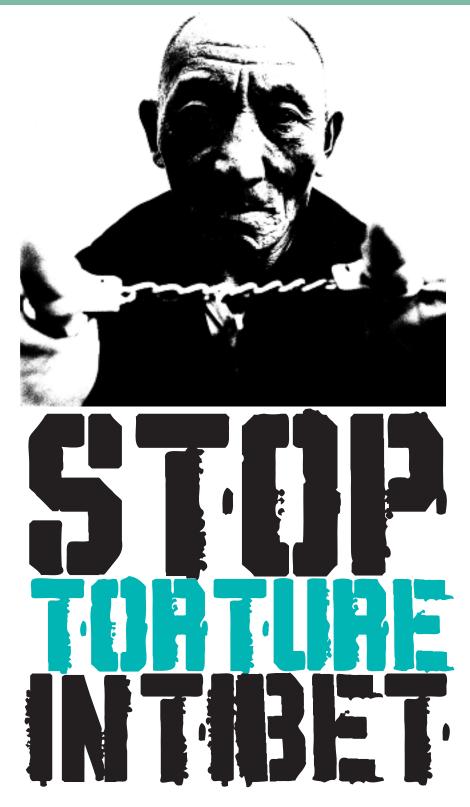
FREEDIBET

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Free Tibet Director Stephanie Brigden with former political prisoner Palden Gyatso

Dear friends

Free Tibet started the year with the launch of our Stop Torture in Tibet website campaign. The website features short films of the powerful testimonies of Tibetan torture survivors read by some of Britain's best-known actors, including Juliet Stevenson (Bend it like Beckham, Truly Madly Deeply) and David Threlfall from the hit TV series Shameless. These shocking accounts directly challenge China's claims that torture is prohibited in Tibet.

As the Chinese administration tries to silence dissenting voices in Tibet and create a culture of fear and intimidation, with your help Free Tibet is shining a spotlight on the truth. If each and every one of our www.freetibet.org visitors sent a link to their contacts we could reach out to the equivalent of the whole of London in one month. Please visit the website soon and tell your friends about it. Awareness is a pre-condition for change!

This year's general election offers Free Tibet and its supporters a huge opportunity to influence our future leaders. So make your opinion count by using the pledge card inside this magazine to secure a commitment from your parliamentary candidates to promote human rights in Tibet and China if elected. And if you're unsure who to vote for this election, why not visit our website where you will be able to check out what the main political parties have said on Tibet and if your current MP has been a champion of Tibet!

Free Tibet will be marking the Panchen Lama's 21st birthday on 25 April with a candlelit vigil. This will remind the world that he and his family, like more than 1,000 Tibetan prisoners, remain unaccounted for. Please sponsor a candle ahead of the candlelit vigil.

Whatever you do, help Free Tibet make the difference.

My best wishes to you all for the year ahead



Contents



3 Free Tibet in Copenhagen Climate change and the Tibetan plateau

4 Stop Torture in Tibet Celebrities back our campaign by recording survivors' testimonies





8 Campaigns
The UK general election
The Panchen Lama turns 21



10 News

Two Tibetans executed in Lhasa Crackdown in Amdo Tibetans protest for Tenzin Deleg News in brief



28 Charles Square, London N1 6HT T: 020 7324 4605 F: 020 7324 4606 E: mail@freetibet.org W: www.freetibet.org Free Tibet stands for the right of Tibetans to determine their own future. It campaigns for an end to China's occupation of Tibet and for the fundamental human rights of Tibetans to be respected. Founded in 1987, Free Tibet generates active support by education about the situation in Tibet. It is independent of all governments and is funded by its members and supporters.

Views expressed in *Free Tibet* are not necessarily those of Free Tibet.

Editor: Harriet Beaumont
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Free Tibet speaks out for Tibetan nomads at Copenhagen climate summit



ree Tibet Director Stephanie Brigden and Press Spokesperson Matt Whitticase travelled to Copenhagen in December to join 'Tibet Third Pole', a delegation of Tibetans attending the UN Climate Change Conference.

"As soon as we landed in Copenhagen it was clear that the climate change summit was not simply another summit that had come to town: huge posters welcoming the world to 'Hopenhagen' adorned whole faces of buildings; giant globes dominated main squares throughout the city; and Copenhagen was filled with people from all over the world, there to bear witness to the effects of climate change being felt in their countries. It was impossible not to be moved by the energy and sense of purpose. Delegates from regions as far flung as Bangladesh, the Amazon and Greenland had travelled to deliver their message to the leaders of big industrialised nations: far more has to be done to avert a catastrophe.

