

TIBET

P R E S S W A T C H

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Brutal Treatment for Repatriated Tibetans

Details have emerged about the torture and maltreatment of 18 Tibetans who were forcibly repatriated by Nepal to Chinese authorities in May 2003 (see *Tibet Press Watch* Nov/Dec 2003). Former inmates from the prison cells in Shigatse, Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), recounted incidents where the 18 deportees were shocked with electric batons, repeatedly kicked in the genitals and forced to stand naked outside for four to five hours at a time, three to four times a week.

One former inmate recalled prison guards beating members of the group of 18 Tibetans while yelling, "Think about why you tried to go and see the Dalai Lama."

Another former inmate in the same

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Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok, Charismatic Tibetan Buddhist Leader: 1933-2004

Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok, the highly-respected Tibetan Buddhist teacher and founder of Larung Gar Buddhist Institute in eastern Tibet, near the town of Serthar (Ch: Seda) in present-day Sichuan Province, passed away on January 7 at a hospital in Chengdu. He was 70.

According to information received from Tibet, he underwent heart surgery in the beginning of this year in a hospital in Chengdu after having been admitted to Chinese military hospital number 363 on December 29, 2003. In recent years he was reportedly in poor health, and in 2001 he was reportedly suffering from diabetes and high blood pressure.

Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok had become a well-known Buddhist figure not just in



Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok at Larung Gar Buddhist Institute near Serthar, eastern Tibet

Tibet and among the Tibetan people, but also throughout China and the Chinese-speaking Buddhist world. The Buddhist Institute that he founded in Larung Gar in 1980 with fewer than 100 disciples expanded to more than 8,000 disciples in 2002, including a sizable Chinese population. He had also traveled extensively within China, giving Buddhist teachings in Beijing, Ningbo, Jizu Shan, Guanzhou, and Shenzhen, although in the last four years Chinese authorities reportedly only allowed Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok to travel for medical check ups and did not allow him to teach outside of Larung Gar.

Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok's institute eventually drew several thousand Chinese Buddhists to receive teachings and participate fully in Tibetan Buddhist practice. David Germano, a Tibetologist at the University of Virginia who made several visits to Serthar, has written: "Not only are there Chinese monks and nuns resident in [Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok's] Golog centre

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Tibetan Nun Phuntsog Nyidron Released from Drapchi Prison

Phuntsog Nyidron, one of Tibet's most prominent political prisoners and the longest serving female political prisoner, was reportedly released from Lhasa's Drapchi Prison Thursday, February 26. Nyidron was due to be released in March 2005.

In 1989, Phuntsog Nyidron was charged with "counter-revolutionary" crimes when she and five other nuns held a peaceful demonstration in celebration of the announcement that the Dalai Lama



Phuntsog Nyidron

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TIBET

press watch



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Message from ICT Director Bhuchung K. Tsering

The Tibetan people have recently celebrated Losar, our New Year, so I would like to wish all ICT members a very warm Tashi Delek. This year, the Tibetan New Year — the Wood-Monkey Year — fell on February 21.

Losar is the period when Tibetans traditionally wish everyone well for the coming year. I am sure you will join me in praying that the new year brings the Tibetan people closer to a solution to our plight.

It has been over eight years since I began working for ICT. I arrived in Washington, D.C., on a balmy August afternoon from Dharamsala, where I was working for the Tibetan Government-in-Exile. While in Dharamsala I heard that a very effective organization had begun working in the United States and so it was particularly exciting for me to come to work here.

My work here has made me realize how we can make concrete contributions in mitigating the plight of the Tibetan people while providing them with opportunity to realize their potential.

Our approaches to the United States Administration and Congress as well as in international fora have helped in actions supporting the Dalai Lama's peaceful initiative as well as in the release of Tibetan political prisoners.

The Tibetan Empowerment Program that we have started has enabled a section of the growing Tibetan community here in the United States and in Europe to become active in the political process.

I have always been glad that we at ICT have a strong Chinese Outreach Program. I look at this as something that will have long-term implications. By reaching out to the Chinese community, through


our Chinese language website and journal as well as by interactions at various levels, we are making them aware of the Tibetan point of view. Ultimately, if there is to be a lasting solution to the Tibetan issue, the Chinese people as a whole need to be better informed about Tibet.

What has given me the most satisfaction is in working with ICT's Executive Chairman, Mr. Lodi Gyari. In his capacity as the Special Envoy of H.H. the Dalai Lama, Mr. Gyari has been entrusted by the Dalai Lama to reach out to the Chinese leadership to begin talks leading to negotiations to resolve the Tibetan

issue. It was a very moving experience for me to touch the soil of my homeland Tibet when Mr. Gyari visited Tibet and China in 2002 and 2003 to meet with Chinese leaders.

I have been fortunate enough to be part of the growth of ICT, both in terms of its activities and membership. In 1995 our membership was less than 5,000. We had a website then, which was being hosted by a kind gentleman in his spare time. Today, our membership has grown to over 50,000 and we can boast of having one of the best and most professionally maintained websites in the Tibet world.

The *Tibet Press Watch* itself has undergone transformation. From being a compilation of news clippings (hence the name of the newsletter) it has also come to be recognized as an analytical journal on developments relating to Tibet.

While growing up in the Tibetan settlement in India I only had a vague notion of how concerned people in the United States and other countries have been supporting our struggle. Working in ICT has given me the understanding about how individuals like our members have done so much on our behalf. I say Thukje Che (Thank you) for your support. 



Bhuchung K. Tsering,
 Director of ICT



Congress Overwhelmingly Passes Resolution Calling on China to Release Tibetan Nun Phuntsog Nyidron and All Tibetan Prisoners of Conscience

On February 2 the U.S. House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed H.Res.157, calling on the Chinese government to release Tibetans held as prisoners of conscience for their involvement in efforts to end the Chinese occupation of Tibet. The resolution was introduced in March 2003 by Representative Tom Udall (D-NM) and cosponsored by 66 additional Members of Congress, including Representatives Kaptur (D-OH), Rohrabacher (R-CA), Smith (R-NJ), and Wolf (R-VA). The legislation passed with 398 votes in favor and none in opposition.

