

INSIDE TIBET:

NGO worker sentenced to life imprisonment; signals China's hardline approach on blocking news from

Tibet: A Tibetan working for an International public health NGO, has been sentenced to life imprisonment for allegedly passing on information about the situation in Tibet according to a report published in the Chinese press. Wangdu, a former Project Officer for an HIV/AIDS program in Lhasa run by the Australian Burnet Institute, was charged with "espionage" by the Lhasa City Intermediate People's Court. Three other Tibetans were sentenced from 10 to 15 years for "providing intelligence" to the "Dalai Clique." The sentences are unprecedented in their severity for Tibetans accused of passing on information to people outside Tibet indicating a harder line approach to blocking news on the current crackdown in Tibet, and also appears to represent a challenge to NGOs working on the plateau. The report also underlines Beijing's view that the Dalai Lama was responsible for the wave of protests against Chinese rule that swept across Tibet from March onwards. Hundreds of Tibetans remain in custody following more than 125 overwhelmingly peaceful protests over a six-month period from March 10. A definitive number of prisoners is not known due to the security crackdown and the Chinese authorities' efforts to silence Tibetans, including the warning implicit in the sentencing of Wangdu and the six other Tibetans detailed in this report. An English translation of the official report which was published in the Lhasa Evening News in Chinese can be found at <http://www.savetibet.org/media-center/ict-news-reports/ngo-worker-sentenced-life-imprisonment-harsh-sentences-signal-harder-line-blocking-news-ti>

Chinese courts handing further prison terms to detained Tibetans: On December 22, Radio Free Asia reports that authorities in China's southwestern province of Sichuan have handed down further prison terms to Tibetans detained in anti-China protests earlier this year. The report quoted that a court employee said that detained Tibetan protestors were being sent to prison "one after another," and promised "More will be sentenced." Many of those recently sentenced are said to have taken part in a March 18 protest in Kardze [in Chinese, Ganzi] Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture that a source there described as "major" but "peaceful." The report said a court official in Dartsedo confirmed the ongoing sentencing of Tibetan protesters, adding that only "serious cases" were being brought to the Dartsedo court, while "other cases are tried in their respective counties of the Kardze Prefecture." Kardze and other Tibetan regions of Sichuan saw a crackdown on Tibetans by Chinese security forces in the wake of protests in the Tibetan areas since spring 2008.

<http://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/jail-12222008165412.html>

China to start teaching children "ethnic unity": On December 16, following the end of an Olympic year marred by unrest in Tibet and north-western Muslim Xinjiang region, the Chinese Education Ministry said that Chinese children will study "ethnic unity" and that the new classes would start from primary school, with high school students getting up to 14 hours a year to help them "recognize the superiority of our government and Communist Party's ethnic policies" and ensure that they reflect them in their work. China has 56 officially recognized ethnic groups with the dominant Han Chinese making up 90 percent of the population. <http://ca.reuters.com/article/lifestyleMolt/idUSTRE4BF0ZK20081216>

TIBET-CHINA DIALOGUE:

Tibetan Government in exile welcomes UN Chief's remarks; Reiterates commitment for Talks: The Tibetan Government in exile, on December 18, while welcoming UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon's statement urging China to continue dialogue with the envoys of the Dalai Lama, reiterated its commitment to resolve the Tibet issue through talks. A press release issued by the Kashag (Cabinet) on December 18, said, "This is to reiterate that we are sincere in our commitment to the dialogue process and are serious that the issue of Tibet be resolved within the framework of the Chinese constitution for the benefit of both Tibetans and Chinese people. Therefore, we are always ready to have dialogue with PRC at anytime, anywhere if the PRC authorities wish to do so." While expressing dismay over the Chinese authorities continuing to insist that the Dalai Lama is seeking "independence", the Kashag called for public scrutiny of the "memorandum on genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people" presented by the Dalai Lama's envoys at the insistence of the Chinese counterparts during the last round of dialogue and which has since been made public.

<http://www.phayul.com/news/article.aspx?id=23458&article=Tibetan+Government+Welcomes+UN+Chief's+Remarks+%2c+Reiterates+Commitment+for+Talks&t=1&c=1>

A full text of the memorandum is available at <http://www.savetibet.org/media-center/ict-press-releases/ict-welcomes-public-scrutiny-memorandum-tibetan-autonomy-counter-chinese-propoganda>