

FREE TIBET

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free
TIBET

• Holding China to account on torture • President Xi visits London • Robed Resisters •

“When they beat us, I remembered the promise I made as we entered the prison that I would not have any regrets, even if I was killed... The same is the case with other Tibetans. They were also saying that the beatings motivated them more, rather than demotivating them.”

Gongpo Thinley, Tibetan torture survivor



Free Tibet Director
Eleanor Byrne-Rosengren

Dear friends

I know it's February – but I think I can still wish you all a Happy New Year. Last year ended on a strong note for Free Tibet and we've got high hopes for 2016.

You can read all about the protests surrounding Xi Jinping's visit to the UK as well as our UN work in this magazine. The protests were an incredibly effective way of changing the narrative – the more the government tried to sweep human rights under the carpet, the more that was what everyone ended up talking about. I have to confess that aspect of it was very satisfying. And it was great to see so many people coming out onto the streets or protesting online. Thank you to everyone who got involved.

Our work with the UN Committee Against Torture was also very rewarding. The Chinese delegation tried every trick in the book: evasive and belligerent by turns, sometimes telling outright lies, sometimes saying things that were just plain ridiculous. The Committee, while always polite, was having none of it and their final report was starkly critical. The most rewarding part of the process is being able to go back to the Tibetans who gave us their testimonies for our reports and letting

them know that the evidence they gave was placed before a UN body and used to challenge China in a public, international forum. It's the best way to thank them for sharing their stories with us.

As you read this we'll be getting ready to commemorate Tibetan Uprising Day on 10 March. This year there will be events on both Thursday 10 March and on Saturday 12 March. We haven't finalised the details at the time of going to press, so you'll need to keep an eye on our website or get in touch a little nearer to the time. I hope to see lots of you, whether at one, the other or both as we stand together in solidarity for Tibet.

With best wishes

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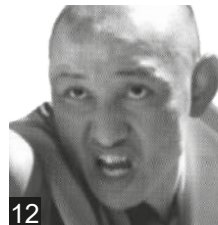


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Our vision is a free Tibet in which Tibetans are able to determine their own future and the human rights of all are respected.

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.

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Back cover photo: © Erik Törner





A Tibetan welcome to the UK for China's president

Protests follow president around the capital.

Although it is banned in China, President Xi Jinping had plenty of opportunity to see the Tibetan flag this October as he was met with Tibet protests throughout his state visit to the UK. The visit provided a valuable opportunity to put Tibet in the media spotlight and also to evaluate how the British government would handle the question of Tibet and human rights. Sadly, the government was wholly unwilling to do anything that might trouble its honoured guest but, in adopting that position, Mr Cameron and his colleagues generated a backlash that could yet work in Tibet's favour.

The campaign around Xi's visit began just before he arrived with the 'stateless lunch' Free Tibet co-hosted in Parliament, in which representatives of groups persecuted by the Chinese state spoke alongside the chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet, Fabian Hamilton MP. Tibetan, Uyghur and Chinese dissident activists spoke powerfully and movingly about the effects of Chinese government repression and the event was widely covered in the national press.

The visit itself was a hectic but rewarding time for Free Tibet and the hundreds of Tibet supporters who took part in demonstrations throughout Xi's three-day stay. The main set-

piece event was the demonstration that took place on The Mall as Xi accompanied the Queen in her carriage from Westminster to Buckingham Palace. Although Tibet activists are well used to Chinese officials' attempts to overwhelm and marginalise anti-China demonstrations with numbers, noise and massive flags, we were taken aback by the scale of the Chinese presence on The Mall, which was lined with Chinese people – mainly students – waving enormous flags and wearing matching pro-China caps and t-shirts. The British media quickly uncovered, however, that all of these props were supplied by the Chinese Embassy – and had been flown into the country in diplomatic bags.

Despite this, and being pushed further back from the edge of the road than had been agreed with the police, the noisy and colourful Tibet demonstration made its presence felt, was widely covered in the media and was certainly noted by members of the procession – although Xi deliberately looked the other way.

That story continued throughout the visit. Working with other Tibet groups, we were able to ensure that wherever Xi went a Tibet presence followed him. In all venues but one, there was a Tibet demonstration. Xi was also

hounded by Free Tibet's 'ad van', a mobile digital billboard demanding freedom in Tibet and criticising David Cameron's silence. Xi was also trailed by pro-China cheerleaders who continued in their efforts to block and drown us out, but repeatedly failed to do so.