Representative Udall, the bill's sponsor, said of the wide support for H.Res.157 received in Congress, "If the Chinese government thinks the U.S. is eventually going to give up on these prisoners, they are wrong. We keep a close watch on the status of Tibetans and the human rights violations there, and will continue to do so. The passage of this resolution illustrates just that."

In a statement on the Capitol floor during consideration of H.Res.157, Representative Edward Royce (R-CA) noted that "The Department of State and other international organizations continue to report ongoing human rights violations in Tibet."

Mr. Royce added that H.Res.157 is part of a "long tradition" of Congressional support for Tibet.

The resolution highlights the case of Tibetan nun, Phuntsog Nyidron, who was arrested with five others from the Michungri Nunnery in Lhasa after a peaceful demonstration to protest the Chinese occupation of Tibet. Nyidron, who was awarded the Reebok Human Rights Award in 1995, was released February 26 (see cover story).

While in Chinese custody Nyidron and the others were kicked, beaten and given electric shocks on their hands, shoulders, breasts, tongues and faces. In 1993, the Chinese extended her prison sentence to 17 years for "spreading counterrevolutionary propaganda" by recording and smuggling taped songs out of the prison.


Well-known former Tibetan political prisoner Ngawang Sangdrol, who was paroled to the United States in 2003, was incarcerated for 10 years in Lhasa's Drapchi prison and recorded the songs with Phuntsog Nyidron. On hearing about the passage of H.Res.157, Sangdrol said, "Phuntsog Nyidron is a quiet leader - a deeply inspired Tibetan woman with tremendous courage and dedication. But she has already served 14 years and is not in good health. In the name of justice, she and all other political prisoners should be released immediately."

The House passed H.Res.157 as the Bush Administration was considering what action to take at the annual U.N. Human Rights Commission meeting in Geneva, from March 15 through April 23, 2004. With the 60th session of United Nations Commission on Human Rights approaching, some observers on Capitol Hill noted that the consideration and unanimous

passage of this resolution sends a strong signal in support of a tough U.S. position on China at the Commission.

"Based on what the Bush administration has called 'backsliding' on human rights issues by China - including specific Tibet-related incidents - a strong case can be made that the United States should introduce a China resolution this year," said Kelley Currie, Director of Government Relations for ICT-US.

"This is what the International Campaign for Tibet is pushing for," Currie continued.

In a statement in support of H.Res.157 on the Capitol floor Representative Eni Faleomavaega (D-AS) said, "Someday Tibetans will regain their freedom and those who languished in Tibetan prisons will be celebrated as heroes... The Tibetan people know the value of freedom because they are not free." 

Tibet Legislative Update

As the second session of the 108th Congress kicked off in January there were several legislative developments impacting Tibet. With the passage of the Omnibus Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 2004, Congress provided funding for a variety of Tibet related activities including: \$2,000,000 for assistance to Tibetan refugees; \$4,000,000 for development projects to empower Tibetans inside Tibet; \$500,000 for Tibetan exchange programs; \$250,000 for democracy and human rights training for Tibetans; funding for Tibetan Fulbright Scholarships; and funding for the Tibetan services of Radio Free Asia and Voice of America.

While many foreign assistance accounts were cut back to accommodate large increases in Iraq and Afghanistan funding, Tibetan programs either held steady or — in the case of the program inside Tibet — increased. According to ICT Director of

Government Relations Kelley Currie, "This was undoubtedly a difficult appropriations year; it is pretty remarkable that we were able to get an additional \$1,000,000 to help marginalized Tibetan communities. I think the September visit by His Holiness was critical to our ability to hold the line on Tibet funding and secure this increase."

The appropriations bill also included tough language on Nepal's treatment of Tibetan refugees and continued prohibitions on U.S. support for multilateral lending for projects that will have a negative impact on the Tibetan culture or environment.

On February 3 the House of Representatives passed H.Res. 157, calling on China to release all Tibetan political prisoners, 398 to 0 (see story, above). The resolution had 68 bi-partisan cosponsors.

ICT expects a companion resolution to be introduced in the Senate. 



“An Honor to Serve” Profile of ICT Board Member Mark Rovner

“It was the mountains that first drew me to the Himalayan region, but I was immediately drawn to the people,”

says Mark Rovner, who has been a member of ICT’s Board of Directors since 1990. “I signed up for a trek in ’86 and, two years later, went back with my wife Shira.”

“I saw an ICT slide show shortly after getting back, got involved and was elected to the Board a year later. I can honestly say it’s the best Board experience I have ever had - and I have served on a number of Boards,” Rovner recounts.

Rovner, who grew up in Maryland, has adopted two children from India and become a practitioner of Tibetan Buddhism.

“I’m not sure which is an extension of which, but my Buddhist practice and service on ICT’s Board are interlinked. There is a more traditional bent in the American Buddhist community that sees political work as something to avoid but many of the Tibetan lamas, such as Sogyal Rinpoche, Gelek Rinpoche and others, have made it clear that engaging in human rights work — with the right motivation — is an extension of Buddhist practice,” Rovner says. “Which is obviously how I see it!”

ICT Board members have a breadth and diversity of skills that they contribute to ICT. Rovner’s speciality is communications, and he was the foremost Board advocate for ICT to invest in its website in order to best use tech-

nology to inform and reach its membership and the public.

As important as that guidance has proven to be, Rovner remembers one of his greatest contributions to ICT as his involvement in the production of ICT’s 1997 “Stateless Dinner,” coinciding with President Clinton’s controversial hosting of President Jiang Zemin to an honorific White House State Dinner.

“It was a real honor to serve as part of the team that put on ICT’s

‘Stateless Dinner,’” Mark recalled.

“We tapped into the real inspiration for the Tibet movement that night — members of Congress, policymakers and activists together — all of us affirming the values that we knew the President was sidestepping at the White House next door, and each of us toasting the real heroes in China and Tibet while Clinton clinked glasses with Jiang.”

Board members are involved in virtually all of ICT’s major events and they have a wealth and diversity of skill and talent. Rovner’s speciality is communications. He has served as Vice-President of Communications for the World Wildlife Fund for several years and is currently Managing Partner at Carol/Trevelyan Strategy Group providing strategic and communications advice and services to non-profit and other organizations. 




