

# FREE TIBET

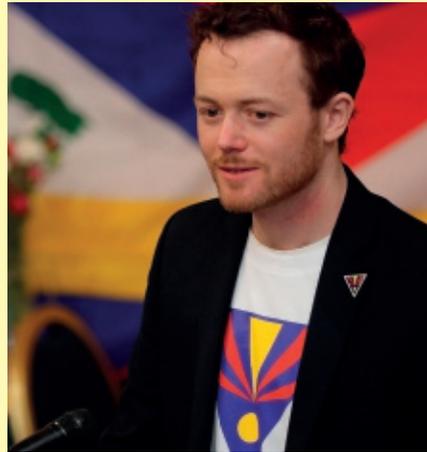


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• Making a racket • Protecting Tibet's children • Taking down a surveillance state •

## CEO LETTER



Dear friends,

In the last magazine I said to watch this space for more success in pushing back Hikvision. We did not have to wait long! Since then the Department of Work and Pensions has banned Hikvision AND we had their nomination for an award rescinded! We are beginning to make them pay for their involvement in repression and torture in Tibet. See page 8 for more. [Stop press: their profits have fallen by 11% with Hikvision blaming human rights activism – us!]

Whilst we've managed a fair amount of media coverage around Hikvision, it was dwarfed by the storm we stirred up at Wimbledon Tennis with our Where is Peng Shuai? campaign (see page 3). At every opportunity we have linked the disappearance of the tennis star to the constant abductions perpetrated by the same oppressive regime in Tibet.

We also forced United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michele Bachelet to finally say something about the plight of Tibet's children, who are being forcibly removed from their families by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in an attempt to wipe out their culture (page 6).

Every time we reveal the oppression the CCP is trying to hide in Tibet we take a small step towards a free Tibet. Your support, your involvement and your passion for Tibet allows the journey towards a free Tibet to continue. We will not stop until we reach our destination.

Thank you for standing with Tibet at this crucial time.

Sam Walton, Free Tibet Chief Executive Officer

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Front cover: Young Tibetan monks waiting outside their school at Labrang Monastery, Gansu, June 2011. Laszlo Mates / Alamy Stock Photo.

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Our vision is a free Tibet in which Tibetans are able to determine their own future and the human rights of all are respected. Free Tibet campaigns for an end to China's occupation of Tibet and for international recognition of Tibetans' right to freedom. We mobilise active support for the Tibetan cause, champion human rights and challenge those whose actions help sustain the occupation.



# MAKING A RACKET

Our trip to Wimbledon this summer hit the headlines.

Free Tibet managed to hit global headlines this summer by supporting the campaign to free Chinese tennis player Peng Shuai. Some 15 million people saw media coverage of our protest at the Wimbledon Championships this July, which included the BBC, all major UK newspapers and other media outlets from around the globe.

Last year, Peng Shuai alleged that she was sexually assaulted by a senior Chinese government official. She then disappeared and her allegations were erased from social media. Even after re-emerging, Peng Shuai has only been seen accompanied by sinister minders.

Although she is not Tibetan, Peng Shuai's case immediately made her a focus of solidarity among Tibetans. Her disappearance after challenging the Chinese government echoes that of many thousands of Tibetans and is not dissimilar to what sisters Youdon and Zumkar faced after a picture of the Dalai Lama was found in their home (see page 12).

A team from Free Tibet attended Wimbledon, wearing 'Where is Peng Shuai?' t-shirts to raise awareness of political detainees under Chinese Communist Party



From top: The four activists, Jason, Will, Caleb and Alvin at Wimbledon; Peng Shuai; Activists confronted by security.



rule. We were soon confronted by security, who told us that they didn't want to have political messaging on display. Footage of the confrontation quickly travelled around social media, with nine-time champion Martina Navratilova expressing her anger at security guards.

With massive media coverage and renewed focus on the Chinese government's human rights abuses, we felt compelled to return a few days later. This time, we teamed up with Australian activist Drew Pavlou, who had previously raised Peng Shuai's case at the Australian Open tournament. We handed out 'Where is Peng Shuai?' to hundreds of tennis goers who further amplified the campaign.

