



Free Tibet Campaign's *Stop the Torture in Tibet* initiative will highlight persistent torture and maltreatment in Tibet's prisons, detention centres and labour camps. Since 2002 China has released at least 14 political prisoners early as a result of pressure from governments and individuals worldwide, thereby demonstrating sensitivity to international criticism of its human rights record. By highlighting individual political prisoners who have experienced torture, we aim to both contribute to their early release from prison and to bring to an end the practice of torture in Tibet.

Karma Sonam

Karma Sonam and Karma Dawa are the two criminal prisoners who started the protests in Drapchi Prison in May 1998, prior to a visit by a delegation of Ambassadors from the European Union.

On 1 May 1998 prison authorities planned a celebration for International Labour Day, to be attended by government officials and journalists. The ceremony involved a flag-hoisting ceremony and demonstration of military style drills by inmates; both criminal and political prisoners. Heavily armed guards surrounded the prisoners.

According to eye witnesses, when the Chinese flag was raised and unfurled, Karma Sonam and Karma Dawa stepped forward and started shouting pro-independence slogans and decried raising the Chinese flag on Tibetan soil. Some prisoners, thought to be Karma Sonam and Karma Dawa, also began to scatter printed leaflets of a political nature around. Soon other prisoners joined in shouting slogans and the People's Armed Police (PAP) were quickly summoned from outside the prison. Warning shots were fired into the air.

Eyewitnesses state that Karma Sonam and Karma Dawa were severely beaten; Dawa being beaten so hard with rifle butts that they split into pieces. Dawa and Sonam were placed in solitary confinement. Still defiant after being tortured, according to reports Dawa told his interrogators: "We were dismayed and saddened by not seeing a single Tibetan flag." In an act of support and solidarity political

prisoners held a hunger strike for five days before the prison authorities forced them to stop the strike.

Eight prisoners died in the aftermath of the incident and 27 prisoners received sentence extension for their participation. Sonam's imprisonment term was extended from 14 years to 23 years. Early reports indicating that Dawa had been executed in the aftermath of the protest turned out to be incorrect and his sentence was also extended. However, according to recent confirmed information he escaped from Drapchi Prison, and lived in exile in Dharamsala India until last year.

The protest demonstrated a sense of unity among criminal and political prisoners. These two categories of inmates are often segregated, owing to fears

that prisoners of conscience will influence criminals with political ideas.

(Sources: Tibet Information Network, Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy)

Name:	Karma Sonam
Age:	45
Arrested:	1993
Reason:	Unknown criminal offence followed by sentence extensions for "political" activities within the prison (demonstration and incitement).
Sentence:	14 yrs extended to 23 yrs
Expected release:	2016
Prison:	Drapchi Prison

ActionActionActionActionAction

Write to the Chinese authorities listed, requesting:

- Confirmation that Karma Sonam will be released at the end of the imprisonment term of their criminal conviction.
- A commitment that the torture and maltreatment of all prisoners arrested for "counter-revolutionary" offences or "endangering state security" in Tibet will cease. (China does not recognise the expression "political prisoners".)
- An independent investigation into prison conditions in Drapchi and into reports that prisoners have been tortured in detention, with the investigation's findings to be made public.
- Unconditional access for the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture to all prisons run by the Chinese authorities.

Addresses

1. *Governor of Drapchi Prison*

Name: Jianyuzhuang
Address: Xizang Zizhiqu Di Yi Jianyu Lasashi 850003
Salutation: Dear Governor

2. *Minister of Justice*

Name: Zhang Fusen Buzhang
Address: Sifabu 10 Chaoyangmen Nandajie Chaoyang Qu Beijingshi 100020
Salutation: Dear Minister