A sour note was struck with the arrest of three demonstrators, including two Tibetans – on groundless charges that were later dropped – for their peaceful protests, but for Free Tibet there were two notable highlights. The first was the astonishing success of a video we posted online of a London cyclist spontaneously and politely challenging pro-China demonstrators outside London's Guildhall (see page 5). The second was a small demonstration we undertook when Xi visited a satellite telecoms company based near our office. We were able to outmanoeuvre pro-China demonstrators and secure an excellent position less than 100 metres from the entrance. As Xi's car pulled up, an attempt was made to block the sight of us by, as our director Eleanor described it, "an undignified attempt to squeeze from the car into a temporary tunnel under a shield of tarpaulin". As she later added, "a small team from Free Tibet forced the president of China to hide from Tibetan flags behind a sheet".

Throughout Xi's stay, the media continued to focus on the issue of human rights with excellent coverage for Tibet. In addition to numerous online and print stories, Eleanor was twice interviewed on Sky News and our banner calling for Tibetan freedom was prominently displayed in a number of live news broadcasts. While China and the UK wanted the visit to focus on a new so-called "golden era" of relations between the two countries, Tibet demonstrators ensured that Tibet and human rights were always in the public eye.

Thank you to everyone who was able to take part in demonstrations in London and Manchester, as well as to the other Tibet and China human rights groups we worked alongside so successfully during the visit.



Red carpet and royals rolled out for repressive regime

They can't have taken away anything other than the overwhelming impression that the UK government will do whatever they ask.

As we stated in the last magazine, Free Tibet is deeply concerned that the British government is now completely unwilling to stand up for Tibet and human rights in its dealings with China. Those concerns were reinforced when Free Tibet joined other Tibet and China human rights groups at a meeting with the minister responsible for China at the Foreign Office in early October. Despite being repeatedly pressed to explain how the British government would address human rights and Tibet with Xi and the Chinese delegation during the state visit, Hugo Swire refused to do so. While officials had claimed he would be in "listening mode", Mr Swire in fact rejected many of the human rights concerns and failures of government policy that were raised by campaigners.

Xi's visit was the most public confirmation of the British government's stance so far. China experts agree that Xi Jinping is the most authoritarian ruler China has seen in more than a generation and that, under his leadership, the Communist Party of China has grown even more hostile to democracy, human rights and Western values. There was no recognition of that in the pomp and ceremony involved in his state visit, which conveyed



Top of page: David Cameron and the Queen greet Xi Jinping. Above: A demonstrator highlights the blood on Xi's hands. Left: Protesters outside the Houses of Parliament.





enormous honour to the unelected leader of the regime which brutally occupies Tibet and denies so many fundamental freedoms to its citizens.

While ceremony may be an unavoidable aspect of a state visit, the government's public position was entirely a matter of choice. Throughout Xi's stay in the UK, the government was silent about China's stance on human rights. At its conclusion, a 1,500-word joint statement was issued which mentioned human rights just once, stating that "continued exchanges" on the subject would take place. Tibet, of course, was a no-go area. As our director Eleanor wrote in a blog reviewing the visit:

"The Chinese have no respect for weakness and, even before the great October kowtow, some Chinese commentators were questioning Cameron's leadership qualities. Now? They can't have taken away anything other than the overwhelming impression that the UK government will do whatever they ask."

While the UK's China policy is cause for serious concern, the state visit had the very positive effect of placing it clearly in the public eye. A great deal of media coverage focussed on the failure of the government to stand up for human rights. The public mood appeared to be one of shame that the government would not take a more robust stance. It is at least possible that, as a result, the government may feel obliged to take a more principled stand in the future.

"More guts than Cameron": video goes viral

When London barrister Paul Powlesland stopped his bike to talk to pro-China demonstrators outside London's Guildhall he didn't imagine that his spontaneous comments would be seen around the world and lead to him being interviewed in the national press. That's exactly what happened, however, because he happened to stop next to Free Tibet campaign manager Alistair Currie, who videoed the encounter on his phone and posted it on Free Tibet's Facebook page. In less than 48 hours the video reached 1.5 million people and subtitled versions appeared in Hong Kong and Taiwan – one was entitled "London boy has more guts than Cameron". We caught up with Paul in December and asked him about the whole experience.



What triggered your decision to stop and talk to the pro-China demonstrators?

I had seen a number of these 'protests' and became increasingly irritated by the hypocrisy of demonstrators who were exercising their right to freedom of speech to praise someone who denies those rights to people in Tibet, Beijing and elsewhere. I'm also generally of the belief that if you disagree with something you should openly challenge it and discuss it. It wasn't pre-planned though and was very much spur of the moment and off the cuff.

How did you first learn about the video's success on Facebook and what did you think?

A few hours later a friend messaged me saying she'd seen the video. I asked where the video was and she directed me to the Free Tibet page. The video seemed to take on a life of its own and when I commented on it, saying it was me, I was inundated with messages and emails of support from people all around the world.