# CAMPAIGNS UPDATE



## OUR PRESSURE IS WORKING

Our deepest wish whenever we launch a campaign in response to events inside Tibet is impact on the ground. In the last issue we were able to report on the release of detained teacher Rinchen Kyi, who has since been reunited with her family. This time we have some good news from Drago County.

Readers of our last magazine will recall how Drago County in eastern Tibet was subjected to waves of repression in late 2020. It began with orders to demolish several giant statues of the Buddha and other significant buildings including a school and a building housing prayer wheels, and escalated into a siege with security forces and spies deployed to the area. At least 10 people were detained and in some cases subjected to torture.

In response, we launched a new campaign on religious freedom in Tibet in May – Stop China’s War on Buddhism – demanding that the religious sites be restored,

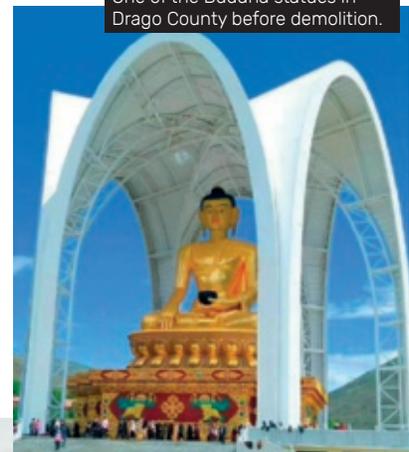
the prisoners released and that an international investigation take place. Since the launch of the campaign, over 3,000 people have taken action.

We are pleased to report that several political prisoners have been released. Excitingly, a source we work with has also passed on that local authorities are aware of the campaign, with attempts made by officials to distance themselves from the demolitions. The pressure is working and we are continuing to demand an international investigation to assess the damage and focus international attention on the Chinese government’s war on Buddhism.

If you have not already done so, you can take action here: [secure.freetibet.org/scwb](https://secure.freetibet.org/scwb)

We are keen to send campaign materials to Buddhist groups, if you’re in one please email [cameron@freetibet.org](mailto:cameron@freetibet.org) and we’ll send you a pack.

One of the Buddha statues in Drago County before demolition.



Following the demolition of the school in Drago County, people can be seen removing building materials by hand alongside others using machinery.

# ADVOCACY UPDATE

# OUTREACH FOR TIBET

Our Advocacy Officer's activities to highlight Free Tibet's work.

It has been a busy summer for our Advocacy Officer Tenzin Kunga. At a parliamentary event on 8 June, Kunga reached out to Sir Iain Duncan Smith MP (Co-chair of the UK chapter of Inter-Parliamentary Alliance on China) and urged him to continue his support for Tibet. The following day, he appealed to Tom Tugendhat MP (Chair of Foreign Affairs Select Committee and also Chair of China Research Group) with a similar appeal for support and to always keep Tibet in his thoughts.

The two-day International Ministerial Conference on Freedom of Religion or Belief, held in London on 5-6 July 2022, gave us the opportunity to promote our Stop China's

War on Buddhism campaign. More than 500 delegates from around the world attended and Free Tibet stationed staff outside the conference venue to distribute leaflets and talk to delegates and the general public about the Chinese government's attempts to claim ownership of the Dalai Lama's succession.

Among the many delegates that we managed to reach were the MPs Jeremy Hunt, David Linden, Navendu Mishra and Fiona Bruce; a delegation from the United States State Department and Lord David Alton of Liverpool.

In the lead up to the start of the conference, Free Tibet assisted in drafting an email on behalf of a concerned Tibetan woman to Fiona Bruce MP, who is also the Prime Minister's Special Envoy for Freedom of Religion or Belief. The email highlighted the sad plight of Tibetan nuns and women inside Tibet.

