



Tibet Groups in Canada

March 4, 2020

Hon. Francois-Philippe Champagne
Minister, Global Affairs Canada
125 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, ON K1A 0G2

Tibetan National Uprising Day: Stand with Tibetan human rights defenders

Dear Minister Champagne:

On March 10, the Tibetan community in Canada and around the world will commemorate the 61st **Tibet National Uprising Day**. Rallies and vigils will honour the thousands who died in March 1959 while peacefully expressing their devotion to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and their unease with Chinese policies in Tibet.ⁱ

The human rights situation in Tibet has declined dramatically in the recent years with gross restrictions on the fundamental rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, religion and privacy. For the fifth consecutive year, Washington based Freedom House has ranked Tibet as the second worst place in the world for freedom and human rights, with only Syria scoring lower.ⁱⁱ More than 2000 prisoners-of-conscience linger in China's prisons. Many are held without charge, are denied due process, or experience torture in detention.ⁱⁱⁱ

We, the representatives of Tibetan community associations and non-governmental organizations across Canada, ask that the Government of Canada to continue speaking out for human rights defenders in Tibet. In particular, we request Canadian intervention on behalf of four prisoners-of-conscience whose cases are summarized below:



- **Tashi Wangchuk:** In January 2016, a young Tibetan businessman and language rights advocate, was detained by police in his home area of Jyegudo, Kham, (Chinese: Yushu, Qinghai) following an interview with the New York Times on Tibetan culture and language. The interview quoted him as saying that Tibet should have greater autonomy, especially in the issue of language, under Chinese governance. On May 22, 2018, Tashi Wangchuk received a five-year prison sentence, more than four months after his trial was held. He is now not due to be released until January 2021 and is at constant risk of torture and other ill-treatment. Five UN experts who released a statement of serious concern on February 21, 2018 that expressed serious concern over the ruling by a Chinese court to uphold charges of “incitement to separatism” to Tashi Wangchuk.



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Gendhun Choekyi Nyima (the 11th Panchen Lama) (m): On May 15, 1995, the Dalai Lama named 6-year-old Gendhun Choekyi Nyima as the 11th Panchen Lama. On May 17, 1995, Chinese authorities abducted the child and his family. No charges have been laid and no trial is known to have taken place. China has admitted holding the Panchen Lama on numerous occasions including at the United Nations. Despite numerous requests from UN special procedures and world governments, including Canada, there is still no information as to the whereabouts or safety of the Panchen Lama.



Yeshe Choedron (f): The 57-year-old retired medical doctor was detained in 2008 after protests broke out in Lhasa on March 14. On November 7, 2008, the Lhasa People's Intermediate Court sentenced her to 15 years' imprisonment for allegedly providing "intelligence and information harmful to the security and interests of the state" to "the Dalai clique's security department". No additional details are known. Sources report that Choedron has not been permitted visits from her children since her sentencing.



Lobsang Jamyang (Lomik) is a young Tibetan writer and monk. He was detained by Chinese authorities on April 17, 2015 while attending a class at his monastery, Kirti Monastery, in Ngaba, eastern Tibet (CH: Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province). He remained 'disappeared' for a year, and his whereabouts and any information concerning his detention, were not released to his family until May 9, 2016, when he was sentenced to 7 years and 6 months in prison on charges of "leaking state secrets" and "engaging in separatist activities."

Request:

- Call for unconditional release of all Tibetan prisoners of conscience
- Urge permission for international observers to visit the prisoners and their family
- Press that prisoners do not undergo any degrading or humiliating treatment, are protected from torture or other-ill-treatment, and are provided with independent medical and urge the authorities to ensure that they have regular, unrestricted access to their family.
- Press China to agree dates for a visit from the High Commissioner for Human Rights to China and Tibet, and issue standing invitation to UN Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council (including Special Rapporteur Against Torture and UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention) with unfettered access to Tibet.

We deeply appreciate Canada's past commitment to taking action for Tibet, and for the interventions to press China for the release of Tashi Wangchuk and Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the 11th Panchen Lama. We know from past experience that inquiries from foreign governments, such as Canada, can have a positive impact on the well-being of prisoners in Tibet. That is why we are appealing to you, on the occasion of the 61st Tibetan National Uprising, to use both



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bilateral exchanges with Chinese officials and joint action with like-minded governments to pursue the individual cases presented in this letter.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sherap Therchin, Executive Director
Canada Tibet Committee

Trinlay Tharchin Domkara, President
Regional Tibetan Youth Congress Toronto

Youdon Tenzin Tsamotshang, Chair
Students for Free Tibet Canada

Dawa Jongdong, President
Tibetan Women's Association of Ontario

Tsering Wangchuk, President
Chushi Gandruk Canada

Namgyal Choedak, President
President Tibetan Association of Alberta

Tenzin Gyurmey, President
Tibetan Cultural Society of British Columbia

Kusang Tsering, President
Tibetan Cultural Association of Quebec

Tsering Wangyal, President
Canadian Tibetan Association of Ontario

Lobsang Tsewang, President
Ottawa Tibetan Community Association

Jampal Gyaltzen, President
Tibetan Cultural Society of Vancouver Island



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Cc: Arif Virani MP, Chair, Parliamentary Friends of Tibet
James Maloney MP, Vice-Chair, Parliamentary Friends of Tibet
Garnett Genuis MP, Vice-Chair, Parliamentary Friends of Tibet
Randall Garrison MP, Vice-Chair, Parliamentary Friends of Tibet
Alexis Brunel-Duceppe MP, Vice-Chair, Parliamentary Friends of Tibet
Paul Manly, MP, Vice-Chair, Parliamentary Friends of Tibet

ⁱ For the sequence of events leading to March 10, 1959, see:

http://tibet.ca/media/PDF/en/March_10_The_Lhasa_Uprising.pdf

ⁱⁱ 'Freedom in the World 2018 Table of Country Scores', Freedom House, March 2020:

https://freedomhouse.org/countries/freedom-world/scores?fbclid=IwAR3RSWq42wvP3fz7sNgO7dIHgK34HVw-uuupqvO5k74Wu7bUhj_ucZSgNMI#.Xl-yr8DhQWU.facebook

ⁱⁱⁱ For a current database of Tibetan prisoners, see Tibetan Centre for Human Rights & Democracy at

http://www.tchrd.org/tchrd_pdb