Mark Rovner and his wife Shira Saperstein on a 1988 trip to Nepal that helped shape Mark’s dedication to working for Tibetans.

Kelsang Aukustang

Kelsang worked at ICT as an office manager and program coordinator from 1994-1996.


He later attended Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy and then went to Rockefellers Brothers Fund, working to strengthen the non-profit sector in central and eastern Europe and South Africa. After relocating to the San Francisco Bay area, he was hired by the Tides Foundation, working with small family foundations.

Currently he is the North American representative for the Instituto Terra, a Brazilian non-profit association, dedicated to ecology restoration, environmental education, sustainable development in the Brazilian rainforest. The organization was founded by world-renowned photographer Sebastiao Salgado and combats a colonization process by outsiders involving the construction of the Vioria railroad and aggressive commercial wood exploitation and deforestation. He spends about a quarter of his time in Brazil but is still based in the Bay area, with his wife, who he met in Tibet, and their child. 

Carol McGranahan

Carol was an intern at ICT in 1992 and 1993 and was a co-author of one of ICT’s seminal reports, *Developing Tibet*, (1992) the first report to analyze the ethics and impacts of foreign companies and NGOs working in Tibet.

Carol went on to get her Ph.D. at University of Michigan and now is an Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the University of Colorado, Boulder, where she teaches a course on the Anthropology of Tibet. Her research focuses on Tibet and the Himalayas, especially issues of power in local, global, and historical contexts. Her work bridges anthropology and history, including interests in colonialism, the nation-state, refugees and exile, memories of war, and the production of history.

Carol is regarded as one of the West’s leading experts on Kham and she is now working on a book, “Tibet: Between Empire and Exile.” Last fall, Carol helped to organize a large public lecture on the CU Boulder campus with ICT in memory of Galen and Barbara Rowell’s work in Tibet. 

EU and U.S. Officials Meet on Common Approach for Tibet

A special roundtable discussion at the European Parliament (EP) with the U.S. Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues concluded that the European Union and the United States, recognizing the importance of their respective relations with China, should join forces to help move forward the dialogue process between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama or his representatives leading to a negotiated solution for Tibet.



From left: Lodi Gyari, Special Envoy of the Dalai Lama; Thomas Mann, President of the European Parliament's Tibet InterGroup; Paula Dobriansky, U.S. Special Coordinator for Tibet

The roundtable, held on January 21, was part of the ongoing efforts by the EP Tibet InterGroup (TIG), ICT-Europe and *Bureau du Tibet* in Brussels to increase awareness among EU members of the need for a political solution for Tibet achieved through negotiations and, specifically, how a EU Special Representative (EUSR) for Tibet could effectively contribute to the dialogue process. The Dalai Lama's envoys, who met with Chinese officials in Beijing in 2002 and 2003, also contributed to the roundtable discussions.

Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs, Paula Dobriansky, serving concurrently as the U.S. Tibet Coordinator, traveled to Brussels to urge for a common EU and U.S. approach on Tibet. In addition to the roundtable and private meetings with parliamentarians, Dobriansky met with EU Council and Commission officials. Her visit followed a decision for the second consecutive year by the EU Joint Budgetary Authority to provide for the appointment of a EUSR for Tibet and the EP resolutions of 1998 and 2002 that called for the same.

To contribute to frank exchange, the roundtable discussion was off-the-

record, however key points were that: Tibet is prominent among U.S. bilateral issues with China; the U.S. Tibet Coordinator ensures that Chinese officials are engaged at the highest levels on Tibet and has a demonstrated and positive impact; the appointment of a EUSR for Tibet is the practical means of working cooperatively with the U.S. to promote negotiations, thereby achieving common objectives for human rights and genuine

autonomy for Tibet within an overall China policy; the bilateral human rights dialogue is insufficient for engaging China on broader political, economic and environmental issues on Tibet; the importance of China on the global stage argues for a vigorous effort to resolve the Tibet problem.

According to Thomas Mann, TIG

President, the Tibet InterGroup is committed to realizing the appointment of a EUSR for Tibet. Following the EP elections in June 2004, ICT Europe will make efforts to ensure that the 31-member TIG group expands significantly to include parliamentarians from the 10 incoming EU countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Malta and Cyprus), many of which have had direct experience in fighting off repressive regimes and have long supported Tibet. 🍀



U.S. Special Coordinator for Tibet Paula Dobriansky (second from left) is joined by ICT Europe Executive Director Tsering Jampa, ICT Germany Director Gudrun Henne and ICT U.S. Executive Director Mary Beth Markey, from left.

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ICT GERMANY HOLDS MAILING COMPETITION FOR TIBET CALENDAR

In early February ICT Germany picked the winners of its December mailing calendar competition.

Birgit Gangl, membership coordinator for ICT Germany, drew names at random from over 400 members who had recently donated to ICT Germany.

15 lucky members received their copy of 'Tibetan Legacy,' ICT's 2004 calendar, as a thank you for supporting the Tibetan cause in Germany. 🍀



Birgit Gangl, ICT Germany's membership coordinator

Phuntsog Nyidron Released from Drapchi Prison

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had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize and to protest the Chinese occupation of Tibet. She was given a nine-year sentence. Her sentence was extended by eight years after recording songs with 13 other nuns about their devotion to Tibet and the Dalai Lama. It was reduced by a year for showing “signs of repentance.”

“Phuntsog Nyidron’s release is wonderful news, but no real substantive change has taken place towards greater freedom for Tibetans in Tibet,” said former political prisoner Ngawang Sangdrol, who was jailed in Drapchi Prison for 11 years with Nyidron.

“The lack of freedom in Tibet is especially dire for former political prisoners. I can say from my own experience that this is precisely the situation in which Phuntsog Nyidron will now find herself,” Sangdrol

continued.


News of Nyidron’s release came the day after the U.S. State Department released its annual human rights report that found China guilty in Tibet of “serious human rights abuses, including execution without due process, torture, arbitrary arrest, detention without public trial, and lengthy detention of Tibetans for peacefully expressing their political or religious views.”

“Even a one-year reduction in sentence is important for Phuntsog; she has suffered so long. But this last minute maneuver to curry favor is callous on China’s part,” said Mary Beth Markey, ICT-U.S. Executive Director.

