

China Demolishes Tibet's Largest Buddhist Academy Larung Gar



Demolition at the important religious institute of Larung Gar in Serthar, Sichuan (Kham, eastern Tibet) began last week with images appearing on social media in China, and netizens expressing concern and distress.

The demolition of monks' and nuns' dwellings began last month at the important Buddhist centre of Larung Gar in eastern Tibet, one of the world's largest monastic institutions with a population of thousands of Chinese and Tibetan practitioners.

The demolitions were ordered by the county government - which gave no indication that Larung Gar's religious leaders had any involvement in the decision-making process. The [order](#) stated that homes for all but 5,000 monks, nuns and laypeople would be demolished, and that "By 30 September 2017, the population of the encampment must be limited to 5,000 persons" (translated into English by Human Rights Watch).

Around 1400 houses were marked for demolition in July, with nuns' homes and elderly peoples' hostels among the first buildings to be destroyed.

Local authorities denied the destruction of the institute, and instead described the demolitions as a 'construction development' that is part of a process of "accelerated urbanisation" towards "a more orderly, beautiful, secure and peaceful land." The Kardze prefectural

IN THIS ISSUE

1. China Demolishes Tibet's Largest Buddhist Academy Larung Gar
2. EU and China Hold their 18th Summit in Beijing
3. Dalai Lama's 81st Birthday: Quiet Tributes in Tibet, Celebration Broken Up in Nepal
4. 2016 'Lhasa Consensus' Draws Foreign Delegates to Endorse Beijing Propaganda on Tibet
5. Political Prisoner Focus
6. Reading Suggestion
7. Upcoming events
8. Cartoon by Fifi

authorities have intensified efforts to attract investment and develop tourism, and have invited several foreign delegations on propaganda visits to the region in recent months. Official tours by diplomats from Germany, UK, Canada and other countries took place last month, which included visits to a well-known Tibetan Buddhist monastery.

As the demolition started, the Tibetan lamas in charge of the institute, who have

> Continued on page 2

> Continued from page 1



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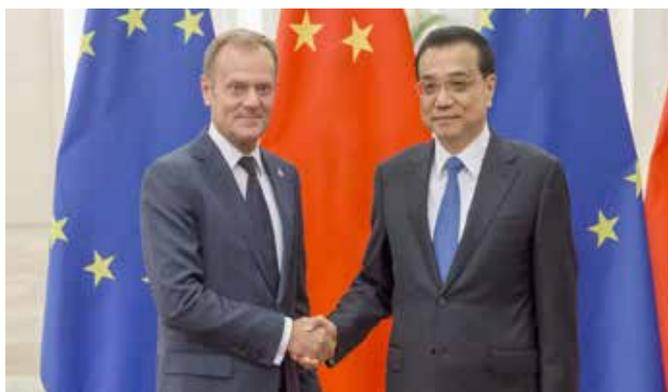
a large following in China, have urged calm among religious practitioners at the centre. They advised monks and nuns to continue with their studies, insisting on the importance of focusing on Buddhist teachings, not the destruction of physical dwellings. Despite their requests, according to Radio Free Asia, a Tibetan Buddhist nun called Rinzin Dolma [hanged herself on July 20](#), leaving behind a note in which she said that "she could not bear the pain of the endless Chinese harassment of innocent Buddhists who quietly studied at the institute."

Larung Gar, located in Serthar (Chinese: Seda), in Kardze (Chinese: Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan (the Tibetan area of Kham) has become

increasingly prominent in both Tibet and China in recent years as a vital centre for the study, practice, and promotion of Buddhist teachings. These have been difficult to access or non-existent in regular monasteries and nunneries as a result of restrictions put in place by the Chinese government. Matteo Mecacci, President of the International Campaign for Tibet, said: "These demolitions are part of a set of policy measures implemented by the Chinese government that severely restrict the religious freedom of Tibetan Buddhists. It is a regressive and dangerous approach aimed at managing and controlling Tibetan Buddhism that sends a chilling signal to the outside world about the pressures faced by people seeking to peacefully practice their religion in the PRC." ■

EU and China Hold their 18th Summit in Beijing

The 18th bilateral Summit between the European Union and China took place in Beijing on 12-13 July.



Donald Tusk, President of the European Council and Li Keqiang, Prime Minister of China at the 18th EU-China Summit in Beijing on 12 July 2016.

The Summit was hosted by Premier Li, who represented the People's Republic of China, while European Council President Donald Tusk and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker represented the European Union. The High Representative/Vice-

President, **Federica Mogherini**, Vice-President for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, **Jyrki Katainen**, and the Commissioner for Trade, **Cecilia Malmström**, also participated, and the EU leaders had talks with the Chinese President Xi Jinping.

