

# FREE TIBET

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The end  
for Tibet's  
nomads?

freeTIBET 

• Tibetans sentenced to death • *De facto* martial law • Economic & human rights •

“Life here is incredibly hard. People are suffering from hunger and hardship. Nobody wanted to move here ... we live in fear.”

A forcibly resettled Tibetan nomad.



KATJA KULENKAMPFF

Free Tibet's director, Stephanie Brigden, with former political prisoner Palden Gyatso.

## Dear Friends

The last few months have been a busy time at Free Tibet. In January, hundreds of free Tibet supporters braved temperatures not unlike a Tibetan winter, to give witness to the crimes being committed inside Tibet during Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao's visit to London.

Weeks later, more than a thousand supporters marched from the Chinese Embassy to Trafalgar Square where I had the privilege of opening the rally which marked 50 years of unbroken peaceful Tibetan resistance. Shao Jiang, one of the student organisers of the Tiananmen Square protests, addressed the crowd. He told us how the movement for a free Tibet is a movement for everyone who believes in justice, democracy and human rights, a movement for all, including the people of China. It was an emotional day, not least as the situation inside Tibet continues to deteriorate. Tibet is effectively under *de facto* martial law, there are restrictions on freedom of movement and night-time curfews are in place.

This year Free Tibet organised, with others, a mass lobby of Parliament. More than 300 people flooded Westminster and Tibet has been pushed up the political agenda by our supporters demanding action from their elected MPs.

Free Tibet is also pushing for greater transparency and accountability in the UK's foreign policy with China, particularly regarding real progress in respect for human rights. See page 6 for how you can support this campaign. Our most urgent challenge is to help reverse the death sentences which have been recently passed (see page 10).

You can also help Free Tibet by completing the short Supporter's Questionnaire enclosed. You will also find this year's raffle tickets enclosed – your chance to win one of several holidays to Europe for just £1! As we mark 50 years of Tibetan resistance we are also launching Life Membership, offering you the opportunity to be an integral part of the Free Tibet campaign.

The last few months have been successful because Free Tibet supporters have mobilised, demanding action from MPs or bearing witness to the human rights abuses in Tibet. With your continued support we can make a difference – however you can help please take action today!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephanie Brigden".

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Free Tibet stands for the right of Tibetans to determine their own future. It campaigns for an end to China's occupation of Tibet and for the fundamental human rights of Tibetans to be respected. Founded in 1987, Free Tibet generates active support by education about the situation in Tibet. It is independent of all governments and is funded by its members and supporters.

Views expressed in *Free Tibet* are not necessarily those of Free Tibet.

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# De facto martial law in Tibet in 2009

In just one day this year 5,766 Tibetans were rounded up and questioned as part of China's 'Strike Hard' campaign.

Free Tibet continues to receive information that supports the view that Tibet is under *de facto* martial law. The Chinese military has a strong and visible presence in many towns across the Tibetan plateau. The military arrive swiftly in response to the first signs of protest, quelling even peaceful dissent. Tibetans in Tibet are living in a climate of fear and repression where the smallest sign of opposition may be met with arrest, detention and even torture. Torture continues to be widespread and is routinely used, as confirmed by the United Nations Committee against Torture. State media has even been used to announce that the authorities would not be held responsible if anyone protesting were killed or arrested.

Following the spring protests of 2008 there has been a steady build-up of troops throughout Tibet, particularly in more restive regions. In the approach to 10 March 2009, the 50th anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising, there were widespread reports of an enormous deployment into Tibet of up to 20,000 extra military personnel, including paramilitary forces and armoured vehicles. Individual cases of roadblocks, sandbags in towns and military checkpoints have been reported across the region.

Tibet is effectively sealed off from the outside world. International media, tourists and civil society representatives are being denied access to Tibet, hiding China's methods of control behind closed doors. Compounding this lockdown, mobile phone and internet signals are routinely jammed and international telephone lines cut, methods that prevent the spread of information both within and beyond Tibet. Tibetans

who are caught trying to tell the outside world about conditions in Tibet face severe punishment: an email or a phone call could lead to arrest and worse. Tibetans who have attempted to disseminate information have indeed been arrested and disproportionate sentences, including life, passed. These restrictions are so openly enforced that in February a local television broadcast was used to announce that anyone making or receiving either local or international calls would be subject to arrest. As a result of the great risks inherent in communicating with the outside world the flow of information from Tibet has slowed and thinned considerably and we are extremely concerned for the safety of anyone who does try to communicate.

