

FREE TIBET

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A look
inside
Tibet's
monasteries

free
TIBET 

• Blood on the Snows • Tashi Wangchuk jailed • Tibet's "intolerable" monasteries •



Free Tibet Director
Eleanor Byrne-Rosengren

Dear friends

Much of my focus over the last few months has been on the Blood on the Snows speaking tour outlined on page 3. It started at the end of March and took us through nine cities in just under two weeks. I won't lie – it was exhausting. But it was also a fantastic experience. We met so many wonderful people, some of whom were new to the cause and some who have been supporting Tibet for decades. It was also an opportunity to fulfil the promise we made to the former prisoners who had given us their testimonies – the promise to share their stories as widely as we possibly could. I'm so glad we didn't let them down.

I'm also very glad that so many people got to meet Lhagyari Namgyal Dolkar from Gu-Chu-Sum, who was my partner for the tour. We've worked together before but it was great to have her here in person. She's an excellent advocate for Tibet and a very moving speaker.

Namgyal and I spent a lot of time talking about Tibetan monks while we were travelling between tour events. Namgyal was keen to challenge the stereotypes that many people have about Tibetans in general and we both agreed on the need to challenge stereotypes about Buddhist monks and nuns. They have

been at the forefront of Tibetan resistance since the occupation began and truly are Tibet's action heroes.

The role of monks, nuns and religious institutions in Tibet has been highlighted in Tibet Watch's latest report, *Tibet's "Intolerable" Monasteries*, which is one of the other things I've been busy working on recently. It's also a central theme of Free Tibet's Robed Resisters campaign, as well as our forthcoming work on religious freedom.

As we move into the summer we'll be looking for ways to keep the momentum of the last few months going. We'll be at the WOMAD Festival in July, we'll have our Summer Shindig in August and hopefully we'll make it to one or two more events too.

With best wishes

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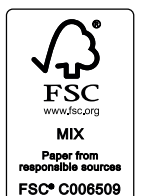
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Our vision is a free Tibet in which Tibetans are able to determine their own future and the human rights of all are respected.

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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Blood on the Snows



A look at Tibet Watch's recent speaking tour on torture.

Tibet Watch's 'Blood on the Snows' speaking tour started at the end of March and over two very rewarding weeks we were able to bring stories of Tibetan courage and resistance to people across the UK. Our director, Eleanor, was joined on the tour by Lhagyari Namgyal Dolkar, vice-president of Gu-Chu-Sum, the Tibetan association for former political prisoners. They had previously worked together on submissions to the UN Committee Against Torture and that was where the idea for the tour came from. You can read more about the vital work of Gu-Chu-Sum in the interview with Namgyal featured on page 13.

The testimonies that Tibet Watch gets from former political prisoners are not easy to read or hear and someone at one of the events described them as "uncomfortable". Nevertheless, they are incredibly inspiring. The people our team have interviewed have no regrets, despite everything they've been through, and are still completely committed to their country, their culture and the Tibetan freedom struggle. Many of them are also committed to sharing their stories – they really want people to know what happened to them and what's still happening inside Tibet.

There is no substitute for personal contact and the tour was an opportunity for Tibet supporters and interested members of the public to hear first-hand from Eleanor and Namgyal and, most importantly, to be able to see the video testimonies of former prisoners talking frankly and courageously about what they had experienced.

The tour started in Scotland and the first event in Aberdeen drew an audience of 60 people, thanks to the efforts of Tibet Support Group Grampian and some student groups from Aberdeen University. The second event was in Edinburgh, where Eleanor and Namgyal were able to meet many members of the Tibetan community in Scotland as well as Tibet supporters.

Glasgow doesn't have an established Tibet group at the moment so there was a small but very passionate audience at the event. The last stop of the first week was Manchester – and a chance to meet up with the Tibetan Community (UK) North Association.

The second week started in Corsham, a small and picturesque town near Bath. The venue was a slightly cold, but quite beautiful, seventeenth century alms-house. There was a good crowd at the event and some local media interest. Once again, Eleanor and Namgyal were pleased to discover a friendly Tibetan community – some of whom had travelled from Bristol for the event – as well as meeting a number of dedicated Tibet supporters and recruiting a few new ones too.

The next stop was Cardiff, where the event had an additional motive – to help drum up support for the new Tibet group. There were certainly a few people showing a lot of enthusiasm by the end of the evening and there are also plans for a potential flag-raising to commemorate Uprising Day on 10 March next year.