You went viral in Taiwan! Why do you think the video seemed to strike such a chord with people in the UK and around the world?

A lot of people around the world were disappointed at how craven the British government had been in their welcome of Xi Jinping; I think they were pleased to know that there were many ordinary British people who disagreed with the government's position. Many people also commented that they liked the fact I was forthright and passionate without being rude or abusive. The fact I was on a bike became part of my nickname on social media in Hong Kong – although I'm still slightly bemused as to why the bike seemingly played such a big part in the video's success!

What are your feelings about Xi's visit now?

The British government has continued to lay out the red carpet for leaders from around the world who abuse human rights. This makes me think that there is a pattern of ignoring such abuses if there is trade or diplomatic gain to be made, which is rather depressing.

On the other hand, the many messages, comments and emails I received from people across the world in the wake of the video makes me realise that so many different people are committed to fighting for these ideals. This gives me hope that things can and will one day change.

See Paul's conversation with pro-China supporters at www.youtube.com/FreeTibetUK



Become a Mi Tse supporter

What does it mean to become a Mi Tse ('lifelong') supporter of Free Tibet?

It means that you'll receive all the news as we get it from Tibet, that you'll always hear the truth behind the Chinese government's lies, and that you'll get this magazine on your doormat until Tibet is free. It also means, of course, that you'll be supporting us financially, thereby allowing all these things to continue.

However, Mi Tse support is also something much more profound. It's a statement of your commitment to the cause of Tibetan freedom. It means you care that people halfway round the world stand up and fight oppression in their country against overwhelming odds. And it means that you're willing to stand up with them.

A single donation of £500 will make you a Mi Tse supporter. You'll become part of an exclusive group and receive:

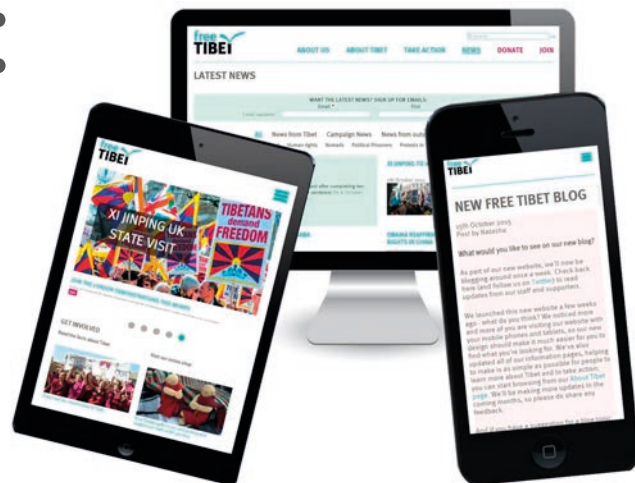
- Copies of all Free Tibet publications
- An annual invite to meet the staff and director to discuss current developments
- A Free Tibet t-shirt
- A mention of your support in the Free Tibet magazine

Please complete the form on the enclosed letter, or visit www.freetibet.org/MiTse

Truth and justice are on Tibetans' side and we'll stand with them for as long as it takes.

We are delighted to welcome new Mi Tse supporters: Ian Boyd-Livingstone, Leila Clarke, Elizabeth Stead, Gill Lester

Online update: sharing the truth about Tibet around the world



Do you follow Free Tibet online? In the last few years our internet presence has become a crucial way for us to share the truth about Tibet with a large and growing international audience.

We're working hard to reach and engage with as many people as possible and last autumn we launched a fresh new website. It has a clean, current design perfectly suited to tablets and smartphones, which more and more people are using to access the internet. We also refreshed all of our content, helping to make it as simple as possible to learn more about Tibet and take action. Please take a look and do share any feedback: www.freetibet.org

We're also now blogging around once a week, at www.freetibet.org/news. The blog gives an opportunity for our team and guest bloggers to write more in-depth articles about Tibet as well as share informal updates about our work. It also gives visitors to the page the chance to comment on what we've written. If you have a suggestion for a blog topic we'd love to hear from you.

Last year we produced a new 10-minute film introduction to Tibet which has already been viewed more than 15,000 times. Featuring footage filmed inside Tibet and narrated by actress Juliet Stevenson, it's one of many ways that we can counter China's propaganda and share the reality of Tibet with people around the world – so please do watch and share if you haven't already: www.freetibet.org/tibetfilm

Finally, if you're on Facebook, please like our Facebook page. We've seen our Facebook fans grow from 20,000 to an amazing 130,000 within two years and in 2015 our updates appeared in more than 20 million Facebook newsfeeds. Following us on Facebook is a great way to keep up-to-date on events inside Tibet and the ways you can get involved in our campaigns.

We know that when people learn the truth about Tibet they will take action for Tibet – so thank you for everything you're doing to help us share the truth, and we hope to see you online!



