

# Stop the Torture in Tibet

***"Throughout those 33 years the only motivation to stay alive was that I was determined to tell the outside world what was happening in Tibet... Pain, torture and anguish are real. I know. You have the chance to make sure that hope is also real."***

Palden Gyatso (right), imprisoned for 33 years.



TIM NUNN

## **Free Tibet Campaign believes that torture must stop in Tibet.**

Our campaign *Stop the Torture in Tibet* aims to draw the world's attention to the endemic nature of torture in Tibet's prisons, detention centres and labour camps despite China's own apparent prohibition on torture. As of January 2005, there are estimated to be at least 140 political prisoners in Tibet. Torture forms a part of their everyday lives. No claims of torture in Tibetan prisons have ever been investigated by the Chinese authorities, either at the point of arrest, questioning or sentencing. Political prisoners are denied proper legal rights; indeed the legal system is designed to ensure successful prosecutions. The 2003 Law Yearbook of China gives a rate of conviction of all defendants of nearly 98%, with over half of political prisoners receiving sentences that are greater than five years.

Over 80% of political prisoners are monks and nuns, who have historically been at the forefront of the freedom struggle, speaking out in support of the Dalai Lama. There is no special treatment for minors; Ngawang Sangdrol, a nun, was tortured at the age of 13 when she was first imprisoned for nine months. (She was arrested again at 15 and served 11 years of a 21 year sentence.)

Political prisoners have been beaten with sticks and belts, kicked, assaulted with electric shock batons, and denied proper food, water, sanitation or medical treatment. The use of solitary confinement exacerbates this abuse, with many prisoners forced to endure protracted periods of darkness, cold or terrible sanitary conditions.

Torture has been used by the Chinese authorities to send the message that political dissent is dangerous and often deadly. China wants the world to forget the suffering of political prisoners. We need your help to ensure that this is not the case.

## **Torture in Tibet.**

The prevalence of torture in Tibet is in many ways the consequence of a political system that persecutes those seeking to express their human rights peacefully.

Severe abuse, beatings and torture, inflicted by police and other security personnel, are most prevalent at the initial stage of detention, when the intention is to extract 'confessions' from detainees. Those being held in custody are particularly vulnerable as they are questioned without the presence of lawyers, are denied the right to silence and are frequently held incommunicado for long periods of time.

Although confessions that were extracted under torture have been banned as the sole basis for conviction by the Chinese Criminal Procedure Law (CPL) and other laws, this practice still continues. Respected religious leader Tenzin Deleg Rinpoche, whose case is one of those featured in this campaign, was given a suspended death sentence by the Kardze Intermediate People's Court in Sichuan (later commuted to life imprisonment), on the basis of a 'confession' by his co-accused, Lobsang Dhondup. Dhondup later withdrew his confession, alleging torture, but his claim was never investigated by the courts and Dhondup was executed in January 2003. Tenzin Deleg Rinpoche repeatedly proclaimed his innocence during his trial in December 2002, and also said that he was tortured.

Torture is also commonplace in other institutions where prisoners are held in administrative forms of detention, such as reform through labour camps.

## **Deaths in custody of Tibetan political prisoners.**

The torture of individual political prisoners has frequently led to their death. Since 1988 at least 41 Tibetan political prisoners have died as a result of torture and maltreatment during interrogation or whilst serving a prison sentence. In all, at least 55 Tibetans are known to have died in prison or shortly after their release; 44 men and 11 women. The vast majority of these individuals were young monks and nuns; the women's ages ranged from 20 to 30 years, whilst the average age of male political prisoners who have died is around 30 years.

Prisons, detention centres and labour camps in Tibet where suspicious deaths have occurred include Drapchi Prison, Trisam Re-education through Labour Centre and Sitru Public Security Bureau Detention Centre. The Chinese authorities have taken steps to reduce the numbers of prisoners dying in custody by occasionally releasing prisoners in immediate danger of dying to the care of their families, so that their death does not take place in prison.

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## The Aims of the *Stop the Torture in Tibet* Campaign are:

### 1. For China to conform to United Nations obligations on human rights.

China has signed a number of human rights conventions, which form an important framework for adhering to international standards in human rights. China has yet, however, to ratify and implement one of the most important, the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). This convention imposes on signatory governments the obligation to guarantee a variety of freedoms, including the rights to freedom of expression, to assembly and to movement.