Headlines were dominated by the failure of the world's leaders to arrive at a legally-binding agreement to cut back emissions to sustainable levels. But to those of us not in the main conference centres there was a real sense of unity and strength, as well as a feeling of empowerment as we shared our experiences, hopes and demands.

The message of 'Tibet Third Pole' was listened to intently. In meetings with conference delegates, journalists and environmental organisations we spelled out how scientific research has shown that Chinese government policies are a significant contributing factor in rapidly rising temperatures on the Tibetan plateau. We stressed the vital importance of the presence of Tibetan nomads in mitigating the effects of rising

temperatures on the plateau. The nomads have learned over thousands of years how to eke out a sustainable livelihood in this fragile environment without adversely impacting upon the health of the plateau's ecosystems and are essential stewards of this region. China's policy to remove them, we argued, not only represents an abuse of the nomads' human rights; it potentially spells disaster for hundreds of millions of people throughout Asia whose water supply depends directly on the health of the glaciers and rivers that have their sources on the plateau.

China's determination to pursue its narrow political and economic interests on the plateau were mirrored by its obstructive tactics at the summit where it was widely blamed for trying to block a deal and attempting to escape accountability on emissions-cuts.

Our argument that the nomads should be placed at the heart of decision-making on the plateau, rather than being forcibly removed, received overwhelmingly positive approval from many of the people at the conference.

In a standing-room only panel discussion on the future of Tibet, Free Tibet Director Stephanie Brigden joined others in presenting potential solutions to the problem of rising temperatures on the plateau. The panel called for an immediate halt to the forced removal of nomads from the grasslands. It also called for an international investigation team, including expert independent scientists, to assess the ecosystems of the plateau and to recommend a way forward that encourages appropriate land-use policies that are in the interests of everyone who depends on the plateau for their survival."

Above: Tibetans met delegates to talk about climate change in Tibet

www.freetibet.org/newsmedia







Juliet Stevenson, Dominic West and David Threlfall in their video testimonies

British actors take a stand against torture in Tibet

Torture in Tibet now

The United Nations (UN) concluded in 2006 that torture was "widespread" in China and Tibet. Two years later, after the brutal suppression of the 2008 spring protests, the UN extended its conclusion to state that torture is also "routine". The UN's conclusion underlines that torture is not the aberrant behavior of a few officials but is a systematic and concerted policy by the Chinese state, used as a weapon to silence dissent.

Following the crackdown on the spring 2008 protests more than 1,000 Tibetans detained at the time remain unaccounted for, with no information released by the Chinese administration about their well-being or whereabouts. Put beyond the protection of law, without anyone knowing their location and without access to legal representation, they are at an increased risk of torture.

"Suddenly one of the soldiers who was standing beside me took out an army knife and stabbed me in my left thigh and then screwed the knife back and forth inside my leg. I cried out in agony. I held the soldier's hands and tried to stop him moving the knife... Now they are putting salt in the wound..."



Pema

Tree Tibet launched its Stop the Torture website on 11 January. The launch date was to coincide with the UK-China Human Rights Dialogue which was supposed to take place in Beijing. However, China called off the dialogue as a response to the British government's strong public condemnation of the execution in China of British citizen Mr Akmal Shaikh in December.

Included on the site are four testimony recordings by well-known British actors Juliet Stevenson, Alan Rickman, Dominic West, best known for his role in the US TV show *The Wire*, and David Threlfall, currently playing Frank Gallagher in UK cult TV show *Shameless*. The recordings offer a heartwrenching glimpse into the utter inhumanity that so many Tibetans endure in Chinese detention centres.

The four survivors whose accounts are told were arrested for a variety of reasons: Lhamo Kyab wanted to fly the banned Tibetan national flag over a sacred mountain in Tibet; Tsering simply wanted to leave Tibet; Pema and Phuntsog were tortured for their alleged involvement in protests in 2008.

The testimony read by Juliet Stevenson tells the story of Tsering, a 38-year-old woman from Lhasa who escaped from Tibet to pursue religious studies in India. She returned to Tibet in 2006 to care for her sick father. After two months with her family in Tibet she attempted to travel back to India but was arrested at the border and taken to a detention centre. She was held in a small cell where she was beaten continuously and shocked with electric batons until she would lose consciousness. Later she was moved to a 're-education though labour' camp where she was held in solitary confinement and chained to the concrete floor. Tsering was released without charge one year later.