Last but not least, Kunga attended the UK book launch event of *No Escape* (William Collins, 2022) – a heart-rending account of the sufferings of Uyghur people in China written by Nury Turkel, Chair of the US Commission of International Religious Freedom – where he had an opportunity to brief Nury about Free Tibet's religious campaign.



From top: In July, Tenzin Kunga (right) attended celebrations for the Dalai Lama's 87th birthday where Tim Loughton MP (centre) was one of the main guests; Kunga with Nury Turkel, author and Chair of US Commission of International Religious Freedom; Navendu Mishra MP joined Free Tibet while we were distributing leaflets to delegates of the International Ministerial Conference.



Our teachers drove us to hate our heritage, our elders, even our parents... We felt ashamed of our cultural background.

Former boarding school student.

# PROTECTING TIBET'S CHILDREN

The resistance to China's colonial school system grows.

It is one of the most distressing pieces of news to emerge from Tibet in recent years – over 900,000 children separated from their families and communities and living in a system of residential schools. There, they are cut off from their culture, language and way of life and instead taught only what the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) wants them to learn.

Tibetans have likened it to the colonial boarding schools previously run in Australia, Canada and the United States, which uprooted indigenous children from their families and imposed what would have been a foreign education on them. In Tibet, this system affects at least three out of every four children (although that is based on available information and is likely to be an underestimate). One thing is for sure: these schools fit into the CCP's wider strategy of denigrating and systematically eradicating Tibet's unique identity.

While this boarding school system is in place, Tibetan-language schools across Tibet are being closed down or demolished, teachers (such as Rinchen Kyi) have been harassed or detained and monasteries (traditionally centres of learning) have been forbidden from giving Tibetan language classes to the lay community.. The assault on Tibetan education feeds the Chinese government's propaganda that this residential school system is necessary because Tibetan children have no other place to learn.

The effects of these policies are also clear: devastating psychological harm is being

inflicted on a generation of Tibetan children and parents, including the total alienation of Tibetans from their culture and traditions. In the words of one former boarding school student: "Our teachers drove us to hate our heritage, our elders, even our parents... We felt ashamed of our cultural background".

A teacher in eastern Tibet stated that in their area it is "mandatory to send children aged four and above to boarding schools" and that "there are very few Tibetan teachers; the majority are Chinese. So teachers only speak in Mandarin and conduct all school curriculum in Mandarin, including nursery rhymes and bedtime stories. When they join primary school at age seven, hardly any of them can speak Tibetan."

The leading expert on this boarding school system is Dr Gyal Lo, a Tibetan educator and researcher who visited more than 50 such schools before escaping Tibet in 2020. Today, he works to raise awareness of the residential school system and its effects on children in Tibet. He has summed up the damage caused by the separation of Tibetan children from their parents as "outright cruelty", adding: "I saw in my own family how within three months of being sent to boarding preschool, children began to speak to each other only in Chinese, even though they had been raised speaking Tibetan. When the children went home on weekends, they stayed silent in the house, almost acting like guests."

In response to this evidence, Free Tibet and partners around the world launched a huge effort to encourage the United Nations High

Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, to speak out against the boarding school system and the closure of Tibetan schools. The action generated an overwhelming response, with nearly 19,000 people signing the petition, including over 8,000 Free Tibet supporters.

Bachelet had never previously mentioned Tibet in her four years as High Commissioner, but in May, after concluding a controversial visit to China, she gave a press conference summing up her meetings with Chinese officials. She stated that “it is important the linguistic, religious and cultural identity of Tibetans be protected”, and added that she “stressed the importance of children learning in their own language and culture in the setting of their families or communities”.

Ultimately, the visit to China was widely seen as a propaganda coup for the CCP and shortly after, Bachelet announced that she would not be seeking a second term as High Commissioner. However, the campaign had made its mark and the seriousness and scale of the CCP’s attack on freedom of education in Tibet means that it will only get bigger from here.