Above: A screen capture from our 10-minute film introduction to Tibet.
Right: A graphic outlining how sharing information online helps Tibet.



Holding China to account on torture

In November, Free Tibet and Tibet Watch travelled to Geneva to lobby the United Nations' Committee Against Torture regarding torture in Tibet. The Committee, a panel of impartial experts, was reviewing China's compliance with its international obligations to end torture and our visit followed the submission of two joint reports by Free Tibet and Tibet Watch earlier in the review process. China was being scrutinised by the committee for the first time since 2008.

The groups took part in the formal NGO briefing session and, despite very limited time, were able to contribute to and deliver a joint statement highlighting particular threats to Tibetans and raising a number of cases, including that of Bangri Tsamtrul Rinpoche, one of our Robed Resisters, who is currently serving an 18-year prison term.

The statement followed up the two detailed reports (compiled with Tibetan political prisoner association Gu Chu Sum) submitted to the Committee in February and October. Both reports are packed with information proving that China, no matter how much its government insists otherwise on the international stage, continues to torture Tibetan political prisoners. One of the testimonies in the reports comes from Golog Jigme, the Tibetan filmmaker, human rights activist and torture survivor. Now free and living in Switzerland, Golog Jigme met up with Free Tibet while in Geneva, as well as watching the proceedings for himself.

The Committee had already challenged China in writing over a long list of concerns we submitted and the November session saw members of the Committee subject Chinese officials to oral questioning. Their claims that

recent changes to Chinese law ensure that torture can no longer take place were treated with deep scepticism by the committee and greeted with astonishment by witnesses, including Golog Jigme.

A damning conclusion

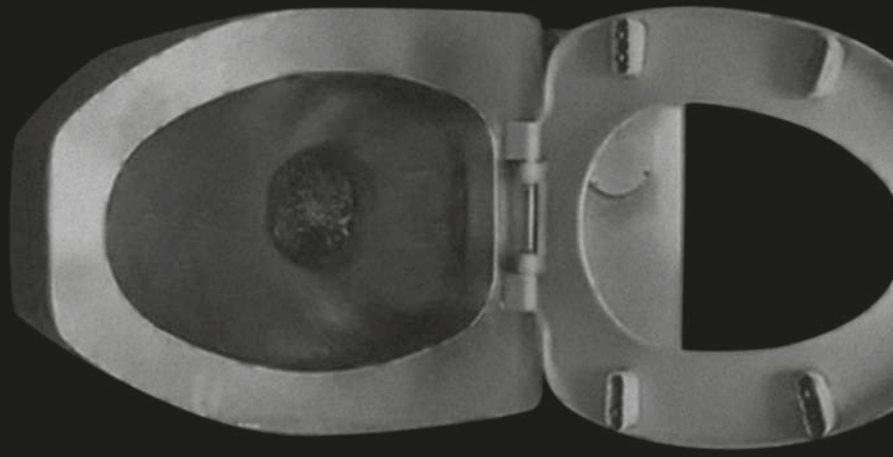
Its work done in Geneva, there was a short wait for Free Tibet to see what the Committee Against Torture would make of all the evidence it had seen, as well as China's response to it. When the Committee announced its conclusions on 9 December, they were tempered by diplomatic language but stark nonetheless. Its final report stated that "the practice of torture and ill-treatment is still deeply entrenched in the criminal justice system." The Committee also acknowledged the prevalence of torture, specifically in Tibet, stating that it had "received numerous reports from credible sources that document in detail cases of torture, deaths in custody, arbitrary detention and disappearances of Tibetans."

Among the cases Free Tibet raised that were taken up in the concluding report was that of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, who died in prison in July 2015, only months before the review (see our last magazine). The Committee highlighted its concerns over allegations that his death in custody was due to a lack of prompt medical care and treatment during his detention. They were concerned this meant China had ignored its own laws by preventing the family from investigating his death by hastily cremating his body against the family's wishes.

The Committee also criticised China for failing to explain reports of brutality and torture surrounding the 2008 uprising in Tibet.

“Most of the prisoners were suffering from urinary infections, kidney infection and a lot of health problems. The water that came from the toilet had to be drunk to quench our thirst.”

Gonpo Thiney



Stop Torture in Tibet

To coincide with the lobbying in Geneva, Free Tibet launched a major new campaign, Stop Torture in Tibet. The campaign aims to spotlight China's continued use of torture in its police stations, detention centres and prisons, and pressure Chinese authorities to take meaningful action and finally end torture.

China claims confessions extracted through torture are no longer admissible in its courts and remains deeply sensitive to criticisms of its human rights record. As of December, nearly 2,000 people had signed Free Tibet's petition to the Chinese Minister of Justice, calling on China to honour its obligations under international law and put an end to torture.