The discussions included investment, climate change, the

global refugee crisis, capacity in the steel industry and the debate on market economy status for China. Leaders also agreed to have another round of the human rights dialogue between the EU and China later this year in Brussels, and signed an energy roadmap.

In advance of the Summit, ICT, along with the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), Human Rights in China (HRIC) and Amnesty International (AI), sent a letter to the President of the European Council Donald Tusk, urging him to ensure that human rights remain at the centre of the EU – China talks. The joint NGO letter urged the EU to publicly and unambiguously condemn the increasingly repressive environment and deteriorating human rights situation in China. It also called for concrete action in order for China to respect the rule of law and international human rights law. It also expressed concerns regarding the trend of overarching securitisation in China's laws and policies, in particular the vaguely worded new law on counter-terrorism, which links 'terrorism' with an unclear 'extremism' tied to religion, and allows for the criminal prosecution of

> Continued on page 3

> Continued from page 2

Uyghur Muslims and Tibetan Buddhists for virtually any manifestation of their religious and cultural beliefs in blatant contravention of international human rights law.

Following the Summit, the Council of the European Union adopted on 18 July the [EU Strategy on China](#). Together with the Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council "[Elements for a New EU Strategy on China](#)" adopted by the European Commission on 22 June, it sets out the European Union's relationship with China for the next five years. The two documents identify

major opportunities for the relationship, in particular aimed at creating jobs and growth in Europe as well as a greater opening up of the Chinese market to European businesses, and highlights opportunities for closer cooperation and partnerships between the EU and China in the fields of foreign and security policy. According to this new strategy, "the protection of human rights will continue to be a core part of the EU's engagement with China. The EU believes that treating human beings with dignity and respect is essential if citizens are to fulfill themselves and flourish creatively, and is good for the stability

and security of Chinese society and the world order. (...) The EU and its Member States will continue to work with China and its people to promote human rights and foster the rule of law, civil society, political accountability and freedom of expression, association and religion. This will require the full range of diplomatic, advocacy and other tools at both bilateral and multilateral level. The EU should also continue to urge China to release political prisoners, ensure fair trials, and fulfill its international commitments in terms of protecting the rights of people belonging to minorities, not least in Tibet and Xinjiang." ■

Dalai Lama's 81st Birthday: Quiet Tributes in Tibet, Celebration Broken Up in Nepal

Tibetans across Tibet celebrated the Dalai Lama's 81st birthday on 6 July 2016, by burning incense and praying before his image placed on shrines, while a peaceful celebration by the Tibetan community in Kathmandu, Nepal, was broken up by police in riot uniform.



A Tibetan man being detained by Nepalese police during the Dalai Lama's birthday celebration in Kathmandu on 6 July 2016. (Picture: phayul.com)

Nepalese police arrived in force at the Dalai Lama's birthday celebrations held at a school in Boudhanath, Kathmandu, on 6 July, even though official permission had been granted by the authorities for

the event. Police told Tibetans to leave or risk detention, and detained 28 people in the nearby police station. Radio Free Asia reported that police also pulled down large portraits of the Dalai Lama that had been placed on a stage in the school's courtyard and scattered banners, flowers and other offerings that had been arranged at the site. A Tibetan present at the event said: "It was very emotional, some people were crying. This showed a very ugly face of the Nepalese authorities; diplomats who had attended from the international

community observed at close quarters how peacefully the Tibetans were celebrating this important religious and cultural occasion, and the outcome." The 28 people detained were released later that day, following an intervention from Nepalese human rights advocates. The Nepalese organisation Inhured (International Institute for Human Rights, Environment and Development) issued a press release condemning the "unconstitutional and anti-human rights" actions of the police.

In the context of a close relationship with the Chinese authorities, Nepalese police have varied degrees of tolerance for celebrations of the Dalai Lama's birthday, an important and hugely symbolic occasion for Tibetans. While last year a quiet celebration was

> Continued on page 4



> Continued from page 3

allowed to take place, in 2011, several hundred Nepalese riot police were deployed in various areas of Kathmandu to prevent Tibetans from celebrating the Dalai Lama's birthday. They also confiscated pictures of the Dalai Lama and birthday greetings hanging inside a walled courtyard at Samten Ling monastery in the Boudha area of Kathmandu. The year before, in 2010, police set up checkpoints at different

locations stopping Tibetans heading to the birthday celebrations.