Our next target is the G7 group of governments, some of which have historically run colonial boarding schools themselves, and where discussions and debate are currently taking place about how the damage these policies caused should be addressed. We hope that through online action and advocacy with government officials we can encourage international pressure on the Chinese government. You can take the action online here: [freetibet.org/protect-tibets-children/](https://freetibet.org/protect-tibets-children/)

Free Tibet is aiming to bring Dr Gyal Lo to the UK in early 2023 to speak to the public and government officials about the damage these schools are causing. “The Chinese government is tearing families apart and forcing these vulnerable children to become strangers to their own Tibetan culture”, said Dr Gyal Lo earlier this year in an interview.

We cannot let this cultural destruction continue. We will work to support his struggle to protect Tibet’s children.



## PLEASE DONATE TO SUPPORT TIBET’S CHILDREN TODAY

Dear reader,

Under cover of the information blackout in Tibet, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has constructed a massive colonial boarding school system. Tibetan children from as young as four years old are deliberately subjected to the Chinese authority’s political indoctrination, aimed at erasing their very identity with overwhelmingly negative consequences for the future of Tibet.

This is deeply concerning. And it is why we are requesting your support. Here are a few ways your donation will make a vital difference in protecting Tibet’s children:



This is deeply concerning. And it is why we are requesting your support.

**£5** will fund advocacy work to urge policymakers to speak out against CCP-controlled boarding schools.

**£10** will target G7 leaders and demand they push China directly to shut the schools down.

**£15** will fund a speaking tour for Tibetan researcher Dr Gyal Lo. As the world’s leading expert on this colonial boarding school network, his testimony will be vital for encouraging change.

Thank you for continuing to support the protection of Tibet’s culture and its future.

Visit [freetibet.org/PTC-appeal](https://freetibet.org/PTC-appeal) to make a donation.

P.S. If you have not already signed up, make sure to leave your email address on the form to receive updates on our campaigns, appeals, events and the impact we have together.



Free Tibet and friends outside the Hikvision office in August.

# TAKING DOWN A SURVEILLANCE STATE

New victories in our campaign against Hikvision.

In just the first few months of our Stop Hikvision campaign we had some real successes with wide media coverage of our research, increased discussion of Hikvision in parliament, and, most importantly, we found out that the Department of Health and Social Care had decided that they will no longer buy Hikvision cameras. And in May, we made our first visit to Hikvision's headquarters and handed out leaflets about the company's complicity in human rights abuses against Tibetans.

More evidence has emerged about how closely Hikvision is linked to the CCP's police state, including details of Hikvision manufacturing an 'Interrogation Monitoring Management System' in China. The system is

paired with a 'tiger chair', which immobilises detainees and is often used for days on end during interrogation. The Hikvision system films the interrogation, monitors the detainee's vital signs, and prints a transcript of the interrogation for the detainee to sign. This is just the latest evidence that Hikvision is developing technology specifically to enable the Chinese government in their mission of oppression.

Since we published our last magazine we've made even more progress in our campaign with another government department committing to stop using Hikvision cameras in future. In June, the Department for Work and Pensions, which had admitted to having hundreds of



Hikvision is developing technology specifically to enable the Chinese government in their mission of oppression.

Hikvision cameras, said it would remove them all in the next three years.

We also challenged the British Security Awards, which had nominated Hikvision for one of their most prestigious security awards, as to why they would be celebrating a company like Hikvision at their ceremony in London. Within two days we had confirmation that Hikvision would no longer be attending the ceremony and their nomination was withdrawn. We went to the ceremony and handed out information to leading members of the CCTV industry raising awareness of Hikvision's behaviour.

In parliament, Hikvision continues to be a hot topic of conversation, being mentioned more in the few months since we launched our campaign than it had been in the entire decade beforehand. This increased interest in what Hikvision is really up to could lead to real change. There are currently two proposed amendments to the Procurement Bill that could limit Hikvision's ability to sell their cameras in the UK. We hope these will become law by the time this magazine lands with you, and there are a number of other bills progressing through parliament at the moment which could be amended to further target Hikvision.