The campaign scored an early success when the EU challenged China over its torture record in November, after Free Tibet and its supporters pressed them for action.

To expose China's record on torture the campaign features a striking series of social media graphics that contrast the mundanity of

everyday household objects such as a pair of boots, a wood stove and a plug socket with testimonies from former prisoners that describe the horrific ways they were used to inflict torture. One graphic shows an interrogation chair, accompanied by the words of Li Wengsheng, a Chinese official who spoke in Geneva in November. Before an audience of experts on torture, he sought to turn this object, clearly intended as a tool of torture and intimidation, into something banal, even innocent, claiming:

“The interrogation chair guarantees safety of the detainee... It sometimes has soft padding to increase a sense of comfort, a sense of safety.”

Golog Jigme sat in the audience that day, observing some of the people ultimately responsible for his torture. He told Free Tibet that whenever he remembered that chair he felt “like it would be better to die than survive being tortured on that chair.” His memories, and the bravery that he and other torture survivors have shown, put the evasive and deceptive words of Chinese officials to shame.

“Whenever I remember that chair I feel scared, even to this day. I felt like it would be better to die than survive being tortured on that chair.”

Golog Jigme

STOP TORTURE IN TIBET

Action

Read about the Stop Torture in Tibet campaign, including testimonies from Golog Jigme and others, and take action on our website at www.freetibet.org/torture

News update...

Solo protests in eastern Tibet

More Tibetans have been beaten and detained while staging solo protests. The latest spate of arrests started in Ngaba County, the site of many previous demonstrations. There were at least three separate protests in one day in September, resulting in several arrests. The following day another five monks were detained, four of whom were subsequently released. Protesters in Ngaba included 15-year-old Lobsang Jamyang, a Kirti monastery monk, who was detained after walking through the town shouting slogans and laymen Tashi and Tashi Dhondup who were arrested for solo protests in October and December.

Elsewhere in eastern Tibet, 29-year-old Sangay was arrested in Kardze after scattering windhorses (small papers with prayers written on them) and calling for the long life of the Dalai Lama. He had grown worried about the Tibetan spiritual leader's age – he turned 80 this year – after seeing a photograph of his escape to India in 1959.



Left: Lobsang Jamyang,
Top: Tashi Dhondup,
Bottom: Sangay.

Homes and nunnery demolished

Chinese authorities have continued their assault on Tibetans and their way of life by demolishing 300 buildings in one village and rendering more than 100 nuns homeless by destroying their living quarters.

In September, 106 nuns were expelled from their nunnery in Driru County and forbidden to carry out religious practices, such as wearing their distinctive red robes and even praying. Those who were allowed to remain in what was left of the nunnery were reported to have been forced to undergo a so-called 'patriotic re-education' programme. There were also reports of the authorities confiscating various valuable items, including statues and prayer instruments made of gold, silver and other precious materials.

In the second incident, villagers were beaten and briefly detained for trying to recover their belongings after their homes and shops were demolished in the lakeside village of Trenak in Chapcha County in October. The destruction of the shops, which had been built to cater for visiting tourists and pilgrims, left many villagers without any source of income.



Remains of
Driru Nunnery.

Political prisoners released

Four political prisoners have been freed after serving lengthy prison sentences.

39-year-old writer and former teacher Dolma Kyab, who spent ten-and-a-half years behind bars for 'endangering state security', was freed in October. He was said to be in poor health. A few years prior to his arrest, he fled to India and wrote an unpublished book on the philosophical concepts of Tibetan sovereignty and identity, before returning to Lhasa to work as a history teacher.

Later in October, his friend Kalsang Sonam was freed after serving a nine-year prison sentence for sharing state secrets, in the form of a letter from Dolma Kyab. The two were reunited in freedom after their release.

Pema Rigzin, who featured in our Jailed Musicians campaign, finished his two-and-a-half year prison term, having been imprisoned for producing pro-Tibetan songs at his Chengdu recording studio. He was given a hero's welcome home.

In December, 45-year-old Yangmo Kyi was delivered to her home in the middle of the night to avoid celebrations. She had been convicted of 'picking quarrels and provoking trouble' and had spent three years in jail. She was accused of involvement in a self-immolation in Labrang in 2012. Four of her co-accused were given 7 to 12-year sentences for 'intentional homicide' after trying to prevent the dead man's body from falling into police hands.



Kalsang Sonam, left,
with Dolma Kyab.

...News update

China clamps down on Tibetan officials

Communist Party members thought to secretly sympathise with the Tibetan cause face severe punishment under a new clampdown. The most senior official in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), Party Secretary Chen Quanguo, threatened “the two-faced people who look at minority matters in an erroneous way”.

