



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Report: Monks given long prison sentences as “preemptive security”

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A new report by Human Rights Watch reveals how Chinese authorities are applying the principle of preemptive security to control all aspects of Tibetan life with the apparent aim of deterring Tibetans from displaying loyalty to the Dalai Lama and their religious traditions.

The report, “‘Prosecute Them with Awesome Power’: China’s Crackdown on Tengdro Monastery and Restrictions on Communications in Tibet,” came out July 6. It presents a detailed account of how Chinese authorities raided a monastery and a village in western Tibet and secretly imprisoned monks affiliated with the monastery after police ran through the contents of a lost phone found at a café in Lhasa, Tibet’s capital city.

The phone contained images of the Dalai Lama and messages about financial contributions the monks had made to a monastery of the same lineage in Nepal in response to the earthquake there in 2015.

After secret trials, four monks received prison sentences of 5, 17, 19 and 20 years, respectively.

Although the Dalai Lama is one of the most admired people on Earth, the Chinese government restricts any mention of him in his homeland of Tibet. The Dalai Lama was forced to flee Tibet in 1959 when China’s occupation and annexation of the historically independent country began.

Preemptive security

Under the preemptive security system, officials identify potential “culprits” before they carry out any criminal action. This presumed guilt makes a mockery of justice and due process, allowing the Chinese to manufacture threats and impose repressive measures under the guise of maintaining internal stability.

Human Rights Watch said the Tengdro Monastery case appears to be an example of preventive control in the Tibetan context, given the severity of the sentences coupled with the absence of information demonstrating any serious criminal or political activity by the monks.

Tengdro Monastery is in Tingri county under Shigatse in western Tibet. Tingri is close to the border with Nepal.

The International Campaign for Tibet supports the recommendations by Human Rights Watch (see below) and urges the international community to ask China to quash the verdicts against the monks and launch an investigation into the misuse of the law against them.

Human Rights Watch recommendations

The following are recommendations that Human Rights Watch makes in its report.

To the Chinese Government:

- Quash the sentences imposed on the four monks from Tengdro monastery and the two monks from Shelkar Choede, and unconditionally release them from detention;
- Investigate publicly and appropriately prosecute all officials responsible for the beatings of monks and others in connection with the detention of Choegyul Wangpo in Lhasa and the raid on Dranak village in Tingri;
- Impartially investigate publicly the circumstances that led to the suicide of Lobsang Zoepa, and appropriate prosecute any officials responsible for harassment or other offenses against him or his family members;
- End required attendance at, and participation in, political education meetings;
- End the practice of holding trials in secret and not publishing trial proceedings involving Tibetans in the TAR accused of jeopardizing state security;
- Permit the clergy in Tibet to appoint their own leadership and engage in religious activities consistent with the right to freedom of religion and belief;
- End restrictions on Tibetans and others to communicate freely with others, including those abroad, consistent with the right to freedom of expression;
- End prosecutions of people for exercising their rights and fundamental freedoms protected under international human rights law; and
- Create an independent, credible, and impartial judiciary.

To the United Nations:

- The UN Human Rights Council should urge the Chinese government to release the Tengdro monks
- The Human Rights Council should also establish, as suggested by the 50 Special Procedures mandate holders in June 2020, “an impartial and independent United Nations mechanism...to closely monitor, analyze and report annually on the human rights situation in China, particularly, in view of the urgency of the situations in the Hong Kong SAR, the Xinjiang Autonomous Region and the Tibet Autonomous Region”
- The UN high commissioner for human rights should call on the Chinese government to end prosecutions and sentencing of Tibetans in violation of their fundamental rights and
- UN special procedures and treaty bodies should continue to document and publicly report on human rights violations in Tibetan areas by the Chinese authorities.

To Concerned Governments in Coordinated Bilateral or Multilateral Action

- Call for the immediate and unconditional release of the Tengdro monks
- Consider imposing targeted individual sanctions on officials responsible for human rights violations in the TAR and
- Support the call for a standing China mandate at the United Nations.

To the Nepalese Government

- Allow Tibetans to safely cross the border and ensure that they have access to the asylum process.



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