In Tibet, video footage of a prayer ceremony in a monastery in Lihang, and images of incense smoke in Draggo were among the low-key celebrations of the Dalai Lama's birthday observed through monitoring of social media. There are likely to have been many more quiet celebrations across Tibet in people's

homes or at gatherings that may not have been recorded on social media due to concerns about repercussions from the authorities. On the Dalai Lama's birthday in 2013, two Tibetan monks were shot in the head and several others seriously injured after Chinese police opened fire at a peaceful crowd who had celebrated in Nyitso, Tawu, eastern Tibet (see Tibet Brief edition 39 [[September 2013](#)]). ■

2016 'Lhasa Consensus' Draws Foreign Delegates to Endorse Beijing Propaganda on Tibet

Questionable international endorsements of Beijing Propaganda on Tibet were recently highlighted by the Chinese Communist Party's controlled media, while independent observers and institutions continue to be denied unhindered access to Tibet.

Chinese state media has circulated a ['Lhasa Consensus'](#) as a result of the 'Development Forum', held in Lhasa on 7-8 July 2016, which emphasized the importance of 'helping the world better understand Tibet' - political language for the endorsement of Chinese Communist Party propaganda. More than 130 researchers, officials and correspondents from over 30 countries attended the conference in Lhasa. The Vice President of the Asia Society, the chief economist of the Environmental Defense Fund in the US, a German politician and a French writer were among the participants.

The Lhasa Consensus this year was worded more cautiously than the previous 'Consensus', produced after the first meeting of such a group in 2014, when foreign signatories came under fire for endorsing a statement that was hostile to the 'Dalai Clique'.

This year's 'Consensus' used a smokescreen of opaque terminology to attract the backing of foreign delegates and to convince them that China's land use policies, which are having a devastating impact on Tibet's fragile environment, are aimed at conservation of the plateau.

Christine Davies, Vice President, Global Partnerships, of the Asia Society, was among delegates cited by Xinhua as endorsing China's environmental policies, saying: "As we have been informed or reminded of through several excellent tours and discussions this week, China intends to make sure that the Tibet Autonomous Region is firmly included in its ambitious nationwide development effort. The infrastructure development plans here are bold and far reaching." (Xinhua, 8 July 2016).

The International Campaign for Tibet

(ICT) is concerned about the integrity of such a forum with individual foreign participants of the conference in Lhasa, such as a German politician Markus Rudolph from the political party CDU. His colleague, Michael Brand, a German lawmaker who chairs the Bundestag's Human Rights Committee, was refused access to China in May after he criticised rights violations in Tibet ([see Tibet Brief edition 54 \(June 2016\)](#)).

"In the case of Tibet, it is astonishing that foreign individuals representing respectable institutions would endorse Beijing propaganda," said ICT President Matteo Mecacci. "While hundreds of Tibetan political prisoners are still in jail for expressing their views and while Tibet continues to be practically sealed off to all independent observers and institutions, such as UN rapporteurs and major international NGOs." ■

Political Prisoner Focus

Khenpo Kartse



Khenpo Kartse in an undated photo taken after his release from prison. (Photo from social media)

Khenpo Kartse, the popular and respected religious teacher whose detention in 2013 sparked peaceful protests and a silent prayer vigil (see Tibet Brief editions [41 \(January 2014\)](#), [44 \(July 2014\)](#) and [46 \(November 2014\)](#)), has been released after serving two and a half years in prison.

An abbot from Gongya monastery in Nangchen, Yulshul (Yushu) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai, **Khenpo Kartse** is well-known for his environmental activism and support for the preservation of the Tibetan language and culture. He was detained on 6 December 2013 in the provincial capital of Sichuan, Chengdu, and taken to Chamdo (Qamdo or Changdu), where he was apparently sentenced behind closed doors. There was concern

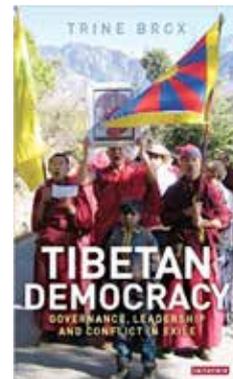
for his health in custody as medical problems that were known before his detention went untreated. He was kept in a cold cell and had inadequate food.

Khenpo Kartse's imprisonment attracted significant international attention, as well as expressions of solidarity and brave vigils by Tibetans in Tibet. Thousands of ICT supporters worldwide added their names to petitions for his release and his case was raised by several governments in dialogues on human rights with China.