The policy is intended to ensure the government of the TAR – for which many Tibetans work – is composed only of those who fully accept China’s occupation of Tibet. The party boss said the campaign will target “party members who profess not to believe in religion but secretly do”.

China claims its fight against ‘splittism’ – threatening to split the country by calling for Tibetan freedom – is part of its campaign against corruption, which is widely seen as a way of removing and punishing officials whose loyalty to President Xi Jinping is suspect. Splittism carries severe punishments, including the death penalty.



Chen Quanguo in front of an image of the Potala Palace.

Visit to Tibet by senior US lawmakers

US Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi was taken on a rare visit to the Tibet Autonomous Region in November. Ms Pelosi is one of Tibet’s staunchest supporters in the US Congress and was joined on the trip by Senator Jim McGovern, another longstanding friend of Tibet. The pair were part of a Congressional delegation to China. Following the closely controlled visit, China state media claimed Ms Pelosi had praised China’s work in Tibet but she and other members of the delegation made clear on their return that they had strongly challenged the authorities over Tibet, leading to some “heated exchanges” between the visitors and their hosts.



Nancy Pelosi.

Free Tibet raffle winners

Thank you to everyone who purchased tickets for our 2015 raffle. We are pleased to have raised over £8,500, which will be used to support our campaigning work throughout 2016.

Congratulations to 2015’s lucky winners:

- 1st Prize:** £1,000.
R Flaherty
- 2nd Prize:** A bespoke experience in the Tibet hot air balloon.
S Smith
- 3rd Prize:** Two tickets to Latitude Festival 2016.
C Kedward
- 4th Prize:** A three-night weekend stay in the heart of the Cotswolds.
T Organ
- 5th Prize:** A bottle of 21-year-old, privately-blended ‘Golden Spirit’ Scotch whisky.
J Kenarki



Campaigns update...



ROBED Tibet's jailed monks
RESISTERS

NAME: **Thardhod Gyaltsen**

DETAINED: December 2013

SENTENCE: 18 years

REASON FOR IMPRISONMENT:

Thardhod Gyaltsen's charges are unknown but he is believed to have owned banned images and teachings of the Dalai Lama. He was well-known for promoting Tibetan culture and Buddhism.



NAME: **Tsewang Choephel**

DETAINED: 18 May 2015

SENTENCE: Not yet tried, as far as is known

REASON FOR IMPRISONMENT:

The reason for Tsewang Choephel's imprisonment is unknown, but is thought to be related to his presence at the self-immolation of his fellow monk, Kalsang Yeshi, in December 2014.



NAME: **Lobsang Gendun**

DETAINED: 1 July 2013

SENTENCE: 10 years

REASON FOR IMPRISONMENT:

Lobsang Gendun's charges are unknown. He was arrested after carrying out a protest in which he called for the long life of the Dalai Lama and freedom for Tibet. He has reportedly been tortured and rendered unable to walk.



Our Robed Resisters campaign has proven very popular with supporters and we are now coordinating action on behalf of our third case. In November, we sent almost 800 messages of solidarity from people around the world to our first prisoner, orphanage-founder Bangri Tsamtrul Rinpoche. The graphic (right) shows the actions supporters have taken and how your generous contributions underpin our campaign work. Letters for Bangri Tsamtrul Rinpoche and December's highlighted prisoner Tsangyang Gyatso were sent to Chushul prison in Tibet, where the pair are being held. Free Tibet also sent petitions to the prison governor and regional government, urging that both men be released. Unfortunately, we cannot expect a reply from any Chinese authorities but they now know there is international public awareness of the cases.

Thardhod Gyaltsen, one of Free Tibet's three current Robed Resisters, is a monk and chant leader from Drongna Monastery in Tibet's Driru County. He is serving 18 years in prison. Well known for his promotion of Tibetan culture and Buddhism, Thardhod Gyaltsen was arrested in December 2013 following the closure of his monastery during a period of sustained protest and repression in Driru County. Thardhod Gyaltsen's father was one of thousands of Tibetans killed by Chinese authorities during protests in Driru in 1969.

The reasons for Thardhod Gyaltsen's arrest and conviction are unknown, although sources suggest he was found in possession of images of the Dalai Lama and recordings of his speeches and teachings. Thardhod Gyaltsen is believed to be serving his sentence in Chushul Prison too.

Action | Visit www.freetibet.org/robed-resisters for more information on all these cases.

You can send a message in Chinese to the governor of the Tibet Autonomous Region to demand Thardhod Gyaltsen's release on our website or write to him at:

Lobsang Jamcan,
Governor of Tibet Autonomous Region,
1 Jinzhu East Rd, Chengguan district, Tibet, China

567

Number of you who gave to our Robed Resisters campaign

£12,728

Amount raised by the campaign

796

Number of you who sent words of solidarity to Bangri Tsamtrul Rinpoche

1,373

Petition signatures to local authorities demanding Bangri Tsamtrul Rinpoche's human rights are respected.