We've kept up our visits to Hikvision's UK headquarters, calling for an opportunity to meet with their marketing director Justin Hollis, who has refused to answer the CCTV commissioner Fraser Sampson's questions about human rights abuses. In August, we were escorted away twice from their offices after asking for a meeting, and then returning with partners from other campaign organisations to protest Hikvision's presence in the UK.

What's become very clear is we've got Hikvision rattled. In July, they called us a "fringe group" who "threw around accusations" after we joined with other groups and dozens of MPs to call for them to be banned from the UK. With your support we can keep pushing to stop Hikvision and further expose their role in human rights abuses against Tibetans.



**STOP**

**HIKVISION**

## CAN YOU TAKE YOUR SUPPORT TO THE NEXT LEVEL BY GIVING A MONTHLY DONATION?

None of the successes from our Hikvision campaign could have been achieved without the regular support of our donors. Thank you.

Regular donations are relentless blows against the unchallenged authority of the Chinese Communist Party. They are what keeps us going.

By becoming a regular donor, you can help us devise long-lasting, impactful campaigns like this. With your donations, we are better able to be urgent and reactive, right when we need to be.

## NO GIFT IS TOO SMALL AND EACH DONATION IS VITAL

To become a regular donor please complete and return the enclosed form in the freepost envelope.

P.S. If you have not already signed up, make sure to leave your email address on the form to receive updates on our campaigns, appeals, events and the impact we have together.



# Q&A WITH ZEEKGYAB RINPOCHE

Zeekgyab Rinpoche (centre) joined by guests at the event.

On 18 July 2022, Free Tibet had the honour of hosting a live seminar with Zeekgyab Rinpoche, Abbot of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, on the future of Tibetan Buddhism and the status of the Panchen Lama. Zeekgyab Rinpoche shares a close connection with the Panchen Lama, who has not been seen since his abduction by Chinese authorities in 1996, as they both belong to the same monastery.

The following Q&A is a summary of some of the questions asked by the audience and answers given by Zeekgyab Rinpoche following the main event (his responses have been edited for brevity). The full livestream is available on our YouTube channel: [www.youtube.com/c/freetibetorg](http://www.youtube.com/c/freetibetorg)

**What is expected to happen to the Panchen Lama? Do you expect the Chinese government to release him?**

This is something that I get asked frequently and, to be honest, I always have hope that the Panchen Lama will be released in the future. The basis of my hope is that the Chinese authorities responsible for the Panchen Lama's abduction are human just like us. When the time comes that their way of thinking will change, things will turn to our side. It is important for us to treat the Chinese authorities with peace and compassion in our hearts.

**Given that the Panchen Lama will have been given a Chinese education, possibly with no authentic exposure to Tibetan Buddhism, would his authority still be recognised?**

I believe that, if he is released, the Panchen Lama will be able to continue the legacy of his predecessor, and

take upon his responsibilities as per the wishes of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Tibetans believe that the Panchen Lama is the manifestation of Buddha Amitābha, so has divine power. So I have no doubt that, if released, the Panchen Lama would be able to take up his religious studies and continue his role.

**What do you think is the most important thing that Buddhists, and people of all religions, around the world can do to help protect and preserve religion inside Tibet?**

It is what His Holiness the Dalai Lama has advised, reminding all Buddhists to not only follow the Tibetan Buddhist practices, but to learn and study the Buddhist philosophy and grasp the real essence of Tibetan Buddhism too.

Tibetan Buddhism should not just be seen as a religion, but should be considered as an educational institution. That way we will not face the problem of continuing Tibetan Buddhism in the future.

**Do you have any comments about the man recognised by Chinese authorities as the Panchen Lama, Tenzin Norbu?**

Tenzin Norbu is the Chinese-installed Panchen Lama. However, Tibetans both inside and outside of Tibet only acknowledge the one recognised by His Holiness the Dalai Lama – Gedhun Choekyi Nyima. We should think of Tenzin Norbu as a fellow human, a Tibetan, and a follower of Tibetan Buddhism. There is no need to think of him with hatred or anger as he himself is someone who is not free and is controlled by the Chinese authorities.