“Phuntsog Nyidron was imprisoned unjustly, denied due process, and tortured in prison. This release –viewed against the background of the new State Department

Human Rights Country Report on Tibet – is clearly part of China’s effort to use political prisoners as bargaining chips in place of systemic reforms,” Markey concluded.

On February 3 the U.S. House of Representatives passed House Resolution 157, calling on China to release Phuntsog Nyidron and all Tibetan prisoners of conscience immediately (*see story, page 3*).

According to the Tibet Information Network, based on information available, there are approximately 150 sentenced political prisoners being held in Tibet, and 75 percent of them are monks and nuns. There are no reliable figures on the number of Tibetans who are detained by the Chinese government for months or years on political charges, as many are never formally tried and sentenced. 

Tibetan Nun Detained by U.S. Released after Public Outcry

Sonam Chodron, a 30-year old Buddhist nun from Tibet, was released on January 30 after spending six months in a Virginia detention facility awaiting a decision on her application for political asylum. Her case drew national attention after the Washington Post reported on January 27, 2004 that the Department of Homeland Security had ordered her to remain in detention while it appealed her successful asylum application.

In November 2003, a federal immigration court in Arlington, Virginia, granted Sonam political asylum in the United States based on a finding that she faced a credible threat of persecution in her home country and that she was not a threat to U.S. security. The Department of Homeland Security, representing the government, immediately appealed the ruling, forcing Sonam to return

to the jail cell she had occupied since her initial arrest in August for entering the United States

illegally. Homeland Security lawyers indicated they were pursuing the appeal based on their belief that Sonam, who lived in Nepal illegally for three years prior to her arrival in the United States, did not face persecution there and had more accessible options to avoid persecution besides coming to the United States. In her court filings, Sonam said that her decision to leave Nepal for the

United States was made after 18 Tibetans were handed over to Chinese authorities in Kathmandu and returned to Tibet, where they suffered extensive torture (*see Tibet Press Watch May/June 2003*).




Sonam Chodron (left) at ICT’s office in Washington with former political prisoner Ngawang Sangdrol (right)

TENZIN N. DHONDUP

The Department of Homeland Security declined to provide a specific reason for their reversal on the issue of Sonam’s continued detention, but ICT-U.S. Executive Director Mary Beth Markey attributed their sudden change of heart to the exposure of this case through both the Washington Post article and syndicated stories nationwide as well as the resulting outpouring of concern from across the United States.

“I am confident they would not have released her if not for this national press coverage, but whatever the reason, we are extremely grateful she is out,” said Markey when Sonam visited the ICT offices in Washington on February 3 to meet former political prisoner and fellow nun Ngawang Sangdrol and describe her ordeal to ICT staff members.

ICT continues to work with supporters in the Congress to press the Department of Homeland Security to withdraw their appeal in this case. Please visit the ICT Action Center at www.savetibet.org to contact your Member of Congress about this case. 



New Report Spotlights Ongoing Repression in Eastern Tibet

On February 9 Human Rights Watch released *Trials of a Tibetan Monk: The Case of Tenzin Delek*, which provides an overview of the legal process that led to Tenzin Delek Rinpoche's sentence, and the impact of the local Tibetan community of his work, arrest and absence. The report also documents how government officials sought to silence Tenzin Delek Rinpoche for more than a decade. Officials limited his right to move about, to meet and speak freely with his followers, and to practice his religious beliefs. At least twice, in 1997 and 2000, he fled to the nearby mountains to escape arrest.

The crackdown on Tenzin Delek Rinpoche also targeted the residents of Nyagchu County, Tenzin Delek Rinpoche's home area, who rallied around the popular lama. Between April 2002 and January 2003 alone, police interrogated some 60 Tibetan community members. More than 100 residents fled because they feared rough treatment and imprisonment. At least six of Tenzin Delek's supporters were sentenced to jail; two received harsh sentences for associating with him.

In his own words, Tenzin Delek Rinpoche described the struggle for a modern Tibet within a political system that cannot tolerate divergent interests: "I have always carried out my work within one country, meaning the People's Republic of China. The work I have undertaken has been to unite people, to develop their warfare, to protect the environment, to promote economic development for the people, and to promote education... Everything I did, they considered a crime.

"Recently, I was called to the Religious Affairs Bureau and the United Front Work Department. They told me, 'You cannot have photos of the 14th Dalai Lama, the young Panchen Lama, or pictures of yourself.' And they said, 'The pictures are getting bigger, and bigger, and bigger, and you cannot do that. And you cannot have a lama's title.' I told them... that I did not

need the title of lama; I did not need the title of monk, but I did need the rights of a human being."

Several governments requested information on the status of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche. In February, ICT Germany reported that after repeated requests the Chinese Foreign Ministry responded to an official European Union demarche by informing the German Foreign Ministry of the prison location of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche and indicating that his sentence to death with a two-year reprieve would be calculated from the date the judgment became final and could be commuted to a lesser sentence.

This is an important development

in the case because, up to this point, the Chinese legal system made it difficult to determine the exact date on which Tenzin Delek Rinpoche could be executed.

ICT, along with Students for a Free Tibet and other partnering organizations, has distributed some 100,000 postcards addressed to the State Department and the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs calling for the release of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche. ICT continues its campaign to free Tenzin Delek Rinpoche as the 60th session of the UN Commission on Human Rights meets in Geneva, Switzerland in March and April. Please visit our website to take action and learn more about the campaign to free Tenzin Delek Rinpoche. 

Excerpt from *Trials of a Tibetan Monk: The Case of Tenzin Delek*

By Human Rights Watch
(Available at www.hrw.org)

Throughout his monastic career, Tenzin Delek championed the economic, social, cultural, and spiritual aspirations of Tibetans in four counties of the Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture (TAP), a predominantly Tibetan area in Sichuan province. He believed Chinese government officials in the area had little inclination to address Tibetan needs, preferring instead to use their positions for personal gain. Tenzin Delek tried to address the needs of Tibetans in a variety of ways: he established schools, clinics, an orphanage, and old-age homes. He mediated economic conflicts between Tibetan communities and was active in efforts to preserve the area's fragile ecological balance from deforestation, excessive mining, and other potentially damaging projects. He built a permanent structure at a major monastic center which previously had depended on tents for shelter, and he expanded its geo-

graphic reach through the establishment of seven branch monasteries. Perhaps most threatening to the authorities, Tenzin Delek's efforts attracted a coterie of several hundred devoted disciples and widespread support among local people at a time the Chinese government was consolidating its control of Tibetan areas and struggling to diminish monastic influence and reinforce secular authority.