In just one day in January this year 5,766 Tibetans were rounded up and questioned in Lhasa as part of China's 'Strike Hard' campaign. Police conducted raids on 3,000 properties, banging on Tibetans' doors at dawn to search their homes. Scores were arrested, in some cases for as little as downloading the Tibetan national anthem onto mobile telephones.

In April, Chinese state media announced death sentences for five Tibetans allegedly involved in setting fires during the protests of 2008 (see page 10). The courts consistently mete out disproportionate sentences for any Tibetan involved in subversive activities and there is considerable evidence that points to the routine absence of due process in cases regarding Tibetan detainees. In such a culture of repression there is diminishing respect for even the most basic human rights and Tibetans take ever greater risks if they protest against the occupying Chinese regime.

Armed troops on the streets of Labrang, February 2009.





ANTHONY ALVAREZ

# The end of the nomadic way of life in Tibet?

As far back as 1998 the Chinese government announced it intended “to end the nomadic way of life for all herdsmen by the end of the century”.

For centuries nomads have grazed herds of yaks and mountain sheep over the vast grasslands of Tibet. The herds are intrinsically tied up with both the identity of the nomads and their very survival in the harsh, high-altitude environment of the Tibetan plateau. The animals provide not only meat and milk but their skins are dried and used to insulate tents; dung is dried and used as fuel for cooking and to heat the nomadic tents; wool and fur from the animals are used to clothe the nomads.

The nomads have forged an intuitive understanding of how best to utilise their herds and to live in harmony with the high-altitude environment. In the short summer months they move their herds over vast distances, grazing their yaks on rich grasslands. In the long winter months the nomads travel similarly long distances to sell their animals in markets to raise money for medicine and to pay for their children’s education. The nomads have long recognised that it is only by seasonal migration through traditionally unfenced grassland areas that habitation of the plateau can be made sustainable, allowing fragile soils to recover from one year to the next.

But now, after more than 4,000 years of sensitive stewardship of the fragile,

high-altitude environment of the Tibetan plateau, the nomads’ unique culture is being threatened with destruction. Increasingly aggressive Chinese policies seek to drive the nomads from their homelands for political and economic reasons.

Since the year 2000, the Chinese government has pushed a resettlement programme which aims to force many of the nomads from their land altogether. The reasons for resettlement are all too clear: China has always known that the Tibetan plateau is a source of vast and untapped natural mineral wealth. The Chinese for Tibet suggests as much: “Xizhang” literally means “Western Treasure House”.

The decision in 2000 to build the first railway into Tibet from China meant that for the first time China would be able to ransack Tibet’s vast mineral wealth. The railway was opened in 2006. To plunder Tibet of its mineral wealth, the Chinese government first had to clear large numbers of nomads from their land where mines were to be established.

The Chinese government has admitted that there is a political motivation to the resettlement. In 2007, Party Secretary Zhang Qingli stated that the “restructuring” of Tibetan farming and grazing communities was not only to

Above: Horses, yaks and other animals are vital to the nomadic way of life. Right: Livestock is being taken out of nomads’ hands.

promote economic development but to counteract the Dalai Lama's influence.

Accurate information regarding the numbers of nomads who have been, or who are to be, resettled is difficult to obtain. As far back as 1998 the Chinese government announced it intended "to end the nomadic way of life for all herdsmen by the end of the century". That target was not reached but since then official state media has announced the resettlement of, or intention to resettle, some 900,000 nomads. That huge figure represents over 15% of the total Tibetan population being forced from their ancestral lands.

Livestock are seized, and often slaughtered, and nomads are moved into complexes of tenement-style brick houses. Compensation is often small and attempts by nomads to set out complaints about their arbitrary resettlement are ignored by government officials. A Tibetan from Ngari county in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) told Free Tibet:

"A meeting was held with the TAR authorities and the local authorities. At the meeting all households outside Tsoetsoe town were told to move into "comfortable" houses in the town. The nomads suggested that if they were to be moved, it should be to a place of their choice so that they could carry on with their traditional nomadic life. But the authorities refused to listen to the suggestions and said it was a 'must' that the nomads moved into the government's new houses.... Prior to moving, the nomad households were asked to pay more than half of the cost of the new house back to the government."