Your generosity has aided our efforts to call for better treatment for religious political prisoners inside Tibet.

Thank you.

Political parties support Dalai Lama

In the run up to the Dalai Lama's visit last September, Free Tibet launched a campaign to persuade British politicians to stand up to China's bullying and welcome him to the UK. China pressures political leaders across the world to shun the Dalai Lama: the 2012 meeting between David Cameron and the Dalai Lama provoked China to put the UK in the diplomatic deep freeze.

After being contacted by Free Tibet in September, Natalie Bennett, leader of the national Green Party, issued a statement saying:

"On behalf of my Party, I welcome His Holiness, the 14th Dalai Lama to the UK. He will understandably want to discuss human rights and other issues relating to Tibet and I hope Prime Minister David Cameron is courteous enough to give him an audience."

Mr Cameron, however, ignored this call, as well as a 4,300-signature petition from Free Tibet supporters, and looked the other way during the spiritual leader's visit.

Meanwhile, the Green, Labour and Liberal Democrat groups in the London Assembly responded to Free Tibet and its supporters by extending their welcomes to the Dalai Lama. London's Conservative Mayor Boris Johnson did not issue an invitation to the Dalai Lama, but later wrote to Free Tibet: "The Mayor admires the work the Dalai Lama has done [and] is aware of the deeply concerning human rights issues in Tibet."

Confucius Classrooms under spotlight

The committee charged with scrutinising the policies of the government of Jersey will question its Education Minister about Confucius Classrooms in a public meeting this February. The island's Hautlieu School recently opened the world's 1,000th Confucius Classroom and its headteacher and members of the Jersey government met Xi Jinping during his October visit to the UK. After a local Free Tibet supporter raised the issue with the government, our campaign generated media coverage on the islands and has also recently featured in Northern Irish, Scottish and education media.

Free Tibet has successfully challenged attempts by University College London to keep secret how much money the Chinese government spends on the Confucius Classroom programme in England – uncovering that it has spent over \$750,000 in the last two years. The Scottish Government has revealed that it has spent approximately £675,000 in support of the programme this year. Free Tibet raised its concerns about the potential effects of the Classrooms in a positive meeting with the Scottish Government in December.

Jailed musicians petition turned away

In September, Free Tibet visited the Chinese Embassy to hand in a 12,000-signature petition calling upon the Chinese government to release a number of musicians jailed in Tibet. As expected, the embassy refused to open the door but we subsequently sent the petition by post to Beijing.



Letters



FRANCOIS DE HALLEUX

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, over the phone on 020 7324 4605 or by post to:
Letters, Free Tibet,
28 Charles Square,
London N1 6HT.
Please note we cannot guarantee publication of each letter we receive.
Thank you!

Hi – I would like to join your campaign in a larger way than donating. I would like to spread awareness around the world. Please let me know if there is a way I can do that better through your organization. Thank you!

Cassidy Greene

Hello, Cassidy. In addition to joining Free Tibet, there are many ways you can get involved, take action and help raise awareness for Tibet.

Firstly, just giving people information about Tibet really helps drum up support. You can share our leaflets, petitions, postcards and magazines with people you know, or leave them (with permission!) in places like doctors' surgeries. Just get in touch and we're happy to send them for free. As we discuss on page 5, sharing our online graphics, videos and news stories is both easy and really effective.

You could also join a local group or even start one up yourself. Local groups are a great way to raise awareness for Tibet, whether hosting discussion evenings, film nights or sponsored fundraisers. We also strongly encourage supporters to write letters to their democratic representative – whether an MP, a Congressman or otherwise – to ensure they remain aware of what is happening in Tibet, know that their constituents are passionate about the fate of the Tibetan people and, most importantly, to press them to take action. This is in addition to writing to Chinese politicians, calling for an immediate end to torture, human rights abuses or the occupation of Tibet. Our website has action pages which allow you to contact Western and Chinese politicians as well as sign petitions. If you want to write to the Chinese government directly, there are some addresses below. We have recently led a letter-writing campaign to support political prisoners too (page 12), both so they know they have global support and so their captors are aware that the world is watching closely.

Another way to show your support is to attend vigils, protests and Tibetan cultural events. With the anniversary of Tibetan Uprising Day just around the corner on 10 March (see page 15), there will be lots of these taking place all around the world very soon.