Stop the Torture www.freetibet.org/campaigns



"I couldn't feel the pain because my body was already numb; I simply wanted to die rather than going through the torture... Every time they came into my cell I would brace myself and try not to cry out as that would only please them."

Tsering

Action

Spread the word:

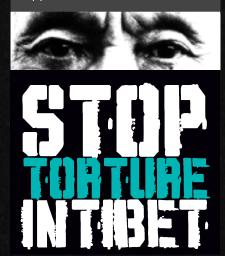
The more people know about torture, the more pressure we can put on both the Chinese and the British governments to take concrete steps to stop torture in Tibet.

Write to your Chinese ambassador and urge him or her to:

- Issue a standing invitation to the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture;
- Account for the status and whereabouts of over 1,000 missing Tibetans who were detained following the 2008 mass protests;
- Abolish all forms of forced education including patriotic re-education campaigns.
 Forced re-education creates the very conditions where torture is likely to take place;
- Amend Chinese Criminal Procedure Law to state explicitly that any confession obtained through torture is inadmissible in all proceedings. Confessions are currently often used as the main source of evidence in proceedings and convictions.

Address for the UK: Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the UK 49-51 Portland Place London W1 1JL

Please send copies of any correspondence to Free Tibet so we can track all our supporters' actions.



Get Involved

Gifts in wills

Gifts left to Free Tibet in supporters' wills have been a vital source of income since the founding of the organisation in 1987. At the heart of Free Tibet's mission is the belief that every human being deserves a chance to live freely, without prejudice and free from the fear of being punished or tortured for exercising their basic human rights.

A gift in your will to Free Tibet will help us continue to defend the human rights of Tibetans in occupied Tibet.

A gift in your will, no matter how big or small, will support our work; all gifts contribute appreciably to our projects and campaigns and help us work towards a free Tibet. We have been very lucky to receive from supporters parts of estates or significant gifts such as a ring or a watch.

If you are thinking of making or amending your will, we advise you to see a solicitor. If you have already included Free Tibet in your will, please accept our most grateful thanks on behalf of all the Tibetans your gift will support.

Please contact legacies@freetibet.org or call Eleanor on 020 7324 4610 if you would like to receive any information about leaving a gift in your will or to find out more about how your gift could support future generations of Tibetans in Tibet.



Your gift can help Tibetans look forward to a brighter future

Stand out from the herd this Valentine's Day!

A Virtual Yak could be the perfect, original gift for your Valentine this year...



A Valentine's yak and some of the yaks created by supporters

Our virtual plateau is filling up with colourful creatures and helping to fund our campaign to protect Tibetan nomads. Now you can decorate your yak with Valentine's 'yakcessories'; you can also send an Easter, Mother's Day or birthday yak e-card.

Actor Brian Blessed has backed our campaign by having his own unique Virtual Yak. Join him and choose from a wide range of hair and eye colours, horn styles and 'yakcessories' to make your yak stand out - the plateau is the limit!



www.freetibet.org/virtualyak

Free Tibet raffle

Free Tibet would like to say a huge thank you to all our supporters who bought raffle tickets last year; we raised over £20,000 which makes a huge difference to the work of Free Tibet. We look forward to launching the 2010 raffle in the spring.

Congratulations to 2009's lucky winners!

 1st
 H Noble (218321)
 5th
 D Willatts (106319)

 2nd
 Penny Whiteman (216844)
 6th
 C Lewis (164044)

 3rd
 M Leventhal (023690)
 7th
 Anon. (210974)

1 W ECVCHINA (025050) 7th Anon. (210574)

4th Liz Bissett (200019) 8th Corinna Wiltshire (000467)

Free Tibet would like to thank our Life members: Lady Hermione Moncreiffe, Marie Rabouhans, P A Hitchcock, Peter Brooke, David Read, Rachel Fawthrop, R G Burns,

6 Free Tibet 55 Winter 2010

10 March events

We are approaching 10 March, the anniversary of the 1959 Uprising – an important day for Tibetans. With the Tibetan community in the UK, we will be marking this anniversary through a series of events. Last year's events were extremely successful and we are thankful to all our supporters who joined us. Hundreds of you came to the mass lobby to meet with your MP and raise awareness about the monumental shift in the UK's foreign policy when it recognised Tibet as part of the People's Republic of China. We also had a fantastic turnout for the Trafalgar Square Rally, with supporters coming from far and wide to take part.