Tearing nomads from their ancestral homelands and herding them into anonymous urban settlements is having a devastating effect on nomadic communities. With their lands lost forever and their yaks, the very means of their survival, seized and slaughtered, nomads face a bleak future. Unable to resume their traditional way of life they become trapped in poverty. They lack the education and skills to find employment in the towns and evidence suggests that the lack of employment opportunities is increasingly leading to mental health issues, alcohol misuse and other social problems. A nomad from Golok prefecture in Qinghai province told Free Tibet:

"They [resettled nomads] live in the towns off a government subsidy of a small amount of flour but they have no skills other than grazing animals. Some make a very rough living doing menial labour but the government has not given them any training to make a sustainable living in the towns.... The nomads have no skills to earn a better living in the towns and social issues have arisen after some nomads were resettled in Tsolho prefecture, including theft."

The Chinese government's policy of resettling nomads is a thinly veiled assault on a distinctive form of Tibetan culture and identity. The policy is mirrored in the Chinese government's attempts to control and ultimately destroy other key forms of Tibetan identity such as Tibetan Buddhism and the Tibetan language. The outlook for Tibetan nomads' unique way of life appears bleak as the Chinese leadership displays an increasing concern for preserving Chinese national unity, territorial integrity and stability through policies aimed at the assimilation of its ethnic minorities. As one Tibetan remarked to Free Tibet:

"The Chinese government intends to remove Tibetan nomads from their grasslands ... because if nomads are forced to quit their traditional livelihoods and skills they will be forced to depend on the Chinese government, making it easier for the government to control Tibetans."



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**Coming soon!  
Buy your very own Yak**



Create your very own unique Yak whilst raising funds for our work on nomads. Free Tibet will soon be launching the virtual Yak where you can buy an online Yak and personalise it. All individual Yaks will 'live' on our website for all to see. This is a fun and creative way of supporting our nomad Campaign so please check our website this summer.

# Get involved

## 1,000 march for Tibet

On 8 March, more than a thousand free Tibet supporters joined a colourful march from the Chinese Embassy in London to Trafalgar Square. The march was led by former political prisoner Palden Gyatso. The event marked 50 years of unbroken peaceful resistance.

Against a back-drop of Tibetan flags, Free Tibet's Director Stephanie Brigden opened the rally at Trafalgar Square. Palden Gyatso spoke to supporters. He had been arrested for taking part in the 1959 uprising and was severely tortured during 33 years in Chinese prisons and camps. He said, "We need to continue our fight for political freedom and all our freedoms. If we continue, I believe that one day, we will be successful in this fight."



MARCH PHOTOS: PHIL KIRK

Palden Gyatso.

Chinese democracy activist Shao Jiang, who helped organise the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989, spoke of the need for freedom in both Tibet and China, saying "There are many Chinese people who support the self-determination of the Tibetan people. The fight for Tibetan freedom has inspired many Chinese people to also fight for their own."

Free Tibet supporters braved freezing temperatures to protest during Chinese

Premier Wen Jiabao's visit in January. Scores stood in witness outside the Mandarin Hotel in Knightsbridge to hold President Hu accountable during his attendance at the G20.

Supporters also gathered at the Chinese Embassy in support of those given death sentences in April and to send birthday messages to the Panchen Lama. The Panchen Lama recently turned 20 in Chinese custody, having been disappeared at the age of six.

Thank you to all those who attended the protests and to the many more Tibet supporters across the world who were there with us in spirit.



Above: Tibetans and supporters take to the streets in London. Right: Shao Jiang.



## Mass lobby of Parliament

On 10 March over 300 UK-based Tibetans and Tibet supporters flooded the halls and corridors of Parliament. This was part of a global day of action to mark the 50th anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising. People travelled from as far as Scotland and west Wales to meet with their MPs to discuss UK Tibet policy and to ask their MP to press the government to call China to account for human rights abuses. We greatly appreciate the time and

effort taken by everyone who attended this very successful campaigning event.

During conversations, which lasted for up to an hour, supporters found out that many MPs were not aware of the UK government's recent change of position regarding the status of Tibet or of its weakening Tibet policy. Free Tibet is now campaigning for a Foreign Affairs Select Committee inquiry into the effectiveness of the UK's foreign policy in securing an increased respect for human rights by China.