Many Tibetans once resident in the predominately Tibetan populated counties of Nyagchu (Yajiang in Chinese) and Lithang (Litang in Chinese), in Tenzin Delek's home base in Kardze, and in several other nearby areas, spoke to Human Rights Watch at great risk to themselves. Their accounts yield insights into the breadth of the projects Tenzin Delek undertook to improve the lives of nomads and subsistence agriculturalists and to revive Tibetan Buddhism in an area where it had been silenced for more than a decade. 

In Memoriam: Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche

By Sogyal Rinpoche

It was with tremendous sadness that we learned that the great Tibetan master, Kyabjé Khenpo Jigmé Phuntsok Rinpoche, had passed away at the age of seventy, on January 7th in Chengdu. Kyabjé Khenpo Jikphun was one of the most important and influential Buddhist teachers of our time. Well-known among Tibetan people, in China and throughout the Chinese-speaking Buddhist world, he played an extraordinary role in revitalizing the teaching of Tibetan Buddhism in its homeland during an extremely difficult period of our history.

Khenpo Jikphun was regarded as an incarnation of Tertön Sogyal Lerab Lingpa, the teacher of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. Prophecies revealed by Tertön Sogyal and others indicated there would be two main incarnations of Lerab Lingpa, and one of the reasons I felt so very close to Khenpo Jikphun was undoubtedly because I, myself, was recognized when young as the other incarnation.

Khenpo Jikphun was born in Eastern Tibet to a family related to a number of famous lamas. He entered the monastery of Nubzur and then went on to study with Dzogchen Khenpo Thubga Yishyin Norbu, an exceptional master of both old and new transmissions of Tibetan Buddhism, studying with him for six years, and becoming his leading disciple. At the age of twenty two he received full ordination and returned to Nubzur to complete his scholastic training.

In 1980, Khenpo Jikphun established at Larung Gar, in Serthar in present-day Sichuan province, a non-secular Buddhist monastic university for higher Buddhist studies and meditation, which attracted thousands of students. At its peak there were estimated to be

over 8,000 students there, a thousand of whom were Chinese. At the invitation of the late Panchen Rinpoche, Khenpo Jikphun twice taught in Beijing as a visit-




Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok at the Larung Gar Buddhist Institute in eastern Tibet, which he established in 1980.

ing Professor to the Beijing Buddhist Institute.

He travelled to meet HH the Dalai Lama in India in 1990, and they exchanged teachings and empowerments. His Holiness would always express his appreciation for Khenpo Jikphun's work in encouraging and restoring Buddhism in Tibet. In 1993, he visited the West, and, at the invitation of the Rigpa Sangha and myself, he came to Europe and to France to teach at my centre Lerab Ling to over 500 students from all over the world. I felt that this meeting at Lerab Ling between the two of us, who held the name of reincarnation of Tertön Sogyal, was not only auspicious but historic. Khenpo Jikphun spoke of a prediction by Tertön

Sogyal that his teachings would spread in Tibet, but they would flourish and become known most widely, all over the world, from the time of his incarnations onwards, when their impact, power and blessing would multiply a hundredfold, and they would remain, without ever declining, for 500 years. It was very moving to hear Khenpo Jikphun compare his tremendous work in the East with my own humble efforts to spread the Dharma in the West.

Foremost among Khenpo Jikphun's great achievements was his careful training of students. He was a very pure holder of the *vinaya* monastic tradition and is said to have ordained ten thousand monks and nuns. In the first twenty years, his centre at Larung Gar had produced six hundred fully trained *khenpos* (professors), who returned to their home areas and other parts of Asia to teach. Some of these *khenpos* are now teaching in the West. Khenpo Jikphun also discovered a number of *terma* treasures, and wrote learned commentaries on the Buddhist teachings.

I pray that the strong and thriving tradition of Buddhist study and practice which Khenpo Jikphun has established continues, and goes on from strength to strength. Khenpo Jikphun's charisma, eloquence, learning and realization marked him as one of the most extraordinary spiritual teachers of our age. He was unique. Not only was he a mystic, but he possessed an extremely dynamic personality, and this great teacher will be sorely missed in Tibet and in the Buddhist world at large. Professor David Germano referred to him as "a bright sun of the Dharma", and Lodi Gyari Rinpoche said: "this is the saddest and greatest loss to the Tibetan people inside Tibet since the passing of the Panchen Rinpoche." 

Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok Rinpoche, Buddhist Leader

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

and Chinese lay Buddhists periodically making the long pilgrimage there, I have heard reports of Khenpo literally being mobbed by Chinese Buddhists or simply the curious seeking his blessings or teachings during visits to Chengdu.”

With Larung Gar’s growth, Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok was responsible for educating thousands of teachers who upon graduation returned to their home areas.

“Perhaps the greatest achievement of Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok was spreading authentic Buddhist scholarship by educating thousands upon thousands of teachers, both monks and nuns,” said John Ackerly, President of the International Campaign for Tibet. “Not only have they spread throughout the Tibetan plateau, but his students are now in China, India and the west.”

Chinese authorities began cracking down on the institute in the late 1990s. On 18 April 2001, the Chinese authorities issued a policy notice that Serthar must conform to a ceiling of 1,400 residents,



The Larung Gar Buddhist Institute in 2001, before the expulsion of thousands of monks and nuns and large scale destruction by Chinese authorities.

IMAGE OVERLAY: ICT

which resulted in the eviction of over 7,000 students. The International Campaign for Tibet was the first to break news of the crack-down.

Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok had traveled widely outside of China and Tibet in the early 1990s, including visiting India and met with the Dalai Lama. However, since the mid 1990s, the Chinese authorities had denied him permission to travel abroad. Many of his overseas Tibetan and Chinese disciples had attempted unsuccessfully to get permission from Chinese authorities to allow him to travel to the West for medical treatment.

Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok was known

for his scholarship. He was the first monk in modern Tibet who succeeded in building a major, successful monastic teaching center. His religious charisma was matched by an ability to work with authorities and to push them to their limits.

Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok’s name means “The master scholar of fearless sublimity.” His disciples referred to Khenpo Jigme Phuntsok simply as “Yeshe Norbu” or “Wish Fulfilling Jewel.”

One of his unfulfilled desires was a visit to Maratika Caves in Nepal, a sacred site where Guru Rinpoche was believed to have attained eternal life. 



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Please remember the International Campaign for Tibet in your will or estate plans.

For information about these types of contributions, please contact Joel Gysan at 202-785-1515 ext. 24 or joelg@savetibet.org.

Twelve Tibetans Receive Rowell Fund Grants

The Rowell Fund for Tibet has awarded grants to 12 Tibetans in honor of Galen and Barbara Rowell. The Rowell Fund's Board of Advisors selected the 12 out of a group of 50 applicants. They will receive a total of \$37,240 in funding to pursue their projects, which include documentary films, the publication of books, leadership training for women, and environmental activism.


The grant recipients and their projects are: Ngawang Choephel (USA), Documentary film on ethnomusicology in Tibet; Tibetan Alliance of Chicago (USA), Tibet archive and photo exhibition project; Tibetan Translation House (India), Book on His Holiness the Dalai Lama's speeches in Chinese; Tibet Times (India), Book translation

of Martin Luther King's speeches; Tibetan Children's Village (India), Funding for Photography Club; Gedun Rabsel (Indiana, USA), Book on "Aku Pema: A Blind Translator to Tibetan Officials"; Tashi Tsering, Tibet Justice Center (USA), Environmental awareness project; Samphal Wangyal (London, UK), Documentary film on the Tibetan antelope, the Chiru; and, Tibetan Women's Association (Dharamsala, India), Leadership Training for Women. Three grants recipients remain confidential by their request.

The Rowell Fund for Tibet honors Galen and Barbara Rowell's legacy for Tibetans by providing small grants to Tibetans in the language and visual arts. The Rowell Fund was started by ICT and the

Rowell families and is managed by ICT.

Projects were judged on content and their ability to make significant contributions to society through photography, film-making, writing, journalism, and projects that promote these skills within the Tibetan community. For more on the Rowell Fund for Tibet go to "ICT Programs" at www.savetibet.org.

ICT wishes to thank the families of Galen and Barbara, other members of the Board of Advisors, and all of those who donated to the Fund. The Rowell Fund for Tibet is particularly grateful to John Jancik, a friend of Galen and Barbara who donated \$25,000 last year. 

Dalai Lama to Visit Canada this Spring

The Dalai Lama will visit Canada from April 12 to May 5, 2004, to give a major Buddhist teaching and participate in a conference on Tibet and the Contemporary World. During this visit the His Holiness will give the sacred Kalachakra Initiations and give the keynote address at a two-day academic conference.

In **Vancouver** the Dalai Lama will deliver the keynote address to an academic conference, "Tibet and the Contemporary World," at the University of British Columbia on April 19 and 20, launching the Institute of Asian Research's new Contemporary Tibetan Studies Program

In **Ottawa**, the Canada Tibet Committee (www.tibet.ca) will use the occasion of the visit to help promote the opening of negotiations between

representatives of the Dalai Lama and the Government of the People's Republic of China. His Holiness is expected to meet with government officials, Members of Parliament, non-governmental organizations, business groups and academics. He will also speak to Canadians at a public event on Saturday, April 24, 2004, at noon at the Ottawa Civic Centre.

In **Toronto**, His Holiness will give the sacred Kalachakra Initiations. The teachings, traditionally conferred on large crowds, are from April 25 to May 5 in Toronto.

Thousands of Buddhists from across North America and other parts of the world are expected to gather in Toronto this spring to participate in the Kalachakra for World Peace, one of the Buddhist faith's most important teachings and initiations, conducted by His

Holiness the Dalai Lama.

This is the Dalai Lama's first visit to Canada since 1993 and comes after a new Prime Minister has taken office in Ottawa.

For more specific information on the Dalai Lama's visit to Canada, please visit the following websites:

Vancouver:

www.dalailamavancouver.org
(April 19 - 21)

Ottawa:

www.tibet.ca/en/dalailamaottawa2004
(April 21-24)

Toronto:

www.kalachakra2004.com
(April 24 - May 5) 

Brutal Treatment Awaits Repatriated Tibetans

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

prison told the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), "When they put the electric cattle prod in my mouth, [I] could feel it through your entire body and you faint from the pain."

ICT has learned that 16 of the 18 deportees were only released after relatives or friends bribed local authorities, in addition to paying a 1,800 yuan fine (approximately US\$220). The bribes are estimated to have been between US\$400-620, according to ICT sources in Shigatse.

The entire group of 18 deportees was believed to have been taken to a prison in Shigatse after spending 11 days in a prison in Nyalam at the Tibet-Nepal border in the first part of April 2003. However, ICT learned that four males from the group spent just over a month quarantined in Nyalam Prison, as Chinese officials reportedly believed they were carrying the SARS virus.

Immediately after the deportation on May 31, 2003, Chinese officials segregated the four Tibetans suspected of carrying SARS and held them in solitary cells. A western human rights monitor who witnessed the May deportations from the Nepal side of the border told ICT that there were at least a dozen personnel in white masks and gowns just over the Friendship Bridge waiting for the group. A Tibetan source in Shigatse told ICT, "The four who they thought had SARS weren't treated as badly as the others because the guards did not want to touch them."

No reports have surfaced as to whether or not the inmates had the virus, leading to suspicions that Chinese authorities used SARS as an excuse for increasing the detention length of certain prisoners.

The 14 Tibetans that were not quarantined received extensive beatings and torture while held at Nyalam, former prisoners from Nyalam reported to ICT. The deportees were reportedly beaten badly and tortured with electric batons. Former prisoners also reported that some of the 18



Nyalam prison at the Tibet-Nepal border

deported refugees were subjected to torture methods that included having sewing needles inserted in between their finger nails and flesh, which in one case was reportedly done to revive one of

the 18 who was unconscious.

