



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.



Sonam

Sonam, a monk in his early 40s, from the Potala Palace in Lhasa, was taken from the Palace in what confidential sources describe as a politically motivated detention. Details on his case remain unclear but it was first suggested that it is linked to pre-emptive action in the run up to the 40th anniversary celebrations of the founding of the Tibetan Autonomous Region by China.

Sonam, originally from Toelung Dechen County, west of Lhasa, was one of the first monks allowed to enrol at the Potala Palace following its re-opening several years after the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). He first started work as a cook and was later promoted to the position of "go-nyer" or caretaker monk, at the Maitreya Temple within the Palace. Recently, Sonam and a Tibetan doctor established a clinic at the Palace to provide medical assistance to older monks in residence. Sonam was also appointed as a delegate on an official trip to Nepal in the mid 1990s, an indication of official trust in his loyalty.

According to witnesses, Sonam was reportedly arrested on or about 21 August 2005 at the rear-vehicle entrance of the Potala Palace. This entrance is usually used by tourist groups, not Tibetan visitors. Sonam was said to have been lured with a deceptive message that someone had been waiting for him. Once there, he was taken quietly in an unmarked vehicle and has not been seen since. Lhasa police often use unofficial vehicles to carry out detentions in a low-key and unobtrusive manner.

The incident occurred during a heightened security alert before 1 September, as China celebrated the

40th anniversary of the founding of the Tibetan Autonomous Region.

However, it seems unlikely that his was a case of preventative detention since he has no previous record of political activism. Those detained have been previously convicted political prisoners who have completed their sentence. Other confirmed cases of pre-emptive action in connection with the 40th anniversary celebrations include Tibetans who had been caught, even years earlier, after returning from unauthorised trips to India. This is Sonam's first known detention.

Name:	Sonam
Age:	early 40s
Arrested:	21 August 2005
Reason:	Unknown, may be linked to pre-emptive action in time for the 40 th anniversary celebrations of the founding of the Tibetan Autonomous Region by China.
Sentence:	Unknown
Detention place	Unknown

There are grave concerns for Sonam's well-being. Some sources indicate that two other Potala monks were detained around the same time as Sonam, though no other information on them is available.

Source: Human Rights Watch



ActionActionActionActionAction

Write to the Chinese authorities listed, with the following demands:

- Call on the authorities to publicly clarify the current whereabouts of Sonam and provide immediate guarantees for his safety.
- Urge the authorities to ensure that Sonam has access to his family, a lawyer and medical treatment while he remains in detention.
- Demand the authorities release Sonam unless he is charged or convicted of a recognizable criminal offence.
- Urge China to fulfil its obligation under Article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights on Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion and Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Addresses

1. Chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Regional People's Government

Name: Guo Jinlong

Address: 1 Kangangdonglu

850000 Lasashi

Xisang Zizhiqu Tibet

People's Republic of China

Telexes: 68014 FAOLT CN or 68007 PGVMT CN

Telegram: Chairman, Regional People's Government, Lasa, Xizang Zizhiqu, China

Salutation: Dear Chairman

2. Minister of Justice

Name: Zhang Fusen Buzhang

Address: Sifabu, 10 Chaoyangmen Nandajie, Chaoyang Qu

Beijingshi 100020

People's Republic of China

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Salutation: Dear Minister