Outside a rainy Houses of Parliament the Tibetan flag is held proudly, and the Reigate local group meet their MP, Crispin Blunt.



## Action

### Call for an inquiry into the UK government's policy on China and Tibet

Write to your MP asking for an inquiry by the Foreign Affairs Select Committee into the effectiveness of the UK's foreign policy strategy in addressing human rights issues in China and Tibet.



For further information please go to [www.freetibet.org](http://www.freetibet.org) and visit 'Campaign action', email [mail@freetibet.org](mailto:mail@freetibet.org) or call 020 7324 4605

## Fabulous prizes for the 2009 raffle!

Now is your chance to win one of eight fabulous prizes in this year's raffle. There is something for everyone, from holidays in the Swiss Alps to holistic cookery courses in Devon. Persuading colleagues, family and friends to buy a couple of tickets each should be easy! The Free Tibet raffle is a great way to support our work. So try your luck and who knows, you may be off to the Swiss Alps!

**The draw takes place on 11 December 2009, just in time for Christmas!**

**First Prize:** A fantastic five night stay for two in the Swiss Alps courtesy of **La Grande Maison de Chandolin**. Set in the heart of the Rhone Valley, La Grande Maison is a unique 200-year-old listed building with stunning views! £100 contribution to flights is included in the prize. [www.lagrandemaison.ch](http://www.lagrandemaison.ch)

**Second Prize:** Listed in Marie Claire's top ten eco holidays, this prize offers a four night stay for two in a beautiful Yurt set among the Olive Groves of Andalucia, Spain. This fabulous prize is courtesy of the **Hoopoe Yurt Hotel**. £100 contribution to flights is also included in the prize. [www.yurthotel.com](http://www.yurthotel.com)

**Third Prize:** Set in the heart of Naples, Italy, **Il Giardino Segreto Guest Bed and Breakfast** is offering a five night stay for two providing the perfect sanctuary after a hard days sightseeing! £100 contribution to flights is included in the prize. [www.ilgiardinosegreto.org](http://www.ilgiardinosegreto.org)

**Fourth Prize:** Two people can enjoy three nights of luxury whilst admiring the stunning views of Loch Earn, Scotland, courtesy of the **Four Seasons Hotel**. You will be greeted in style with a champagne reception and will enjoy dinner at the superb restaurant. [www.thefourseasonshotel.co.uk](http://www.thefourseasonshotel.co.uk)



### Other Prizes include:

- Tibetan thangka donated by **Pink Lotus**
- A two day cooking course for one in Devon, courtesy of the **Holistic Cookery School**
- A 'Dolphin Discovery Day' for two in Scotland, courtesy of **Wild at Heart Eco Holidays**
- A 'Demalogica' facial for one donated by **All About You**, beauty parlour, Golders Green, London

**Responsible Gambling:** Gamble Aware offer advice and support for people affected by gambling problems. To find out more visit [www.gambleaware.co.uk](http://www.gambleaware.co.uk)

## Supporters send messages to Tibet

Thank you to the hundreds of supporters who have contributed their wonderful messages to the people of Tibet. We were sincerely touched by these beautiful messages of solidarity. They have been transferred onto Tibetan prayer flags and they are now hanging up, for everyone to see, in the heart of the Tibetan refugee community in Dharamsala, India. These inspiring messages of hope and unity will be carried on the winds to our friends in Tibet.

We hope to launch a Message for Tibet book later this year which will be a collection of some of the messages, so keep your eyes peeled. We will also be hanging more flags in Dharamsala later in the year. If you haven't yet sent your message to us it's not too late! Simply complete the form in the merchandise catalogue and return it to us.



Messages for Tibet flying in Dharamsala.



To view some of your Messages for Tibet go to [www.freetibet.org](http://www.freetibet.org) and visit 'Support Us'.

## Chinese propaganda offensive masks policy impact

Realising that the legacy of its 50 years' of direct rule over Tibet was certain to be scrutinised intensely by the international media, China embarked upon a major propaganda offensive. Claiming it had "liberated" Tibet, China enforced a new public holiday, to be known as 'Serf Emancipation Day'. The Chinese government also attempted to make a case for having boosted economic development in Tibet, leading to a marked improvement in welfare and living standards for Tibetans.



