

Lobsang Jamcan
Chairman
People's Government of the Tibet Autonomous Region
Zhuren Xizang Zizhiqu Renmin Zhengfu
1 Kang'angdonglu
Lasashi 850000, Xizang Zizhiqu
People's Republic of China

Dear Lobsang Jamcan

I am contacting you today to raise the case of Thardhod Gyaltsen [塔堆坚赞, Tadi Jianzan], currently believed to be serving a 18 year sentence in Chusul prison. I call on you to take all measures within your power to secure his release from prison as a matter of urgency. Like other monks and nuns imprisoned in Tibet, he is a peaceful individual who has stood up for his religious beliefs, his community and his culture. Such actions should not be criminalised.

The state has provided no evidence that Thardhod Gyaltsen's conviction was based upon due legal process or principles of justice established in international law. Authorities do not appear to have released the reason for Thardhod Gyaltsen's arrest and conviction, but they are reportedly based on his alleged possession of pictures and recordings of the Dalai Lama. To arrest him on this basis is a violation of his rights under international law to freedom of expression and freedom to receive and impart information. The provincial authorities must seek an immediate review of his conviction and imprisonment, with a view to his release as soon as possible.

Thardhod Gyaltsen's case reflects concerns about the imprisonment of monks and nuns across Tibet. As you know, Article 35 of the Chinese constitution guarantees freedom of speech, assembly, association, procession and demonstration. Article 36 guarantees religious freedom. Monks and nuns must be free to exercise their religious freedom and freedom of speech across the Tibet Autonomous Region.

Abuse of these freedoms is a source of significant distress and resentment to Tibetans and is a legitimate trigger for protest. Authorities must not interfere in any way with the religious activities inside or outside monasteries or prevent monks and nuns serving their communities. Monks and nuns must be free to travel within the TAR and Tibet as a whole, including on pilgrimage and for religious festivals or teachings. In addition, there is no justification for shows of force and heavily-armed security forces at religious events and religious authorities. Ordinary Tibetans must be able to practice their religion without fear.

I call on you to take immediate action in regard to Thardhod Gyaltsen and to ensure that the religious freedom and freedom of expression of all citizens of the Tibet Autonomous region are protected by your regional government.

Yours sincerely