The torture did not stop once the deportees were moved from Nyalam to prison in Shigatse. Reports have reached ICT from former inmates of the Shigatse prison that described in detail the various kinds of torture used there. These include beatings with electric batons and rubber tubing, extensive beatings and repeated kicking of males in the testicles, and long periods of time standing naked out of doors.

A Tibetan who spent time in the Shigatse prisons last year after being caught while trying to flee Tibet told ICT, "The cruelest person in prison is a Tibetan they call Phuntsog. He would beat us without any reason whatsoever and I was told that he killed a prisoner a few years back."

Former prisoners have told ICT that Chinese are more likely to be present during interrogation sessions but those carrying out the torture are more often ethnic Tibetans. The identities of Tibetan prison guards regarded as particularly sadistic are known in Tibetan communities but reprisals against them are apparently rare.

After spending a month in Nyalam prison, the four Tibetans suspected of SARS infections joined the rest of the group in a prison in Shigatse. The prison where they were taken, officially named "Tibet's New Reception Center," holds Tibetans caught attempting to flee into exile as well as Tibetans who are returning to Tibet after going to school or visiting family in Nepal and India. ICT released information concerning this new prison in December 2003. Photos of the new prison are available from ICT.

According to former inmates, there were approximately 300 prisoners in detention at the new Shigatse prison in June 2003 and in November there were an estimated 450 to 500. Nearly all of the prisoners are Tibetans who have been caught at the Nangpa pass or near the Friendship Bridge border crossing near Dram, the main commercial border crossing into Nepal from Tibet.

On December 28, 2003, China's official Xinhua news agency reported that China's highest executive authorities, Prime Minister Wen Jiabao, head of the State Council, and Jiang Zemin, chairman of the Central Military Commission, conferred an honorary title of 'Model Frontier Police Substation' on the Pali Border Police Substation under the Shigatse Detachment of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) Public Security and Border Defense Corps. The story mentions specifically that the title was given because of the border guards "safeguarding [of] the motherland's unification and peace in the border areas."

"Why do China's top leaders praise those responsible for the torture of Tibetans seeking a safe haven," said John Ackerly, President of ICT, "when instead they should be ordering a judicial inquiry of this pattern of brutal torture?"





THU JE CHE! (THANK YOU!)

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Q: Is there a way I can help ICT monthly rather than with one large contribution?

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Long-Held Tibetan Nun Released By China

By PHILIP P. PAN
Washington Post Foreign Service

BEIJING, Feb. 26—China has released one of its longest serving political prisoners, a Tibetan nun who spent nearly 15 years behind bars for campaigning for Tibetan independence and recording songs in prison that were used to inspire sympathizers, a U.S.-based human rights activist said Thursday.

Phuntsog Nyidron, believed to be in her mid-thirties, was granted a one-year sentence reduction and allowed to leave Drapechi prison in Lhasa, the Tibetan capital, according to John Kamm, who has previously served as an intermediary between the United States and China on prisoner issues. Kamm said Chinese Foreign Ministry officials informed him of her release in a telephone call. Phuntsog was the last of 14 Tibetan women known as the "singing nuns" to be released from

prison. In 1993, the women used a tape recorder smuggled into Drapechi to record songs about their love of their families, their homeland and the Dalai Lama, the exiled Tibetan leader. Their sentences were extended after the recording was smuggled out and distributed across Tibet.

Kamm said Chinese officials described the decision to free Phuntsog as a "humanitarian gesture" to mark the Tibetan New Year, which began last week. He said they also indicated China was "responding to concerns raised by the United States and in particular a few members of Congress," including Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah) and Rep. Frank R. Wolf (R-Va.).

Phuntsog's name was on a list of about 10 prisoners that the U.S. ambassador to China, Clark T. Randt Jr., and senior Bush administration officials have repeatedly raised in meetings with Chinese leaders and in public statements. Several international human rights groups had made her release a priority.

Phuntsog's release came as the European Union is debating whether to lift the arms embargo it imposed on China after the violent 1989 crackdown on pro-democracy protests in Tiananmen Square. European diplomats have told the Chinese government it can strengthen its case by releasing more political prisoners and taking steps to ratify a U.N. human rights treaty.

The State Department accused China last year of backsliding on human rights commitments it made during bilateral talks in 2002 and has said it is inclined to seek a resolution condemning China at a U.N. human rights meeting in Geneva next month.

Kamm said it was unclear whether Phuntsog would be allowed to return to her convent or leave China for medical treatment.

Phuntsog was arrested and sentenced to nine years in prison in 1989 after leading a brief, small march in Lhasa protesting China's rule of Tibet. She received another eight years after authorities discovered the recording in which she and the other nuns identified themselves and dedicated songs and poems to their supporters.

The London-based Tibet Information Network said she was one of nine women in its database of Tibetan political prisoners. The group says the number of known Tibetan political prisoners has fallen to about 145 after peaking at about 800 in 1996, but the decline appeared to stop last year after a surge of political arrests in Tibetan regions of neighboring Sichuan province.

THE NEW YORK TIMES INTERNATIONAL THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2004



Agence France-Press—Getty Images

Preparing for the New Year in Tibet

A pilgrim prayed yesterday in Lhasa at the Jokhang Temple, the spiritual center for Tibetan Buddhists, who celebrate the New Year on Saturday.

Tibetan Nun's Path To Asylum Hindered

Woman Entangled in Post-9/11 Caution

By DAVID CHO
Washington Post Staff Writer

HOPEWELL, Va.—Sonam always feared her devotion to Buddhism would land her behind bars in her native China. As it turns out, she is serving a long term in jail—not in East Asia but in central Virginia.

The 30-year-old Buddhist nun, who grew up in a Tibetan village near the foot of Mount Everest, fled to the United States in August after family members had been tortured and friends jailed for their faith, she said. But when

she arrived at Dulles International Airport and requested asylum, federal immigration officials detained her and placed her in the local jail in this small city outside Richmond.

Sonam, who is known by that one name, has been here ever since except for a brief visit in November to a court room in Arlington where a federal immigration judge granted her asylum. But even as she was hugging her attorney in celebration, the lawyer from the Department of Homeland Security announced that she was appealing the case.