The Gormo-Lhasa railway is a key part of the western development plan.

The truth is very different. The economy of the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) *has* doubled in five years, fuelled by intensive government subsidised building and infrastructure programmes, including the Gormo-Lhasa railway. Government administration has become one of the largest sectors of the TAR economy but this growth has not benefited the Tibetan people.

However, these booming sectors of the TAR economy advantage workers with Chinese language fluency, familiarity with Chinese work culture and connections to government and business networks within China. The TAR economy is dominated by Chinese companies domiciled in provinces outside Tibet and whose profits are rapidly repatriated out of Tibet.

Critically the heavily subsidised infrastructure programmes, implemented by Chinese state-owned companies, have put transport networks in place to enable the State to plunder Tibet's natural resources and to transport the military into Tibet and Tibetan dissidents out.

Education indicators expose how, despite the rapid economic growth within the Tibetan Autonomous Region, the Tibetan people are not benefitting. Figures available from 2005 show that the TAR has the highest illiteracy rate (45%) of any province in China and Tibet, and the proportion of adults in the TAR with secondary education or higher was only 12%.

## Mixed messages on human rights from Britain

In a recent letter to Free Tibet, Prime Minister Gordon Brown stated that he "firmly believe[d] that allowing China's citizens to enjoy freedom of expression ... and to live in confidence that the rule of law will be applied consistently and impartially is not only the right thing to do, but will also benefit China's future stability and prosperity, which is in all our interests."

The Prime Minister's correct assertion that China's future prosperity can only be guaranteed through an improvement in its human rights record is strikingly at odds, however, with the British government's public silence over human rights before and after recent key meetings with Chinese leaders.

Since the beginning of 2009 there has been a flurry of activity between Britain and China. A visit to the UK in January by Chinese Premier, Wen Jia Bao, for a UK-China summit meeting with Gordon Brown was quickly

followed by President Hu Jintao's trip to London in April for the G20 meeting.

The British and Chinese governments were both at pains to emphasise in public that the meetings would focus on the importance of co-operation between the two countries on climate change, trade and initiatives for reviving the flagging world economy. Britain's megaphone diplomacy on the importance of trade with China contrasted starkly with its expedient public silence on the issue of China's dire human rights record. UK government officials merely stated that human rights concerns were discussed by diplomats in an ongoing and separate human rights dialogue. The dialogue is yet to produce any demonstrable improvement in China's human rights record twelve years after its inception.

The British government's prioritisation of trade over human rights can also be seen in its recent

publication, "The UK and China: A Framework for Engagement". Whilst a framework for monitoring progress in the UK-China relationship is welcome, the benchmarks set out by Britain in the document which would indicate positive outcomes in the field of human rights are particularly weak. For example, on detention without trial Britain's framework merely calls for a *reduction*, a significant weakening of the UN's call for its outright abolition.

In a recent presentation to UK parliamentarians Free Tibet outlined the glaring inconsistency between Gordon Brown's comments in his letter to Free Tibet and the government's public prioritisation of trade over human rights in its relations with China. Free Tibet is now building parliamentary support for its call on parliament's Foreign Affairs Select Committee to conduct a formal review of the formulation of priorities in Britain's China policy.

## US takes action against torture

A White House National Security Council statement to the Chinese-American Committee on 1 May stated that the most effective way to influence China, whose “human rights record, as we know, is poor”, is to lead by example. On the third day of his term of office President Barak Obama ordered the closure of Guantanamo Bay detention facility. In April his administration released torture memos exposing that methods such as ‘waterboarding’ were approved by the Bush administration; it referred to them as “brutal and inhumane”. President Obama’s clarity that he will not tolerate the use of torture by US state officials heralds a shift in attitudes towards torture in the international arena.

These latest developments show that US policy makers are taking action against the use of torture in the US and also globally. Last year’s US Department of State’s Human

Rights Report on China presented a damning indictment of China’s human rights record in Tibet. It included a clear recognition from the US that in the past year the Chinese government “...continued to commit serious human rights abuses, including torture”.

Free Tibet continues to have grave concerns for the well-being of large numbers of Tibetans who have been detained by the Chinese authorities and who are at risk of torture. Supporters’ donations have contributed to Free Tibet’s capacity to gather testimonies from former victims of torture which have been instrumental in our lobbying. Our hope is that the lead taken by President Obama on torture creates new opportunities for lobbying the Chinese government to end their systematic use of torture.

