



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

ICT mourns passing of Tibet activist Lobga Rangzen following first Tibetan self-immolation on US soil, calls for action on Tibet

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WASHINGTON, DC, July 3, 2026 -- Tibetan activist Lobsang Palden, widely known as Lobga Rangzen, died after self-immolating outside the United Nations Headquarters in New York on Thursday, July 2 evening, a day after [China's new so-called Ethnic Unity and Progress Law](#) entered into force. This is the first self-immolation by a Tibetan on US soil and [marks over 170 known self-immolations by Tibetans](#), both inside Tibet and China, and in exile.

The International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) mourns Lobga's passing and extends its deepest condolences to his family, friends, and the wider Tibetan community, and stands in solidarity with Tibetans around the world who are grieving his loss and urging a united action against the Chinese government's repressive policies in Tibet and the [dangerous escalation in its efforts to completely erase Tibetan identity](#).

"We are deeply saddened by the passing of Lobga Rangzen following his self-immolation outside the UN headquarters in New York on Thursday evening. Lobga was a tireless advocate for Tibet who devoted himself to peacefully raising awareness of the human rights crisis and independence of Tibet and he will be remembered for his unwavering commitment to justice and the Tibetan cause," said ICT President Tencho Gyatso.

Lobga was born to Soga (father) and Dorjee Lhamo (mother) in Kardze (Ganzi) in eastern Tibet traditional Kham province. Lobga escaped into exile in India in the 1990s and was a monk at Gaden Jangtse Monastery in south India, where he held several positions, before coming to the US in 2006. For over two decades, Lobga has been known for being a firm advocate of Tibetan independence, working tirelessly to peacefully protest the Chinese occupation of Tibet.

At the time of his self-immolation, Lobga was dressed in the traditional Tibetan robes and carrying a Tibetan flag, which he stationed next to him and ensured was flying high as he set himself on fire in the hot New York evening. He had also carried sheets of white paper with the messages of 'Free Tibet' and 'China out of Tibet.' Lobga succumbed to his injuries and died at around 07:04 pm EDT, shortly after he was rushed to Bellevue Hospital in New York.

In his final public message in Tibetan, which he posted in an over 6-minute-long self-recorded video on his Facebook account, Lobga directly appealed to Tibetans in exile to remain united in their struggle for the Tibetan cause, citing deep concerns about China's repressive policies aimed at wiping out Tibetan identity. He recalled His Holiness the Dalai Lama's longstanding guidance that Tibetans in exile, including those in the US, must serve as the advocates and voice for Tibetans inside Tibet.

“In his final statement, Lobga warned that China’s policies threaten the very survival of Tibetan identity, language, and culture, and called on all Tibetans to be united in their fight for the cause of the Tibetan struggle,” Gyatso said. “While we mourn this tragic loss, it is imperative that the international community heed the message behind his profound despair by addressing the worsening human rights situation in Tibet and holding the Chinese government accountable for its policies of repression and forced assimilation,” she added.

Lobga also emphasized that the denial of fundamental freedoms in Tibet, including the freedom of expression, the freedom to display a portrait of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and the freedom to practice Tibetan language, religion, and culture, stems from the loss of Tibetan independence and China’s brutal occupation of Tibet.

In his statement, Lobga lauded Tibetans inside Tibet for their continued resistance against Chinese persecution and thanked them for their efforts to preserve the Tibetan language, religion, and culture, despite severe restrictions and repression they face.

He also called on Tibetans to celebrate His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s upcoming 91st birthday in the grandest way possible, and to not let his ultimate sacrifice hamper these celebrations or any other expressions of Tibetan culture, such as cultural performances, which he said were critical to the preservation of the Tibetan identity.

“Today, if I engage in an alarming activism, it is not because I do not have food, or clothes or out of sadness. I do it for the Tibetan nation. And since I am doing it for the cause of the Tibetan nation, whatever action is necessary to be done for the cause of Tibet, must all be continued,” Lobga said in his final message.

“Some of us in exile may call for people to mourn for me. There is no need to mourn for me. If you need to mourn, then continue my struggle and hope (for Tibetan independence and cause). Please heed my appeal,” he said with folded hands.

Calls for global action

In a statement by Sikyong Penpa Tsering, the democratically elected leader of the Central Tibetan Administration, Tsering expressed deep sorrow over the self-immolation of a Tibetan activist and said, “While we honor his devotion, human life is precious and must be preserved to serve the long-term struggle for Tibet. On behalf of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), I earnestly urge all fellow Tibetans to cherish your lives.”

“The unfolding genocide inside Tibet and the enforcement of the draconian ‘Ethnic Unity and Progress Law’ on July 1, 2026 are what drove Lobga Rangzen to this tragic decision. He joins at least 157 Tibetans inside Tibet who have offered their lives to draw global attention to the brutal repression endured under Chinese rule,” [said Tsering](#).

