



## ICT'S TIBET ROUNDUP — ISSUE 5

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ICT's Tibet Roundup is a twice-monthly compilation of curated news from various sources, including Chinese state media, official Chinese documents, briefings, information reported by Tibetans in Tibet and international commentary on Tibet. The roundup is organized in categories, including law, politics, culture, economics, climate and commentary. The focus is on presenting news and reports with limited analysis and editorializing.

### **POLITICS**

#### **1. Family of imprisoned Tibetan businessman sues Lhasa police for mistreatment**

In a rare and bold move, Gonpo Kyi and her husband Choekyong have sued Lhasa police for the mistreatment they endured for requesting a fair trial for Dorjee Tashi, Gonpo's imprisoned brother, in December 2023. The incident occurred when the couple staged a sit-in outside the Tibet Autonomous Region Higher People's Court in Lhasa to demand a retrial for Dorjee Tashi, who is serving a life sentence in Drapchi prison. They were detained and beaten by the police for their sit-in instead of being granted access to Dorjee Tashi in prison.

The lawsuit accuses the police of arbitrary detention and beatings, as well as denying Gonpo Kyi medical treatment for her injuries. However, due to strict government censorship, obtaining full documentation of the legal proceedings has been challenging. It's alleged that the Lhasa city police, in collusion with the court, prevented the couple from meeting Dorjee Tashi in prison and denied their requests for a fair trial for his case.

Dorjee Tashi is serving a life sentence after being arrested in 2008. Initially facing political charges, he was later convicted of loan fraud, a charge he and his family dispute.

Despite being imprisoned since 2008, the details of Dorjee's case only became clear when ICT was able to obtain a part of his [testimony](#) in August 2021 wherein he wrote details of his arrest, pretrial torture and petition for a fair trial.

Gonpo Kyi, Dorjee's sister, has been staging sit-ins in front of the TAR People's Court in Lhasa since [June 2022](#) demanding justice for her brother.

## 2. University spot for hefty investment for non-Tibetans

[Reuters](#) on March 21 reported that Tibet's government under China extends a perplexing proposition to prospective college exam candidates, allowing them to secure a spot in universities in exchange for a hefty investment of 3 million yuan (\$417,000) from their parents.

This university spot in exchange for significant investment raises several concerns.

Past anecdotal evidence of such abuse of the system has not been considered. Although a university spot in exchange for investment is rarely heard of, anecdotes of Chinese students from towns and cities in China using their connections to usurp spots reserved for Tibetans have been reported multiple times in the past by Tibetan students. Unlike the past practices of usurping spots meant for Tibetans through personal networks and bureaucratic corruption, the government of the officially designated Tibet Autonomous Region offering such a scheme is concerning for the systemic problems that come to light, as well as in encouraging potential Chinese settlers in Tibet.

The scheme appears to exploit the access to education affirmative action in Tibet. Equity and fairness in access to education, particularly for local Tibetan students who face increased competition from wealthier students coming from outside the region, are a huge concern.

The issue also highlights broader socioeconomic challenges, including rising unemployment rates among young people in China. While the scheme may bring capital into Tibet, it risks exacerbating inequality and widening the gap between wealthy urban centers and marginalized regions like Tibet.

## 3. Newly identified unaccounted-for Tibetans after Derge dam protest

Exile Tibetan language media outlet the [Tibet Times](#) reported on March 28 that, while most of the Tibetans, including numerous monks, who were detained, severely ill-treated and beaten by Chinese police since late February 2024 in Derge (Chinese: Dege) county of Kardze prefecture, Sichuan province, have been released recently, some of the Tibetans remain missing. More than 10 Tibetans, including university students, who were disappeared after submitting petitions against a proposed hydropower station over the Drichu (Jinsha) river, are yet to be accounted for. Some of them have been identified as Rigzin, Thubphur, Dechen Dolma, Yangkyi, Dechen Palmo, Rinchen Dolma and Tsedrub.

Besides the newly identified unaccounted-for Tibetans, two individuals, Tenzin Sangpo, a senior administrator of the local Wonto Monastery, and a village official named Tenzin, who were arrested on February 23, are still under arrest and have been handed over for prosecution. They are suspected of organizing the protests against the Kamtog (Gangtuo) dam project.