# Give the gift of freedom with a Gift for Human Rights

The perfect present for someone special: Gifts for Human Rights really brings Free Tibet's work to life. Each gift includes a detailed greetings card – specific to one of our three main campaigns – for you to personalise and a handmade Tibetan character doll.

Every Gift for Human Rights bought for £20 will support powerful campaigning, lobbying and the self-determination of the Tibetan people.

- **Cultural Freedom**  
This gift helps ensure the protection of cultural freedom for all Tibetans.
- **Environmental Protection**  
This gift helps call for international recognition of Tibet within climate talks.
- **Religious Expression**  
This gift supports the protection of religious freedom for Tibetans.

You can find out more and purchase a Gift for Human Rights through our online shop, our summer shop catalogue or by contacting us at [host@freetibet.org](mailto:host@freetibet.org)



[shop.freetibet.org/collections/gifts-for-human-rights](http://shop.freetibet.org/collections/gifts-for-human-rights)

# NEWS FROM TIBET



China works hard to keep news of their abuses in Tibet hidden. Here are some stories which Free Tibet, working alongside our research partner Tibet Watch, has brought to global attention.

## POLITICAL PRISONER RELEASED EARLY

Norzin Wangmo, a Tibetan political prisoner and mother of three children, was released early on 2 May. Her release comes before the completion of her three-year prison sentence.

Despite this good news, Norzin Wangmo is in poor health due to the torture inflicted on her in prison and she is unable to stand on her own feet. Following her release, and despite her poor health, Norzin Wangmo has not been allowed to travel to hospital to seek medical treatment and security personnel are closely monitoring her at her home.

Norzin Wangmo is originally from Chigril Township in Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. She was arrested in 2020 and accused of sharing information with Tibetans in exile about the self-immolation of Tenzin Sherab. During her time in prison, her family were prevented from meeting with her but she has now been reunited with them.



## SISTERS DETAINED OVER DALAI LAMA IMAGE

The censorship of the Dalai Lama continues across Tibet, with two sisters arrested in Tsarang Township in central Tibet. Police detained Zumkar on 23 June after she was allegedly found in possession of pictures of the Dalai Lama, which she displayed on an altar in her home.

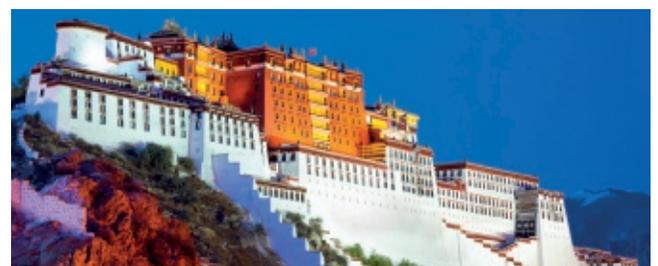
Then, on the morning of 11 July, Chinese authorities arrested her younger sister – 20-year-old Youdon.

Images of the Dalai Lama, who has been living in exile since 1959 and is routinely vilified by the Chinese government, are banned in occupied Tibet.

## PILGRIM ARRESTED IN LHASA

Police in Lhasa detained a Tibetan pilgrim on 9 June. According to eyewitnesses, 40-year-old Tsewang Norbu was taken away by police outside the Potala Palace after demanding that pilgrims like himself be given priority over tourists. He had been waiting for over a week for an opportunity to visit the Palace, the home of the Dalai Lama, during the holiest month of the lunar calendar.

Tsewang Norbu's condition and wellbeing remain unknown. Following his arrest, sources state that security officials have increased their surveillance of Tibetans waiting to visit the palace. Lhasa, like much of Tibet, has seen a huge influx of tourism in recent years, promoted by the Chinese government.





## WRITER SENTENCED TO PRISON

A Tibetan writer named Thupten Lodoe was sentenced in June to four years and five months in prison under charges of “inciting separatism” and “picking quarrels and provoking troubles”.

Thupten Lodoe, who hails from Sershul County, was arrested in October 2021, reportedly due to political posts he had made on social media. His family remains under surveillance, while his two children have been ordered to stay home and barred from joining school.