Building on the impact of the 2009 mass lobby, on 10 March 2010 we will be holding our second mass lobby of Parliament. This is a unique opportunity for our supporters to make an appointment to meet their MP in Parliament and press them to prioritise human rights, in particular to commit to working towards securing human rights for Tibetans. We invite all supporters to join us for this event: in the run up to the general election MPs will be paying particular attention to the views of their constituents so we need your help to lobby as many MPs as possible.

We will also be holding a public event to mark the anniversary of the 10 March Uprising in central London for supporters and their friends. Both events offer a wonderful opportunity to play an active part in the large Tibet support community in the UK.

Why is 10 March important?

10 March is the anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising of 1959. By the late 1950s it was clear to Tibetans that China had no intention of honouring a pledge made in 1951 to respect Tibetan autonomy. Tibetan resentment of China's occupation simmered and on 10 March 1959, fearful that the Chinese intended to kidnap the Dalai Lama, 300,000 Tibetans surrounded his summer palace in order to protect him. Tibetans also marched through the streets of Lhasa with banners demanding Tibetan independence and they barricaded Lhasa's streets. On 19 March the Chinese started to shell the palace, slaughtering thousands of Tibetan men, women and children. Over a few days it is estimated that more than 86,000 Tibetans in central Tibet were killed by Chinese armed forces.

For more information, including how you can join these events and for a lobby pack, call 020 7324 4605 or visit the website.





Monica Giles, Ann Brooks, Richard Laversuch, Sharon Reuben, Mr Robert Honeybourne, Dom Myers, Emily Myers, Corinna Wiltshire, Dr Peter Vardy, Graham Hale, Nalin Patel

Campaigns

UK general election: raise human rights and Tibet

You ensured that Tibet was never far from MPs' minds in 2009 by writing to your MP, supporting our campaigns, attending our mass lobby of Parliament and urging MPs to sign Early Day Motions on Tibet. We want to build on this momentum. The general election, which must take place by June this year, offers an extraordinary opportunity for you to influence Britain's politicians and to give your backing to the powerful message we want to send to the next parliament: human rights and Tibet really matter to the British people.

Dissatisfaction with MPs is widespread and there are bound to be more seats changing hands in this election than in any other election in recent memory. With previously safe MPs at risk of losing their seats and candidates sensing new opportunities, anyone seeking election will

be particularly receptive to the views of their constituents – you. Quite simply, there has rarely been a better chance of influencing Britain's politicians and making sure that your voice is heard.

This is why Free Tibet has been working hard to develop materials and key information to help you to identify the candidates most likely to support human rights in Tibet in the next parliament. There is a pull-out pledge card in this magazine (pictured below); please ask all candidates canvassing for your vote to sign the card as a pledge that they will work to promote protection of human rights in Tibet if they are elected. By urging a candidate to sign a pledge card you will not only prove to him or her that Tibet and human rights are a matter that you take seriously, but that they are also issues taken very seriously by the British people more generally.

Find out more about the views of candidates in your constituency

Free Tibet will be publishing on its website information about the main parties, sitting MPs and their views on Tibet. We will highlight the position of the main parties on Tibet and also highlight 'Champions of Tibet' - MPs who have established a good parliamentary record on Tibet by signing Early Day Motions (EDMs), tabling parliamentary questions, speaking out on Tibet in media interviews or by participating in Free Tibet campaigns. To help you engage with election candidates we will also publish on our website a series of frequently asked questions and answers.

If you do not have access to the internet but want to learn more about the position of a party you are considering voting for or the record of a sitting MP in your constituency, please call the office on 020 7324 4605 and we will be happy to assist you.



When the UK election date is announced information on candidates and party positions will be available on our website.



www.freetibet.org/campaigns



8 Free Tibet 55 Winter 2010

Panchen Lama's birthday

The Panchen Lama, one of the most important spiritual leaders in the Gelukpa tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, turns 21 on 25 April this year. The whereabouts and welfare of the Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, remain unknown more than 15 years after he was abducted by Chinese authorities. At the time of his abduction in 1995 he was only six years old, making him probably the world's youngest political prisoner.

