to monastery abbots and other senior monks.

Both abbots were the primary disciples of Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok, the founder of Larung Gar Tibetan Buddhist Academy in eastern Tibet, formally known as the Serthar Larung Five Sciences Buddhist Institute. Jigme Phuntsok passed away in 2004, and since then, the institute has been looked after by a team of abbots, including Sodargye and Tsultrim Lodro.

Larung Gar has become one of the largest and most influential centers for the study of Tibetan Buddhism in China, attracting both Tibetan and Chinese students. Over the last five years, Chinese authorities have repeatedly targeted it for demolitions, forcing monks and nuns to leave and destroying vast swaths of living quarters in an effort to severely reduce the size of the center.

Larung Gar also survived previous attempts by Chinese authorities to demolish sections of it in 2001.

Both Sodargye and Tsultrim Lodro have been making international travels in recent years giving talks on Buddhism and Buddhist philosophy.

The closure of Sodargye's international centers may represent an effort to restrict his religious and moral influence, which has grown in recent years. As recently as 2014, Sodargye was featured on the

cover of Chinese magazine Renwu Zhoukan (People Weekly). This was likely the first time a Buddhist monk or a Tibetan had been featured on the magazine cover.

Sodargye's statement said he is taking the following actions:

1. I disband the Bodhi Institute of Compassion and Wisdom and all its offices. As a result, regional dharma centers, committees and institutions related to and established in the name of [the] Bodhi Institute will be disbanded. I would like to reiterate that all activities undertaken by these institutions will be suspended, and websites related to them will also be disbanded.

2. Henceforth, if you come across any kind of announcement made in the name of Bodhi Center, they are fake. Any type of donation sought in the name of Bodhi Institute has nothing to do with me, and one shouldn't fall prey to it. If in case such act happens, I will take legal action to identify the culprit whosoever is responsible.

3. I will continue to love the nation as well as the religion and be in the service of faithful public. I hope faithful public will remain honest and be law abiding.