The Convention Against Torture (CAT) bans all forms of torture absolutely. Although China has signed and ratified this mechanism, it fails to live up to the spirit of the convention. Torture remains commonplace and China does not allow unannounced visits by the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture. Adhering to the Convention Against Torture would ensure that the Chinese authorities institute a number of the reforms detailed in this leaflet.

### 2. To expose malpractice by 'naming and shaming' prisons and detention centres.

One of the first institutions to be featured in this campaign will be Drapchi Prison in Lhasa, also known as Tibet Autonomous Region Prison Number 1. Drapchi Prison accomodates the vast majority of Tibetan political prisoners and has the worst record of employing practices designed to break the spirit and health of political prisoners. Of the 41 political prisoners who have died since 1988 as a result of torture and maltreatment, 27 were inmates of Drapchi Prison.

### 3. To secure the release of Tibetan political prisoners.

Since 2002 China has released at least 14 political prisoners early as a result of international pressure. To continue this success, Free Tibet Campaign will highlight 16 cases during 2005. These will include Ngawang Phulchung, a Drepung monk serving 19 years for peaceful protest. He has suffered torture throughout his detention.

*"Right from the first time I was detained, Chinese officials used different torture instruments on me to break my spirit... my fellow political prisoners and I were subjected to electric shocks from different types of electric batons and prods... Other nuns and I were hung in the air with our arms tied behind our backs for extended periods of time and we were frequently made to stand in the direct sun or freezing cold for extended periods of time and if we collapsed... we were beaten... This torture and mistreatment occurred through most of my life in prison."*



Ngawang Sangdrol (pictured right in Drapchi Prison) was first imprisoned for nine months when she was 13 years old. She was re-arrested when she was 15 years old and served 11 years of a prison sentence totalling 21 years for peaceful protest.

Please write to the Chinese authorities urging them to carry out the following reforms:

#### 1. Stop Torture

- Outlaw the use of torture to extract 'confessions' from detainees.
- Ensure that all detainees are granted immediate access to lawyers, family, friends and medical personnel within 24 hours of arrest.
- Introduce a training programme for police and prison personnel in Tibet, in order to eradicate the use of torture and ill-treatment.
- Institute a system for prisoners to report incidences of torture and for a investigatory procedure that would lead to the prosecution of those who commit acts of torture.

#### 2. Conform to International Standards

- China to ratify and implement the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).
- China to sign and ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture (CAT) which allows the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture the right to make unannounced visits to prisons and other institutions of concern. In the interim, for China to allow all UN Special Representatives and Working Groups unhindered access to Tibet to investigate human rights concerns.
- China to allow prison access to organisations such as the International Red Cross, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, to monitor the condition of prisoners.

## Addresses

### President Hu Jintao

Yongdingmenjie  
Beijingshi 100032  
People's Republic of China  
**Salutation:** Your Excellency

### Prime Minister Wen Jiabao

Guowuyuan  
9 Xihuangchenggenbeijie  
Beijingshi 100032  
People's Republic of China  
**Salutation:** Your Excellency

### Minister of Justice

Zhang Fusen Buzhang  
Sifabu (Ministry of Justice)  
10 Chaoyuangmen Nandajie  
Chaoyang Qu  
Beijingshi 100020  
People's Republic of China  
**Salutation:** Dear Minister

## Ordering Materials

You can obtain copies of this leaflet, the accompanying Case Sheets, and Action Sheets on Prisons, Detention Centres and Labour Camps (as they become available) in the following ways:

**By Web:** From our website at [www.freetibet.org/campaigns/torture](http://www.freetibet.org/campaigns/torture).

**By Email:** You can opt to receive updates via email. To subscribe to this service send an email to [torture@freetibet.org](mailto:torture@freetibet.org) with either SUBSCRIBE TEXT (if you want to receive text-only documents) or SUBSCRIBE PDF (if you want PDF documents) in the subject line.

**By Post:** You can contact the office to request materials. Either call 020 7324 4605 or write to Free Tibet Campaign, 28 Charles Square, London N1 6HT.