Lodoe’s short stories and essays are loved by many readers inside Tibet and posted on various Tibetan language websites and literature platforms. He also taught Tibetan language classes at Sershul County Middle School for years until he quit his teaching position due to the Chinese government’s repression.

## 170 NOMADS HELD FOR QUESTIONING OVER GRAZING LAWS

On 10 May, Chinese authorities in Cheudru Village in Gade County detained over 170 nomadic Tibetans and questioned them one by one at the county police station. The detentions followed local opposition to the Chinese government’s orders that grazing lands be confiscated.

Under China’s occupation, pastures that had been used by rural Tibetans and their flocks for generations have been placed under government control. Grassland use certificates permit the holder the right to let their flocks graze on the land for 50 years. The campaign to confiscate grazing lands from nomads if they cannot provide the correct paperwork is being pursued in neighbouring counties as well. Local Tibetans have opposed this directive, asserting that grazing lands should belong to the people.



STOCK IMAGE

## HYDROPOWER PROJECT PUTS 19TH CENTURY MONASTERY AT RISK

Chinese authorities in Amdo, eastern Tibet are planning to relocate a Tibetan monastery against the wishes of its resident monks and local Tibetans. The monastery, located in Drakkar County, will make way for a hydropower station to be constructed on the River Machu, also known as the Yellow River.

Atsok Gon Dechen Choekhor Ling, or Atsok Monastery, was established in 1889 and currently provides accommodation and education in Buddhism for 157 monks.

A source with knowledge of the relocation process told Tibet Watch that the committee for the relocation have been visiting to tell monks to cooperate. While the exact date for the relocation has not yet been announced, attempts by Atsok Monastery’s monks to appeal to the authorities for a review of the relocation has not been acknowledged nor addressed.



# SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT

If you have a question or comment that you would like to see published in the next magazine, do get in touch with us by email at [letters@freetibet.org](mailto:letters@freetibet.org), by phone on +44 (0)330 016 8404 or by post to: Letters, Free Tibet, ER82, The Link, Effra Road, SW2 1BZ, UK Please note we cannot guarantee publication of each letter we receive. Thank you!

## Tibet in the past

Hello,

**I have been in debate with a friend who claims that before China's invasion, Tibet under the Dalai Lama was a theocracy – Tibetans were serfs and punishments inflicted by the Tibetan government were horrific, including eye gouging. How can I respond to him? – Simon**

Dear Simon,

Thank you for getting in touch. Speaking to other people about Tibet is one of the most effective things supporters can do to grow the movement and show solidarity with Tibet.

For years the Chinese government has claimed that it has "civilised" Tibet. It is an attempt to justify its destructive policies in Tibet but ignores the bigger picture: Tibet is occupied and its people reject this occupation.

We do not need to romanticise life in Tibet in 1950. The use of torture in Tibet during this era is documented, as it was in numerous places across the world at that time (although Tibet was one of the first countries to abolish capital punishment, in 1913). Some academics do describe how many Tibetans lived during this time as "serfdom", but others contest this term.

However, is it justifiable to simply invade a country because the invader does not approve of how it is run? The invasion and the occupation of Tibet have claimed the lives of countless Tibetans. In the years following occupation, Tibetans died from starvation – something unheard of prior to the invasion. Your friend mentions torture, but China today routinely uses torture against the hundreds of Tibetans that it holds as political prisoners. It is also attempting to destroy Tibet's language, culture and religion. None of this suggests any concern for the Tibetan people.

We should also consider what Tibetans are calling for today. They are not calling for a return to life 70 years ago. On the contrary, the Dalai Lama has been forward thinking in renouncing his political role and encouraging the establishment of a democratic government in exile, the Central Tibetan Administration, and an elected leader (or Sikyong). Both are elected by Tibetans around the world – a blueprint for what a free Tibet might look like. Meanwhile, China and occupied Tibet are recognised as two of the least free places in the world.