Thanks very much for your support. As always, the best way to stay in touch and find out what you can do is to check our website at www.freetibet.org/take-action

Hello, I've been a member of Free Tibet for quite a while, and have donated for some time. I was just wondering if you think being a supporter of Free Tibet will be a problem if I ever want to go to China. I know that getting into China can be quite a hassle, and they probably don't like your organisation very much. So I don't know if I might be on some 'unwelcome' list. Anyway, thanks for answering!

Identity withheld

Hi! Firstly, you would be correct in thinking the Chinese government doesn't particularly like our organisation. I can confirm, however, that our supporter database is kept offline and is very securely protected. The visa process for China can be quite rigorous, but many of our supporters do travel to China (and Tibet) on a fairly regular basis.

The evidence suggests that at the moment China doesn't keep a list of everybody who has ever signed a petition or a postcard, so it seems unlikely that you'll face too many hurdles – but it is possible that if you are very active and visible in public on behalf of Tibet it may present a problem.

We would also advise that you don't attempt to display any Tibet flags in China or Tibet, nor discuss political or human rights issues with any locals. Given the levels of surveillance in China, it is a very real possibility that they might face arrest if you were to do so.

If you would like to write to authorities in China directly, here are some useful addresses:

Wu Aiyong,
Minister of Justice,
Ministry of Justice,
No.10 Chaoyangmen Nandajie,
Beijing 100020, People's Republic of China

Chen Quanguo,
Communist Party Secretary, Tibet Autonomous Region,
Tibet Autonomous Regional Office,
No.1 Kang'angdonglu,
Lhasa, Tibet 850000, People's Republic of China

Supporter activities



Local Groups

Fundraising by the Grampian Tibet Group

In November, the Grampian Tibet Group carried out its annual sponsored walk raising £750. The group kindly donated £375 of the money that it raised to Free Tibet. The group also organised a Tibetan exhibition in Aberdeen in January.

New Tibet group in Cardiff

November saw the establishment of a new Tibet group in Cardiff. The Cardiff and South Wales Tibet Group, headed by Meryl Coles, was the third group to join Free Tibet's network in 2015 after the Norfolk and Bath groups. You can find out more about their plans for 2016 on Facebook at www.facebook.com/cardifftibetgroup

Flag raising ceremony in Northampton

This March the Tibetan flag will once again fly over Northampton. Supporters of Tibet will gather inside Northampton's Guildhall at 12pm on 1 March for speeches and tributes. The Tibetan flag has flown over the Guildhall in Northampton for the past 16 years. For the first time, this year a second flag will be raised over Northampton's County Hall at the same time.

Tibet talk in York for International Women's Week

Recently returned from Rewalsar, a Tibetan refugee settlement in the foothills of the Himalayas in northern India, Rowena Field from the York Tibet Support Group will host a talk about some of the Tibetan women she met there and their lives in exile. The York group has been running a sponsorship scheme in Rewalsar since 2013. Tibetan handicrafts brought back from the trip will also be on sale.

The event, 'Building a Life in Exile – Stories of Tibetan Women Refugees', will take place at 7:30pm on 7 March at the Friends Meeting House, Lower Friargate, York, YO1 9RL. For more information you can contact Rowena at rfield151@yahoo.co.uk.

They were also very busy in December, raising £1,000 at their Christmas stall. The money raised was split between several organisations, with £135 going to Free Tibet.

Above: Grampian Tibet Group on their sponsored walk.
Left: Dee from York Tibet Support Group at their Christmas stall.



For the latest information on activities by Tibet groups, and contact details for the groups themselves, visit our [local groups page](http://www.freetibet.org/localgroups) at www.freetibet.org/localgroups If you're interested in setting up a group or fundraising for Free Tibet, please get in touch with us at mail@freetibet.org

Tibetan Uprising Day 2016

On 10 March every year events take place across the world to mark Tibetan Uprising Day, 10 March 1959, when Tibetans rose up against Chinese rule and tens of thousands gathered in Lhasa to protect the Dalai Lama. In the UK this year, the day will be marked with a vigil organised by the Tibetan Community in Britain at the Chinese Embassy on 10 March (a Thursday) and Free Tibet will host an event on Saturday 12 March at a central London location.

In previous years Tibetans and Tibet supporters have staged a march from Downing Street to the Chinese Embassy, but traffic management costs have escalated significantly and, unfortunately, the annual march has become prohibitively expensive for the coalition of groups, including Free Tibet, who have previously organised and funded it.

Full details of the 2016 Uprising Day events in London have not been confirmed at the time of going to press. Please contact the Free Tibet office or check online at www.freetibet.org/March10 for more information about events both in London and worldwide.



FLICKR/RACHYHOO



Give Tibet's
children the
best possible
chance to
grow up free

Please consider
leaving us a gift
in your will.

For more information
please contact us on
020 7324 4605 or at
legacy@freetibet.org