Following the death of the 10th Panchen Lama in 1989 the search for the Panchen Lama's reincarnation began. The Dalai Lama recognised six-year-old Gedhun as the 11th Panchen Lama but the Chinese administration, intending to choose its own candidate, denounced the Dalai Lama's claim as "illegal and invalid". On 17 May 1995 Chinese authorities abducted Gedhun with his family and appointed their own Panchen Lama.

The abduction and replacement of the Panchen Lama are elements of China's efforts to 'stabilise' Tibet by controlling its religion and reducing the influence of the Dalai Lama. The ongoing detention of one of Tibet's most important religious leaders is a source of great distress for Tibetans and is a clear demonstration of the lengths to which China is prepared to go to control, and ultimately crush, both Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan identity.

The abduction of the Panchen Lama also highlights the Chinese administration's utter disregard for children's welfare and the rights of the child under international law. The administration still refuses to reveal Gedhun's whereabouts or agree to the numerous requests from the United Nations and western governments to allow impartial international observers access to check on Gedhun's well-being. We do not even know if Gedhun is still alive.

There is no definitive list of Tibetan political prisoners but we know that the Panchen Lama is one of many hundreds of Tibetan political prisoners today. These people are serving long sentences for crimes such as flying the Tibetan flag or sending an email to friends outside Tibet. China regularly fails to provide information on Tibetan



This is the only known image of the Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, taken before his abduction in 1995

political prisoners to their families, lawyers or the United Nations. Free Tibet's campaigning work is vital in working for the protection and release of these political prisoners, as evidenced by former political prisoners Golog Jigme and Jigme Gyatso who both stated that their treatment in detention improved markedly when campaigning in their names began.

Action

To mark the Panchen Lama's 21st birthday we are asking our supporters to sponsor a candle at a special birthday vigil in London. This will help to keep his continued detention in the spotlight.

You can sponsor a candle by completing the form on the magazine cover letter making a donation. This will support our work for political prisoners, including the Panchen Lama.



China executes two Tibetans

Two Tibetans were tragically executed on 20 October 2009. They had been sentenced to death in April after being found guilty of alleged arson attacks in Lhasa in March 2008.

The Chinese government made no official announcement of the executions at first. It was only after Free Tibet secured an article in The Guardian newspaper that the Chinese government confirmed they had taken place.

According to one of the sources that reported the executions, Lobsang Gyaltsen was allowed a visit by his mother before he was executed. He reportedly said to his mother: "I have nothing to say except please take good care of my child and send him to school."

There is serious concern regarding the validity of the evidence that was presented against Gyaltsen and Loyak. Three other Tibetans: Tenzin
Phuntsog, Kangtsuk and Penkyi were
given suspended death sentences at
the same time that Gyaltsen and Loyak
were sentenced. A court official was
quoted by Xinhua, the official Chinese
news agency, as saying that a
confession had been used as evidence
in the case of Tenzin Phuntsog, a case
closely related to those of Lobsang
Gyaltsen and Loyak. No independent
observers were at the trials of
Gyaltsen and Loyak to confirm that
their rights had been respected.

The cases were highly politicised. When the death sentences were reported in April, Xinhua quoted the court spokesperson:

"The two defendants given death penalties had committed extremely serious crimes and have to be executed to assuage the people's anger."





Loyak (left) was executed in October; Penkyi (centre) and Kangtsuk (right) are serving suspended death sentences

Action

Please write to your Chinese ambassador, calling on the Chinese government to:

- Not carry out further executions;
- Clarify the legal steps that led up to these executions and the evidence upon which the convictions were based;
- Give clarification on the legal status and health of all Tibetans held in detention, including Penkyi from Sakya County, Tenzin Phuntsog and Kangtsuk who received suspended death sentences in April 2009;
- Extend an open invitation to Tibet to all United Nations Human Rights Special Rapporteurs.

Address in the UK: Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the UK 49-51 Portland Place London W1 1JL

Please send copies of any correspondence to Free Tibet so we can track all our supporters' actions.

Continued crackdown in Amdo

The silencing of Tibetans has intensified recently in the Amdo region of eastern Tibet with the detention of a number of bloggers, artists and publishers.

Traditionally there has been a closer suppression of freedom of expression inside the Tibet Autonomous Region, while less scrutiny was applied in the Autonomous prefectures such as Amdo. This situation has changed since the 2008 Uprising as the overwhelming majority of protests took place in Amdo.