BY DORLEY M. BRINGS—THE WASHINGTON POST

Sonam, a Buddhist nun, won U.S. asylum, but it was appealed.

Sonam was then shackled and returned to her cell, where she waits for her next court date, which is likely to be in the fall at the earliest, her attorney said.

Sonam is among thousands of

■ Part of the Patriot Act is struck down. | Page A15

See NUN, A10, Col. 1

THE WASHINGTON POST

A16 MONDAY, FEBRUARY 2, 2004

Security and the Nun

Regarding the plight of the Tibetan nun [front page, Jan. 27]: The difference between the bureaucrats at the Homeland Security Department with their many rules and the rest of us is that we recognize an injustice when we see it. If department lawyers want us to feel that their work is making us safer, they should behave with a little more compassion and a little less bureaucratic disinterest.

Asylum seekers such as Sonam deserve better than what they are getting from Homeland Security.

OTTO SCHULZ
Bethesda

■
The fact that the judge in the case found enough merit in the Tibetan nun's status to release her should have been enough for the Homeland Security Department attorney not to pursue the case. While all U.S. residents should understand the changed situation after Sept. 11, 2001, Homeland Security should have better ways to spend its energy and resources than appealing the judge's ruling.

BHUCHUNG TSERING

Director
International Campaign for Tibet
Washington

Tibetan Nun Caught Up in Asylum Case

NUN, From A1

asylum seekers who have fled persecution in their homelands only to be jailed in the United States, a new report by the New York-based Lawyers Committee for Human Rights shows.

By law, the Department of Homeland Security detains all asylum seekers who arrive without proper documents. But since the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, federal immigration officials have also been denying parole to these immigrants and appealing rulings in their favor, a practice that can keep them locked up for years, according to the report, which monitored the department's activities for a year and details scores of cases, including Sonam's.

Homeland Security officials deny they are trying to keep asylum seekers behind bars, although they acknowledge that long incarcerations occur. They say they are reviewing their practices in response to the report and are tallying statistics on how many asylum seekers have been detained, refused parole or seen their cases appealed.

"Even a well-balanced policy can get out of kilter on an individual case because someone has exercised poor judgment," said Asa Hutchinson, the Homeland Security Department's undersecretary for border and transportation security.

At the same time, he and others say there is concern that a terrorist could slip into the country under the guise of an asylum request.

"People who come here may have no legitimate [reason]. They are here for economic reasons or for criminal reasons and have been trained to assert asylum," Hutchinson said.

"That requires us to be careful and . . . sometimes it makes people more skeptical of asylum cases than they should be."

Last week, during an interview at the Riverside Regional Jail, Sonam spoke of her journey to the United States that began with a desperate, eight-day walk to Nepal across snow-capped mountains and ended with her first ride on an airplane, which frightened her so much she couldn't look out the window.

Sonam Singeri, a Tibetan working for Radio Free Asia who has befriended Sonam, was at the interview to translate. As soon as Sonam walked into the visitors' room and saw Singeri, she collapsed into her arms and sobbed uncontrollably.

"It's so lonely. It's so hard. Why is this happening?" she cried out, Singeri said.

Sonam told a story of flight and fear. She said her father had been jailed in Tibet and tortured with electric shock. She described hiding from police patrols as she made her way across the Himalaya Mountains to Nepal, where she lived for three years.

But even there, she said, she worried about her safety. In May, the Nepalese government began to round up Tibetan refugees and send them back to China, where they were sure to face prison and torture, she said.

Even after asylum seekers such as Sonam have convinced immigration judges that they are bona fide and pose no threat, Homeland Security lawyers continue to press appeals in many cases, the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights report says.

"They are indefinitely detaining asylum seekers who have already been granted relief, who present no risk, who have often been tortured in their home countries," said Archi Pyatt, who works in the lawyers committee's asylum program.

"We are sending a message that in the United States . . . we don't hope that asylum seekers find their way here because if they do they will find themselves in a very difficult situation and in prolonged detention."



BY JULIA WONG—THE WASHINGTON POST

Sonam, 30, said she fled China after her relatives and friends were tortured for their religious beliefs.

Immigrants seeking asylum in this country must prove not only their identities but also that they are in danger in their native countries.

Sonam's case was appealed because she did not have enough documentation to back up her story, according to a brief filed by Homeland Security attorney Deborah Todd. The fact that Sonam lived in Nepal for three years indicated that she could have safely stayed there and did not need to come to the United States, Todd argued in her appeal.

Asked to comment, a spokesman for Homeland Security said the department does not talk about ongoing cases.

Sonam said she had no way to get identity documents in Nepal because the government does not recognize refugees from China. She feared that she would be deported to China along with other Tibetans who were being sent back at the time. So she sought a way to get to the United States.

Using the money she had made as a seamstress before she joined her monastery in Nepal, Sonam booked a flight through Calcutta to Dulles.

After she was jailed in Virginia, her attorney, who has taken the case pro bono, twice asked the Department of Homeland Security to release her from detention, arguing that Sonam poses no danger. But immigration officials denied both requests without much explanation, according to Sonam's attorney.

The hardest part of Sonam's life these days is that she cannot speak or understand the language of the inmates or guards. (She is also illiterate in her native Tibetan tongue.) She has not been able to have a conversation with anyone since her hearing in November and wept as she recounted her seemingly endless days of silence and isolation in jail.

"I live in a prison but always in my mind, I hold onto a picture of His Holiness [the Dalai Lama] in my heart," she said. "This prison has become my monastery."

An hour into the interview, a guard tapped the window of the visitors' room. It was time to go.

Sonam shed a few more tears. It might be months before her next conversation. She hugged Singeri again and then followed the guard back to her part of the jail where she does not speak, cannot understand anyone and where she waits in her prison within a prison.

Tibetan Greeting Cards

ICT now offers beautiful all-purpose cards depicting five contemporary Tibetan paintings by Losang Gyatso. Each \$10 packet includes 10 blank cards with envelopes (two each of five unique designs). You can purchase them at ICT's online store at www.savetibet.org or by calling ICT at 202-785-1515



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