I hope this answer helps. Disagreements like this can be frustrating, but if you are patient and can address their points firmly but with a smile, you might find you are arguing with a future Tibet supporter.



In 2011 the Dalai Lama devolved political responsibility to the Sikyong, Lobsang Sangay (left). Sangay was succeeded by Penpa Tsering in 2021.

# Supporter stories from Tibet

Several supporters have been in touch about their connection to Tibet – be that from visiting Tibet themselves or through previous generations. In this issue we decided to share some of their stories and perspectives about what makes Tibet so special.

## 100-year anniversary

A grandson of WH King MBE and present-day supporter of Free Tibet wrote in to tell us about his grandfather who ran the 'Telegraph to Lhasa project'. Completed in 1922, this year marks the project's 100-year anniversary. In the early 1900s, the office of His Holiness the 13th Dalai Lama requested the British send engineers to Lhasa to help connect a telegraph line from Tibet to the rest of the world. The work was organised and completed by Tibetans with the technical guidance of Mr King and his assistant Mr WP Rosemeyer, who were allowed to roam the Potala Palace and Lhasa freely in order to complete the project. This offered them a unique experience of Tibet most Europeans will never experience. Mr King was a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and, to document his experience, later published the geographical journal *The Telegraph to Lhasa* (Royal Geographical Society, London, 1924).



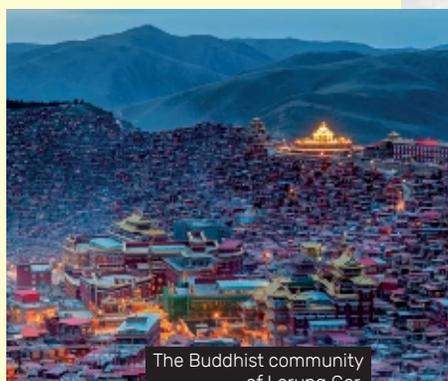
Seated (left to right): Mr WH King, Tsarong Dzasa (project Commander-in-Chief), Ngapoi Ngawang Jigme (Civil Member of Council) and Parkhang Shapé (Member of Council). Standing (left to right): Mr Kyipook (Tibetan Director of Telegraphs) and Mr WP Rosemeyer

## My travels in Tibet

*"I travelled through Tibet in October 1987 and experienced great friendship, humour, anger and grief! I will always have a great fondness for my time there and know I was lucky to be able to experience the generosity, friendship and humour of Tibetan people, their way of life and the amazing landscapes. The struggle will always live with me."*

## From a regular visitor

*"My favourite places have been Yarchen Gar, Larung Gar and the Repkong Shaman Festival. The 'backcountry' monasteries of Dzongsar Tashi Lhatse and Pelpung Tubden Chokhorling and the shortcut road to Derge from there. Interesting also was the visit to Dzamtang Tsangpa Gon monastery where most of the monks are unfamiliar with foreigners. This Jonagpa sect monastery and others in the same valley had been lost to western Tibetologists from the late 18th century until 1992! A recently deceased abbot of the monastery had been mummified and sits at the top of his funeral chorten looking at the world from behind a glass. The locals claim his beard is still growing... Part of the fascination about these places also comes from history, knowing the importance of these places, not only what they look like at this moment."*



The Buddhist community of Larung Gar.

## A new perspective

*"My wife and I visited Tibet (inevitably under an organised tour) and so loved the true Tibetans we met, the country and the original culture. So sad to see it attacked and the people restricted so much. However it was an incredible opportunity to see what we are supporting and why the work is so important. I wouldn't go again, knowing it funds the CCP, but it certainly gave us a new perspective."*

**Free Tibet is delighted to welcome new Mi Tse (life long) supporters:  
Nanny Luiten, Robert Bluck and Sebastian Jano.**

# LET FREEDOM BE YOUR LEGACY!

Remember Free Tibet with a gift in your will.

A gift in your will as small as 1% will protect Tibetan heritage against the tyranny of the CCP and ensure the Tibetan movement will never lose strength in their fight for freedom.

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