



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Eastern Tibet: Wave of arrests over language rights, Dalai Lama images

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The International Campaign for Tibet is deeply concerned about reports of a wave of detentions in eastern Tibet. The detentions in Wonpo (Chinese:Wenbo) township in Sershul (Shiqu) County, Kardze (Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan province have been ongoing since August amid a crackdown on Tibetan language activism and possession of images of the Dalai Lama.

According to reports, Chinese security have undertaken raids into private homes and arrested more than 100 Tibetans.

“The crackdown in eastern Tibet is unacceptable and must stop immediately,” the International Campaign for Tibet said. “Images of the Dalai Lama are not illegal, and advocacy to preserve the endangered Tibetan language must be protected, not persecuted. As in other parts of Tibet, Chinese authorities are instilling a climate of fear in Kardze. But rather than demonstrate China’s strength, these latest arrests only show how illegitimate Chinese rule in Tibet remains after more than six decades of occupation.”

In light of the upcoming 2022 Beijing Olympics, which China is using to project a positive image to the world, ICT calls on governments to apply pressure on China to ensure it does not increase its repression in Tibet before or during the Games. The International Olympic Committee and the international community must make sure the Olympics are not used for increased human rights violations by the Chinese government.

ICT believes that instead of increased repression, the only lasting solution in Tibet is for China to resume meaningful dialogue with the Dalai Lama’s representatives.

Detentions

Below is a timeline of the police crackdown in Wonpo township (known to Tibetans by its historical name Dza Wonpo).

- 30 Tibetans from Dza Wonpo township in Sershul county were detained from Nov. 21 to Dec. 12, 2019 for two weeks on suspicion of having contacts with exile Tibetans and for sharing information on the internet. They were rounded up after police launched a crackdown in Dza Wonpo in response to a pro-independence protest in November 2019.
- In mid-January 2021, 19-year-old Tenzin Nyima, a.k.a. Tamay, died due to injuries sustained in custody. He was admitted to a hospital in Dartsedo in a comatose state on Nov. 12, 2020. Tenzin Nyima and four other monks from Dza Wonpo Monastery were arrested on Nov. 9, 2019, two days after staging a pro-independence protest outside the local police station. He was released in May 2020 but rearrested on Aug. 11, 2020 for sharing his news on the internet.
- Sershul County Intermediate People’s Court sentenced the other monks who protested alongside Tenzin Nyima on Nov. 7, 2019 to varying prison terms on the charge of “incitement to split the country.” Choephel, 20, was given four years in prison, So-tra three years and Tsultrim, 16, one year. Nyimay, 22, who shared news on social media about the detention of Tenzin Nyima and the other monks, was given five years on the same charge for sharing information on the internet, although he

did not physically participate in the protest. Nyimay's elder brother Choegyal and friend Yonten were sentenced to four years for protesting outside the local government offices on Nov. 21, 2019.

- On March 6, 2021 additional armed police arrived in Dza Wonpo for house-to-house search operations and to instill fear in the community by conducting patrols and drills daily.
- In a classic example of Chinese propaganda, state media on March 9 publicized that SWAT officers would “fetch water, wash clothes, wipe glass and clean” at an old age home in Dza Wonpo. But Tibetans on the ground reported that the officers searched the old age home for clues of disloyalty and to confiscate pictures of the Dalai Lama. The SWAT officers handed to the elders pictures of Chinese President Xi Jinping and Chinese revolutionary leaders to hang in their rooms.
- On Aug. 22, 59 Tibetans (40 laypeople and 19 monks) were detained for possession of pictures of the Dalai Lama in their homes during police raids. Some of the detainees have been identified as Lodhen Chunglam, Palkyab, Tenzin Losel, Pendo, Losher, Choechook, Gadhen, Sherab, Jampel, Dalo, Choepa, Sonam Galak, and Tamdin Norbu. They were led to the Sershul county public security bureau detention center.
- Chinese authorities summoned Tibetans in Dza Wonpo to a public meeting on Aug. 25, during which they warned against possessing pictures of the Dalai Lama and sharing information with the outside world. In house-to-house police raids in Dza Wonpo from Aug. 25 to 29, 53 Tibetans were rounded up for possession of pictures of the Dalai Lama, for having contacts with exile Tibetans and for being members of a social media group promoting the use and preservation of the Tibetan language. After police released four of the Tibetans, the remaining 49 remained in detention in Sershul County.
- 20 monks of Dza Wonpo Monastery were subjected to interrogation per police order in effect from Aug. 31. The police interrogated the monks for their political activities and exile contacts. The monastery's management committee continued to surveil the movement and activities of the monks.
- Police detained eight Tibetans (six Gaden Shedrup Monastery monks and two women) from Dza Wonpo on Sept. 3, 2021.



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