## Economic slowdown: a political opportunity for Tibet

Since the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989 China’s leaders have consolidated power by striking a powerful deal with their citizens. In return for strong, uninterrupted growth of the Chinese economy improving the livelihoods of millions of Chinese, the government has demanded unquestioning loyalty.

As the global economic slowdown applies the brakes to even the Chinese economy, this cosy consensus is unravelling. In March the World Bank revised downwards its forecast for Chinese economic growth rates for 2009 from 7.5% to 6.5%. This is a significant reduction for China who experienced rates of 11-12% throughout the 1990s and 2000s. In China’s heavily export-dependent economy the slowdown has profound implications for Chinese society: factories that employed millions of workers are having to lay those workers off as orders from abroad dry up. Millions of recent graduates will find it all but impossible to find jobs.

Even during the boom around 800 million Chinese were excluded from the expanding Chinese economy, prompting a rising tide of social unrest. Millions more newly laid-off factory workers and students unable to find work have now been added to this number. Incidents of social unrest are sweeping across China, challenging the Party’s hold on power.

The government is rattled: Chinese officials constantly parrot the mantra that 8 per cent growth this year is likely, regardless of contradictory World Bank forecasts. It is widely believed among Chinese elites that if growth rates are to fall below the ‘magic figure’ of 8% for any period of time an upsurge in political opposition to the Party is likely to follow.

The downturn in the Chinese economy leaves the Chinese government more vulnerable politically

than at any time over the past two decades. Free Tibet believes that this vulnerability offers an opportunity for governments to push China to improve its human rights record in Tibet. As China’s economy slows, the dynamics of global financial power are beginning to shift: China is having to adjust to greater dependency on global co-operation and trade than at any time since 1989. It can no longer threaten trade boycotts of governments that demand an improvement in China’s record in Tibet.



Tiananmen: The last occasion political dissent threatened Chinese government power.

## Five Tibetans sentenced to death

*This article was written on 6 May 2009. Updates on these cases will be posted as we receive them at [www.freetibet.org](http://www.freetibet.org)*

China executes more people than any other country. In April 2009 the official Chinese news agency, Xinhua, announced death sentences for five Tibetans. All were allegedly involved in starting fires that caused fatalities during protests in spring 2008. These are the first death sentences relating to last year's protests. Two of those sentenced, Lobsang Gyaltsen and Loyak, could be executed imminently. Three others, Tenzin Phuntsok, Gangtsu and Penkyi, a 21-year-old Tibetan woman, have received death sentences with a two year suspension. Suspended death sentences are automatically commuted to life imprisonment assuming the convicted person does not commit a crime during the two year period.

As Tibet is effectively sealed off from the outside world, information regarding these sentences is limited to information the Chinese government chooses to release. It is therefore impossible to verify if legal safeguards have been met.

Those sentenced have the right to file an appeal under Chinese law. However, it is unclear if they have

been advised of their rights or have access to legal representation. Recent trials of Tibetans would suggest that legal safeguards have not been met. Those previously accused have not had access to a lawyer or been made aware of the charges against them.

All death sentences should be reviewed by the Supreme People's Court. However, courts in China are highly politicised. The lack of an independent judiciary in China means it is unlikely those convicted and facing the death penalty will receive a fair review of their cases.

The information that is available raises very serious concerns regarding the safety of these sentences. Tenzin Phuntsok's death penalty, reprieved for two years, is based on a confession made in detention. In November 2008, the United Nations' Committee against Torture, China report stated its deep concern "...of routine and widespread use of torture ... especially to extract confessions or information to be used in criminal proceedings" and that there is "continued reliance on confessions as a common form of evidence for prosecution".

### Urgent Action:

Please lobby your MP to sign EDM number 1373.



Three of the Tibetans sentenced in April, Penkyi (left) was sentenced to death.

## Continuing protests in Tibet despite climate of fear

Despite what the United Nations called 'a climate of fear', Tibetans continue to risk their liberty, and in some cases their lives, to protest against Chinese rule.

