



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Tibetan monk enduring six-year prison sentence for efforts to safeguard linguistic heritage

<https://savetibet.org/tibetan-monk-enduring-six-year-prison-sentence>

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The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) has learned that, after nearly five years of enforced disappearance and arbitrary detention, Tibetan monk Palden Yeshe is serving a six-year prison sentence in Chushul (Chushur) Prison southwest of the Tibetan capital Lhasa. Details regarding his imprisonment are still being ascertained, but sources contacted by ICT believe he was jailed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) for his efforts to preserve the Tibetan language.

Yeshe, 52, a monk at the Kardze (Ganzi) Monastery in the Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan, was detained by Chinese police on May 17, 2021. For nearly five years, his whereabouts remained unknown to his family until a relative was permitted to visit him in late February 2026 at Chushul Prison. During the visit, Yeshe revealed to the relative that he is serving a six-year sentence.

While Chinese authorities have not publicly disclosed the formal charges or the legal procedures followed in the case, sources close to the family believe the heavy sentence was politically motivated due to Yeshe's educational activities. Prior to his arrest, he organized voluntary classes during school holidays for more than 300 local children, teaching them foundational skills in reading and writing their native Tibetan language.

Family targeted for seeking answers

As they targeted Palden Yeshe under politically motivated charges, local authorities also regularly harassed and intimidated his family members who inquired about his case. Following his 2021 disappearance, his family approached Kardze County authorities on four separate occasions to ask about his whereabouts. In response to these inquiries, officials reportedly detained Yeshe's brother for over a week, subjecting him to interrogation and physical beatings. The family was also warned to stop searching for him. The prolonged uncertainty and repeated police pressure took a fatal toll on the family; Yeshe's elderly father, Sonam Tsewang, suffered from chronic anxiety and emotional distress, ultimately passing away on September 29, 2022, without ever learning his son's fate, according to sources.

A broader campaign of cultural erasure

The sentencing of Palden Yeshe is part of the broader CCP campaign to marginalize Tibetan culture in Kardze Prefecture. This crackdown has moved from targeting individuals to implementing sweeping institutional and policy changes, including the following:

- Since 2024, a Chinese government [directive](#) has required all primary and middle schools in the prefecture to terminate Tibetan language instruction, replacing it entirely with Chinese-language curricula.
- In 2021, authorities dissolved a [Tibetan language protection organization](#) in Sershul County. [Over one hundred Tibetans](#) were subjected to prolonged detention and assault in connection with language activism and for possession of banned images of the Dalai Lama.

Judicial context in Kardze

The legal process against Palden Yeshe has been characterized by a lack of transparency and due process. Although Yeshe lived in Kardze County in Sichuan Province, he is currently serving his sentence in Chushul Prison in Lhasa, Tibet Autonomous Region. It is highly likely that he was convicted of “endangering state security” on the charge of “inciting splittism.”

Nine other Tibetans from Kardze were also sentenced to imprisonment for “endangering state security” between June and August 2020. Chinese authorities withheld critical information regarding their ages, genders, specific reasons for arrest and the lengths of their sentences, with only their names and dates of judgment released, according to a September 2020 [Dui Hua Foundation](#) report. To date, no further information has come to light regarding these nine individuals.



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