

FIDH - International Federation for Human Rights
ICT - The International Campaign for Tibet
Lungta Association Belgium

Testimonies of some of the people who were arrested in Bruges on April 1 during the visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping

- **Yeshi Wangma** said: "Today, April 1, 2014, at noon around 1.30, me and my wife were going to attend the demonstration organized by Lungta Association Belgium and International Campaign for Tibet for which the organizers got the official permission. On the way from my home in the Ezelstraat to the protest, a policeman asked me if I was Tibetan. Proudly I said 'yes'. Then they asked my identification. After a few minutes they said 'You are under arrest'. In my bag I had the Tibetan national flag and the flag of my host country Belgium. My wife wore a 'Tibet is burning' t-shirt. They put us in the police car together with another Tibetan who was in the car already. We were taken to the police station where I found 16 pro-Tibet people of which three were non-Tibetans including two females, so in total 13 males and three females including my wife. I was so shocked; I didn't break any rules here, I was simply on the way to the protest as I'm a resident of this city. All the time, the important politicians talk about human values, freedom of speech, freedom of travelling, the importance of human rights and democracy, but still they detained me for some time and I was only released after the Chinese president left my host city Bruges. So today being a ethnic Tibetan, originally from Tibet, I couldn't move freely in my host city Bruges in Belgium."
- **Nyima Karma** : "I was on the way with some friends from my home to the Minnewaterpark, when I got stopped on Markt. About 20 policemen came to us and asked us: are you Chinese or Tibetans? We answered that we are Tibetans. The police told us we were not allowed to enter the square, only Chinese allowed. We replied that we are on our way to a demonstration in the park and we had permission to demonstrate. The police said they knew nothing about that and that we had come with them. They locked us into their van. We could see many Chinese passing by. We kept repeating that we had permission in the park, but they would not listen. We were brought to the police station, and by 4 PM we got released in small groups."
- **Georges Timmermans** from Vrienden van Tibet said: "Every ten minutes or so they brought in a couple of Tibetans. None of the Tibetans resisted arrest and were simply detained due to the fact that they were Tibetan. None of them had been publicly showing the flag, they had them in their bags. Some were wearing T-shirts with Tibet motifs. It was absurd. I was detained by 20 to 25 policeman - that was totally unnecessary. The treatment was also very random so some were allowed to keep their shoes on, others were not, and the floor was really cold. All we got was a cup of water."

- **Jigme Tenzin**, 47, testifies: "I live and work in Bruges. I had permission from my employer to go in the afternoon to the peaceful protest, which was authorized. A little after 13:30 I was walking with a friend toward Minnewaterpark. In the center of the Eiermarkt near the Market police stopped us. My friend had a Tibetan flag in his pocket. We knew that we were only authorized to perform the action at Minnewaterpark so all that time he kept the flag in his pocket. The police asked where we were going, and we responded that we were going to the action for Tibet which some groups had official authorization. We had to show our papers and we were promptly arrested and put in the police van, and then went to the police station where we were kept until 16:00. We were not alone; there were several Tibetans and some Belgians. We have no idea what we did wrong and we know nothing about [why the police did this]."
- **Inge Hermans** said: "Vrienden van Tibet members Caroline Debaene, Georges Timmermans and I gathered on April 1 around 9.30 am at the area in Bruges in front of the Concertgebouw. The Chinese president was due to give a lecture to the students of the College of Europe. All over this huge square were a lot of people, mostly Chinese. Lots of big limousines (with mostly Chinese diplomatic numberplates) were all parked in the middle of the square.

Caroline and I walked through the square to the front of the building, meeting Georges half way. We stayed there for a while, observing police and the police in civilian clothes and Chinese security. While we were talking, Caroline went away for a few seconds to look in the entrance from the underground parking, just beyond some policemen. At this moment, some Chinese people approached Georges and I and started talking. Georges had a kind of plastic plate with him, depicting the Dalai Lama and Xi Jinping shaking hands and calling for dialogue. He explained this, and asked if we had ever been to Tibet, so we answered that we had not.

They started to provoke us, but we didn't fall for this trap. Caroline came back. And then Caroline, Georges and me were surrounded by a dozen police in civilian clothes; they were trying to intimidate us by commanding us to leave the place immediately. I asked for some explanation, but we didn't get it. They started to look into our bags, a plastic bag with flags, posters, flyers, some tape, my VVT shirt, etc.

Meanwhile, I kept asking what the problem was, because we were not doing anything wrong. Nobody said to us we were not allowed to walk over there, and so on. I kept asking what the complaint was, that we live in a democracy etc. They answered me that during this visit there was no democracy and that the rules had changed for the occasion. I asked for the paper where this was written. (I am still waiting.) They got very nervous, some more police came along to join them, we were forced by 12 policemen to leave this place and we had to follow them. They wanted to charge me for 'refusing to follow orders' etc.

Everybody who was there at this moment, could see this happening, they treated us like criminals. Still no explanation of what we were being accused of. We crossed the street and we came to four or five large police vehicles. We had to stay spread-eagled against the wall. They confiscated our stuff and started to search our bodies.

After a while the three of us had to step into the back of the police truck, they locked the doors twice, we didn't get any explanation whatsoever. They drove us to the police station, level -1 'politiehuis Brugge'.

The three of us were taken to separate rooms and questioned. They took some pictures (front and side) they took all of our stuff - coat, shoes, bracelets, glasses, papers, documents, I even had to take off my bra. They checked our ID, wallets everything. They 'labelled' me with some plastic bracelet with number A30. We had to sign some papers concerning the content from our bags and belongings. They charged us for 'disturbance of public peace'. Nobody gave us an answer on our questions. The only answer was 'We don't know, we have to ask our boss.' Under the guidance of two policemen, they brought me to cell number 11. Caroline was already there. Nobody told us for how long we had to stay in this cell, neither why or when.....no information at all. We could make one phone call, so I called my husband. I had to play a very difficult and hard performance at the opera in Antwerp, I was under a lot of stress and nerves because I had no chance of warning them that I would be late or not showing up. It was a cold very big cell, no daylight, no toilet paper. I can assure you without shoes and missing underwear, it was so cold. I was shaking and feeling sick.

We were locked up for five hours, we rang a few times to ask some toilet paper, we asked for some food which they refused to give. The paper on the desk (in the interrogation room), said some stuff about our rights. 'Food at a respectable time" is one of them. So I rang a few times on that bell but we still didn't get food. Their answer was that this was only meant for people under 'judicial arrest'. At least that's what they said to Caroline and I, to excuse themselves for not giving us anything to eat. But I have the paper here at home, were it says that deprivation of liberty should be done discreetly.

Around 15.30 they opened the door from our cell and we could go after we signed a paper for receiving our belongings. I am still missing my T-shirt...