On 12 November 2008 the Kanlho Intermediate People's Court in Gansu Province sentenced two prolific writers in closed trials on charges of 'disclosing state secrets'. Kunga Tseyang, 20, an amateur blogger and photographer from Labrang was sentenced to three years. Kunchog Tsepel, the founder of one of the most influential Tibetan literary websites, Butter Lamp, was sentenced to 15 years

imprisonment. Kunchog's family does not know the reason for his arrest or the charge against him.

Thirty-year-old Tashi Dhondup (right), a popular music star in Amdo, has been missing since he was arrested in Xining in December. His new album contained songs about his desire for the return of the Dalai Lama and the tragedy of the 2008 Uprising.

Dhondup Wangchen, the Tibetan nomad who made the film *Leaving Fear Behind*, was sentenced to six years imprisonment on 29 December 2009 in Xining. Dhondup Wangchen's family were not notified of the trial or the verdict at the time and only found out later about the sentencing. They believe Dhondup Wangchen was charged with 'subversion'. The lawyer hired by the family was later replaced with a government-appointed lawyer. It is understood that Dhondup has appealed his sentence.

10 Free Tibet 55 Winter 2010

Protests in Tibet

It has been reported that a series of protests took place in Tibet last December. Protesters called for the retrial of respected Buddhist leader Tenzin Deleg Rinpoche, who was arrested in 2002 for his alleged involvement in a bomb explosion and was sentenced to death later that year. Following a high-profile campaign for his release the death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment in 2005 and he remains in detention to this day.

A petition (right) with 40,000 signatories, many of them with thumbprints, calling for a new trial was brought to Beijing by Tenzin Deleg's family in late 2009, but was not accepted by the authorities. Protests sprung up in and around Tenzin Deleg's hometown and shops in Lithang closed in support of the protests. Lithang is an area of Tibet where many protests took place during the spring of 2008 and which has been repeatedly closed off to outsiders. Security has been stepped up in the area where, it is estimated, over 50 people were detained during the protests.





Authorities in Beijing rejected a petition (top) calling for the retrial of Tenzin Deleg Rinpoche (above)

Tenzin Deleg Rinpoche maintains his innocence and the Chinese authorities have failed to provide evidence of his guilt. Tenzin Deleg is held in high esteem by Tibetans. It is understood that his standing as a community leader and defender of Tibetan culture put him in direct conflict with the authorities and was probably a driving force behind his arrest and sentencing.



www.freetibet.org/campaigns



Tashi Dhondup was arrested for making 'subversive' songs

In Brief

- Google threatens to pull out of China. Internet giant Google announced that it may pull out of China after discovering that hackers in China had attempted to access the Gmail accounts of human rights activists. Google also apparently dropped filters imposed by the Chinese government on 13 January, allowing users in China to see previously censored material such as images from the Tiananmen Square massacre. Free Tibet campaigned against Google in 2006 when the company first adopted a system of self-censorship in order to operate in China.
- Phurbu Rinpoche sentenced.
 Phurbu Rinpoche was arrested in March 2008 and sentenced to eight and a half years imprisonment in December 2009 for "occupying government land and possession of weapons". His lawyers claim he has been framed and that he had been tortured to obtain a confession; they were later banned from representing him.
- Obama visits China, US President Barack Obama visited China in November. His visit followed a bizarre assertion by the Chinese government that Barack Obama should be especially sympathetic to China's "liberation" of Tibet due to his status as a black president known to admire Abraham Lincoln for abolishing slavery. Although President Obama underlined the US position that Tibet is part of China he also raised concerns over human rights with Chinese President Hu Jintao and encouraged the resumption of talks with representatives of the Dalai Lama.
- Chinese dissident receives harsh sentence. Chinese human rights activist Liu Xiaobo was sentenced to 11 years imprisonment on 24 December 2008. He is the founder of the Charter 08 reform group which campaigns for freedom of expression in China and which has also challenged the Chinese government on human rights abuses in Tibet.

They imprisone aboy...

...help us find the man

In 1995 six-year-old Panchen Lama Gedhun Choekyi Nyima became the world's youngest political prisoner. This year he will be 21; he is still missing.

To mark his 21st birthday we are asking our supporters to sponsor a candle at a special birthday vigil in London. With our birthday candles burning bright, we can ensure that his illegal detention is not forgotten.



Please sponsor a candle today and together we can keep a light shining for the Panchen Lama and over 1,000 missing Tibetans.

To sponsor your candle please complete the form on the cover letter enclosed with this magazine or call 020 7324 4605



www.freetibet.org/support