## RELIGION

### 4. Senior municipal United Front leader's monasteries visit indicates party's continued focus on Sinicization

On March 18, Kelsang Tseten, a member of the Standing Committee of the Lhasa Municipal Party Committee and Minister of the United Front Work Department, visited remote monasteries in Meldrogongkar county, Lhasa City. While the visit was framed by Chinese [state media](#) as a chance to investigate living conditions, it raises concerns about the suppression of religious freedom in Tibet.

Tseten's emphasis on political control and adherence to Chinese Communist Party doctrine in his instructions to the cadres stationed in the monasteries indicates a focus on curtailing religious expression. His demands for the "three consciousnesses" campaign to infiltrate the monasteries and strict adherence to regulations by the monastics indicate the CCP's continued focus on "Sinicizing" Tibetan Buddhist monastics, meaning to make them subservient to the Chinese government.

Furthermore, directives to investigate "hidden dangers" and expand propaganda activities reinforce government surveillance and control over religious institutions.

### 5. United Front's national security preaching tour

In efforts to bolster the so-called "three consciousnesses"—national awareness, citizen engagement and adherence to the rule of law—campaign among farmers, herdsmen, monks and nuns, the Dzogang (Zuogang) county CCP and government under Chamdo (Changdu) Prefectural-level city dispatched officials from the United Front Work Department of Zuogong County on a "three consciousness" tour across 14 villages and temples. With a focus on reaching out to 500 individuals, including monks, nuns and residents, the officials preached the significance of supporting the Communist Party's leadership and prioritizing state laws over religious regulations as part of the "Eighth Five-Year Plan" for legal popularization. According to [state media](#), they emphasized the cultivation of "politically reliable monks" and the safeguarding of national security with content focused on the National Security Law of the People's Republic of China. The Tibetans were instructed to abide by China's law and uphold national security.

Similarly, on March 21, the United Front Work Department and the District Justice Bureau conducted the "Law into Religious Venues" campaign in monasteries in Nedong County, located in the Lhoka Prefectural-level city. According to Chinese [state media](#) reports, this campaign is part of the promotion of the "Eighth Five-Year Plan" aimed at propagating Xi Jinping's thoughts on the rule of law. During this campaign, monks "receive education" on China's laws concerning religion, including the "Religious Affairs Regulations," "Measures on Management of Reincarnation in Tibetan Buddhism" and other state religious regulations.

## **6. Tourist fees for visiting Tibetan landmarks**

Several prominent Tibetan historical, cultural and religious landmarks, including the Potala Palace, Jokhang Temple and Norbulingka Palace, have been converted into tourist attractions by Chinese authorities in Tibet. While Tibetans revere these landmarks as invaluable embodiments of their culture, religion and civilizational heritage, the Chinese authorities impose a [tiered ticketing](#) system with prices varying according to season.

For the Potala Palace, the seat of the Dalai Lamas, the off-season runs from March 16 to April 30, 2024, with tickets priced at 100 yuan per person. During the peak season (May 1 to October 31), the price rises to 200 yuan for Line 1 and 100 yuan for Line 2. Similarly, the Norbulingka Palace, the summer residence of the Dalai Lamas, has a set price of 60 yuan per person. Access to Jokhang Temple, the holiest shrine in Tibet, appears to be controlled through a daily ticket reservation limit, though the price is yet to be announced.

## **7. Chamdo deputy mayor stresses stability maintenance and state ideology alignment in religious site inspection**

In a recent development, Dolkar, the deputy mayor of the municipal government, embarked on an inspection tour of temple management committees and religious sites in Menda (Mianda) Township, Kama (Gama) Township, and Chawe (Chaiwei) Township in Kharub (Karu) District in Chamdo Prefectural-level city, TAR, according to a [state media](#) report on March 18.

Dolkar's emphasis on stability maintenance reinforces the implementation of surveillance and control within religious institutions infringing upon the rights of religious freedom and autonomy of religious communities.

Furthermore, the directive to strengthen temple management and the implementation of "Three Consciousnesses" education to promote ethnic unity are indicative of coercion and manipulation of religious practices and beliefs to align with state ideology.

We welcome your feedback! Send any thoughts about ICT's Tibet Roundup and ideas for future changes to [research@savetibet.org](mailto:research@savetibet.org).



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