Lobga’s passing brings the total number of known Tibetan self-immolations [to over 170, according to the International Campaign of Tibet](#). Between 2009 and 2022, 159 Tibetans self-immolated inside Tibet, while 11 other self-immolations have occurred in exile, including Lobga’s. The previous 10 self-immolations in exile occurred in India and Nepal, making Lobga’s the first Tibetan self-immolation on US soil.

For nearly two decades, self-immolation has remained one of the starkest manifestations of the desperation felt by Tibetans living under the intensifying restrictions on the religious freedom,

language, culture, identity, and fundamental human rights. Chinese authorities have continued to suppress information about such protests, while aggressively expanding policies aimed at forced assimilation of Tibetans, Uyghurs, Hong Kongers, South Mongolians, and other non-Chinese nationalities.

ICT calls on global governments, the United Nations, and the international community to recognize the gravity of Lobga's final appeal and to respond with urgency to the worsening human rights crisis in Tibet. This includes publicly condemning China's policies of forced assimilation, including the new ethnic unity law which went into force on July 1, and demanding its repeal, and demanding accountability for ongoing human rights violations, and supporting the fundamental rights of the Tibetan people to preserve their identity, culture, religious, and language without fear of persecution.

Here's the full English translation of Lobga Rangzen's final public message, which he shared on his social media profile before he self-immolated on July 2:

What I want to say is that communist China's policies and activities in Tibet are targeted at completely destroying the Tibetan people. I have nothing to say towards the Tibetan people inside Tibet (folds hand). They have been working sincerely to preserve our spoken language, script, religion and culture, and revive all that has declined. Their efforts are very noteworthy, therefore, I want to thank them. I don't have anything else to say to them.

I want to share my message to those of us (Tibetans) in exile. For the struggle of our people, if we don't do anything, we will not achieve anything. I want to say that those of us in exile, we need to work harder. We are very grateful to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Arhat Avalokiteshvara, for giving us democracy which he gifted us without us having to make any effort. Even though we said that we do not want it, His Holiness the Dalai Lama bestowed us standard-worthy democracy.

His Holiness' gift of democracy is not for us to have internal disunity, but in the hope that there will be advancement in our struggle for the cause of the Tibetan people and Tibet as a nation. In particular, His Holiness has in the past said that those of us living in foreign countries, including those in the United States, it is shameful if it is only about (owning) a house and a car.

His Holiness said you (Tibetans in exile) are all the spokespersons of the Tibetan people inside Tibet and therefore, you should work and struggle for the Tibetan people. His Holiness won't be able to say more than that as he is a Buddha who works for world peace, unity and harmony of all the people, irrespective of color and religion.

But we are not Buddha, we are human beings. Today, what I have to say is that the Chinese Communists have persecuted all of us, Tibetans, irrespective of whether we belong to Dotoe, Domed or Utsang province (the three traditional provinces of Tibet). We are all Tibetans. Therefore, we should work together for the Tibetan nation; we should work for the people of Tibet.

Today, when we say that we do not have human rights, that we do not have freedom of speech, that we do not have the freedom to display a portrait of His Holiness the Dalai Lama – if we examine why we do not have these freedoms, it is because we lost the independence of Tibet.

That's why, from today onwards, whether it is the Tibetan government (in exile), the Tibetan parliament (in exile), or the Tibetan people, it is important that we should all be united and work for the cause of the Tibetan nation and the Tibetan people.

Therefore, from today onwards without arguing about our province or religious denominations, we should think of ourselves as Tibetans. I am a Tibetan (raises fist). Some of us say we do not have independence. It is not that we do not have independence; we have independence, but that independence was lost. We have to regain our independence. Therefore, we Tibetans in exile must unite and struggle for the independence of Tibet. I want to appeal with folded hands to our exile community to work towards this.

Secondly, in the next few days His Holiness the Dalai Lama's 91st birthday is coming up. These celebrations as well as Tibetan cultural performances are to safeguard our culture. These have health benefits and also greatly benefit our younger generation. So, today, if I undertake a major action, my action should not cause any disturbances to the celebrations of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's birthday. Please celebrate His Holiness the Dalai Lama's birthday in the grandest way possible.

Likewise, those who are performing songs and dances should continue to do so; they should not be stopped, they should not mourn. Instead, they must think what more can one do for the Tibetan people and nation. It is important to think in this way. Therefore, I appeal to all of you to work even harder.

Today, if I engage in an alarming activism, it is not because I do not have food, or clothes or out of sadness. I do it for the Tibetan nation. And since I am doing it for the cause of the Tibetan nation, whatever action is necessary to be done for the cause of Tibet, must all be continued.

Some of us in exile may call for people to mourn for me. There is no need to mourn for me. If you need to mourn, then continue my struggle and hope (for Tibetan independence and cause). Please heed my appeal.

Whatever (freedoms) we say we do not have – what is the reason for that? The source of all of this is because we don't have independence, because we lost our independence. If we regain independence, we will have everything. Therefore, what we need is independence and for that, all of us should be united in our struggle. I ask all of us to continue the Tibetan struggle. Bhod Rangzen Gyalo (victory to independence of Tibet), Bhod Gyalo (Victory to Tibet), Tashi Delek.