On 24 April 2009 Tibetan teenagers from Labrang Tibetan Middle School in Amdo, north eastern Tibet, protested on the streets of Labrang. According to several Tibetan sources the teenagers were calling for freedom, democracy and for the return of the Dalai Lama to Tibet. Hundreds of armed police allegedly stopped the protest and detained several students. Although the students are believed to have been released, some after

being beaten, local Tibetan sources fear further retaliation by the authorities.

Earlier this year, on 21 March eyewitnesses reported a protest involving over one thousand Tibetans outside a police station in Lajong township, north eastern Tibet. This huge protest was prompted by the apparent suicide of a monk. He was one of seven who had been detained the previous day on suspicion of raising the Tibetan flag and distributing leaflets. Tashi Sangpo was seen running from the police station and jumping into the nearby Machu River. His body was swept

away by the current and it is not known if he survived. It is unknown why he jumped into the river. Many believe it was to escape the treatment he received on being detained. Torture is widespread and routine in Tibet and detainees are most vulnerable when they are first arrested.

On 10 March, in separate incidents in Lithang county, eastern Tibet, two monks threw leaflets and shouted, "Free Tibet" and "Long live His Holiness". One of the monks, Lobsang Wangchuk, was detained. It is not known if the other, unidentified, monk was detained.

## Monk sets himself alight

In February, Tabe, a monk in his twenties, doused himself in petrol and set himself on fire in a desperate attempt to draw the world's attention to the situation in Tibet.

According to eyewitness accounts obtained by Free Tibet, Tabe walked from Kirti monastery into Ngaba town shouting slogans and carrying a home-made Tibetan flag. When he reached the town, Tabe set himself on fire.

Eyewitnesses reported that he was immediately surrounded by several armed police who began pointing guns. Eyewitnesses said they then heard three separate gunshots and saw Tabe collapse to the ground. Police then extinguished the flames, bundled Tabe into a van and drove him to an unknown location.

There have been separate reports that his legs may have been amputated. It is suspected that this was done in order to conceal irreversible damage, allegedly from gunshot wounds.



Tabe surrounded by police after setting himself alight.

TIBET TIMES

## Shocking film exposes brutality

The Tibetan Government-in-Exile has released shocking footage filmed in Lhasa during last spring's protests. The explicit film shows brutal and excessive force being used against Tibetans.

A representative of the Dalai Lama said, "The footage clearly shows the beating of Tibetan captives even after they are handcuffed and tied, a violation of international norms."

The film also included sickening footage of wounds suffered by a young Tibetan man, Tendar, who was arrested and tortured after attempting to save a monk from being beaten by Chinese police. The wounds led to Tendar's death. They were reportedly caused by Tendar being 'fired at' and the use of torture techniques including burning, nails being forced through his foot and beatings with electric batons.



Evidence of wounds on Tendar's body that led to his death.



To watch the footage go to [www.freetibet.org](http://www.freetibet.org) and visit 'News & Media'.

- **Mount Kailash to be developed.** China has revealed plans to 'develop' the sacred Mount Kailash area by building hotels and restaurants and extending the road from Lhasa around part of the mountain. The rapidly developing tourist industry largely benefits the minority Han Chinese community at the expense of Tibetans, their culture and the environment.
- **An act of peaceful disobedience.** Farmers in the mountainous regions of Kham in Eastern Tibet refused to till their fields. This prompted the Chinese government to send troops to force farmers to prepare their land. In some cases soldiers ploughed the fields themselves.
- **President Obama raises Tibet.** The White House reported that US President Barack Obama expressed his concerns about human rights in Tibet to Chinese President Hu Jintao during the G-20 summit in April. According to a White House spokesperson, President Obama said that "we are concerned from a human rights point of view" and that "he hoped there would be progress in dialogue between the Dalai Lama's representatives (and China)".
- **Losar celebrations boycotted.** In Tibet and across the world, Tibetans put their usual New Year celebrations on hold to mourn those who died in last year's Tibetan uprising. This sombre observance of Losar, which fell on 25 February, serves as another example of peaceful resistance against Chinese rule.
- **Chinese cyber spy network exposed.** After being contacted by the Dalai Lama's Personal Office, experts uncovered advanced computer viruses which had the capacity to steal information and remotely switch on computers, cameras and audio devices. Investigations revealed that the 'GhostNet' network spied on computers in more than 100 countries. Allegations of the Chinese Government's involvement have been made.



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