Full details are not available about circumstances or the exact date of his release, nor about his current health condition, and he is likely to be under close supervision by the Chinese authorities. ■

Reading Suggestion

Tibetan Democracy: Governance, Leadership and Conflict in Exile, by Trine Brox



Publisher:
I.B.Tauris

Publication Date:
30 May 2016

How do you govern some 130,000 people from exile? Tibet -and the struggles of diaspora Tibetans- are elements of an ongoing and highly debated issue. The Dalai Lama's democratisation process during his time in India between 1959-2011, and the subsequent election of Lobsang Sangay as prime minister-in-exile, showed the Tibetan people the move away from a seemingly feudal societal structure and traditional theocratic governance. Central to these Tibetan democracy aspirations is the 'freedom struggle' in which Tibetans dream of an ideal politics which includes both Tibetans residing in Tibet and those in exile, with the ultimate goal of returning to a self-ruled Tibet. However, some have questioned whether the fight for democracy has helped or hindered a united and free Tibet. To elucidate this complex debate, Trine Brox has undertaken extensive fieldwork investigating how democracy is viewed and practised amongst Tibetans in exile. She explores how the Tibetans living in India imagine, organise and negotiate governance that is modern and democratic, but uniquely Tibetan. This is an important book for those with an interest in Tibet, diaspora communities and democracy. ■

UPCOMING EVENTS

▶ **8-10 SEPTEMBER 2016**

International Tibet Support Groups Conference in Brussels, Belgium

▶ **SEPTEMBER 2016**

Visit of the Dalai Lama to Europe (Brussels on 9-11 September, for a Dialogue: <http://www.powerandcare.org/> and a Public Talk: <http://www.dalailama2016.be/> and Strasbourg on 17-18 September)

▶ **13-30 SEPTEMBER 2016**

Human Rights Council 33rd Session

▶ **16 SEPTEMBER 2016**

Tibet Solidarity Rally at the UN, Geneva (for more information, contact info@tibetoffice.ch)

▶ **16-19 OCTOBER 2016**

Conference "Courage to Take Responsibility" at FORUM 2000 in Prague, Czech Republic

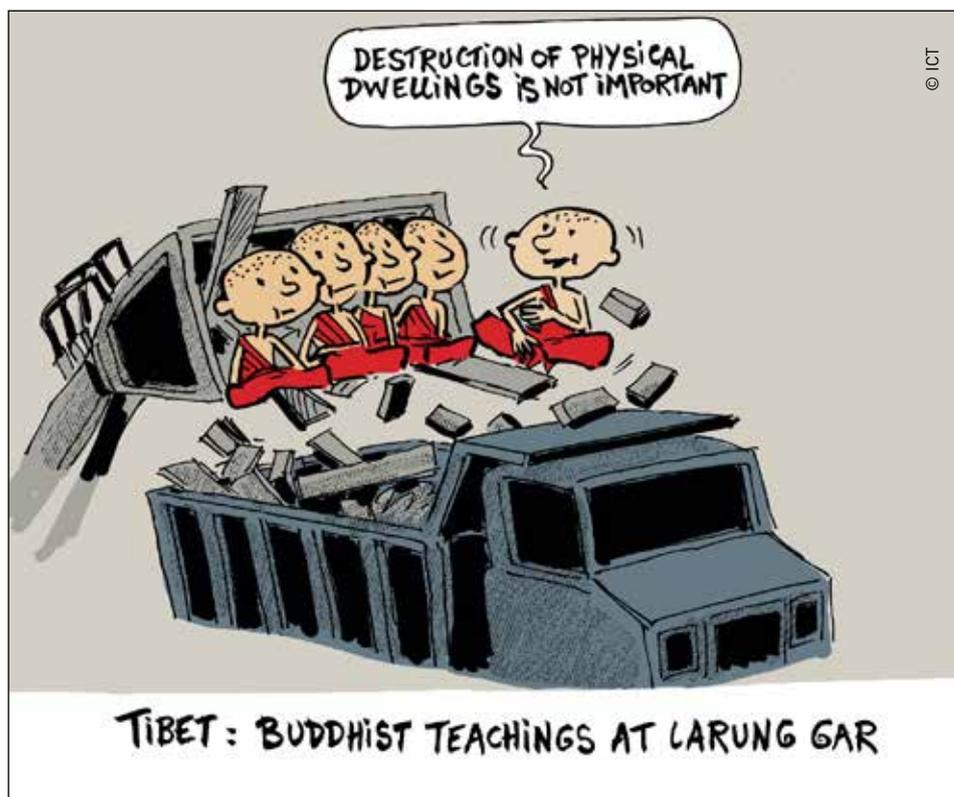
▶ **NOVEMBER 2016 (TBC)**

5th 16+1 Summit in Riga, Latvia

▶ **NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2016 (TBC)**

35th EU-China Human Rights Dialogue

Cartoon by Fifi



A cartoon by Belgian artist Fifi (Philippe Sadzot).