The tour continued on to York, where there was another good crowd and we recruited a few more new supporters. Norwich was a last-minute addition to the tour. Eleanor and Namgyal met a group of very committed supporters and Alison Reynolds from the International Tibet Network was also in attendance. The tour finished in London where, once again, the audience was moved and inspired by what they saw and heard.

Namgyal also joined us at the very end of the tour to meet officials from the Foreign & Commonwealth Office and MPs from the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet to share the video testimonies and provide her vital insights. We would like to thank Namgyal, everyone who came and in particular the fantastic local groups who worked so hard to organise the events and make the tour the success that it was.

Tashi Wangchuk: Jailed for speaking out



“No one wants to live in an environment that is full of pressure and fear.”

In April, Free Tibet launched an urgent campaign for Tashi Wangchuk, a 30-year-old businessman from Yushu in northern Tibet. He has been charged with ‘inciting separatism’ and faces a possible 15-year prison sentence. Tashi Wangchuk’s only crime was campaigning peacefully to improve Tibetan language education – and talking openly about it to the international media. Few cases could more starkly emphasise the injustice of China’s rule in Tibet.

In November 2015, Tashi Wangchuk was featured in two articles in the *New York Times* and a short online documentary, also made by the *Times*. With almost no direct reporting from anywhere in Tibet, the features provided a remarkable insight into the challenges faced by Tibetans in simply staying Tibetan. They told of Tashi Wangchuk’s efforts through official channels to improve Tibetan language education in Yushu. He told the paper how he had wanted to help his nieces learn Tibetan but found no classes available. In 2012, officials in China’s Qinghai and Gansu provinces practically eliminated the teaching of Tibetan in primary and secondary schools, which were ordered to use Chinese as the main language of instruction. Tashi’s concern about his nieces was simple: “our words could be lost to them”.

His response was to discuss challenges to Tibet’s culture on a popular online social media platform and to patiently campaign for a change in official policy. Even under China’s own law, he had every right to do so. Article 4

of the Constitution of China states that “people of all nationalities have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages.” Article 41 of the Constitution goes on to say “Citizens of the People’s Republic of China have the right to criticize and make suggestions to any state organ or functionary” and that “[no] one may suppress such complaints, charges and exposures, or retaliate against the citizens making them”.

Throughout his campaign, Tashi Wangchuk notably avoided calling for Tibetan independence and even praised China’s President Xi Jinping’s leadership. He insisted in the *New York Times* that he was solely concerned with preserving Tibet’s culture and that Chinese officials should aid Tibetans in doing so. However, he also spoke frankly about what he called “in effect, the systematic slaughter of our culture”.

Despite all this, the local and regional authorities took no action. The *Times* film shows him travelling to Beijing in an attempt to find help to make a legal challenge to the language policy. His quest was fruitless, however. He told the newspaper: “If they [the Supreme People’s Court] can’t take the case, it proves one point, which is that the whole Tibetan issue cannot be solved through the law.”

In January 2016, Tashi Wangchuk was arrested in Yushu and, like many jailed Tibetans, disappeared for many weeks before his family was told where he was. In March they were notified that he had been charged

with 'separatism' – a vaguely defined, catch-all crime that allows China to punish almost any sign of opposition to its rule by Tibetans. If convicted, he could face 15 years in prison. Many Tibetans charged with separatism have been imprisoned for even longer terms.

Taking action

Tashi Wangchuk sought only what was his by right under the Chinese constitution and pursued his campaign not through protest but through dogged lobbying of officials. He also showed incredible bravery in talking openly to a major international newspaper – fortunately, because of the media articles, we also know far more about what he did than is the case with most political prisoners. For all these reasons, his case is very important. China cannot be allowed to silence people like Tashi Wangchuk.

When we learned about his case, we immediately contacted major Western governments and the senior human rights official in the European Union. We have heard back that the US State Department is following his case and the UK will raise it at a forthcoming Human Rights Dialogue meeting with China. Our urgent online petition, addressed to the regional government in Yushu and demanding Tashi Wangchuk's release, obtained more than 2,100 signatures in two weeks and was delivered in April. We have also taken his case to the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

At the time of writing, Tashi Wangchuk has not yet been tried. Although the conviction rate in Chinese courts is more than 99%, we know from experience that sometimes when the spotlight is shone on political prisoners the sentences they are given can be lighter than expected and their prison conditions can improve. We believe that sustained pressure will help Tashi Wangchuk and it is still possible he may be freed.

“My goal is to change things a little bit, to push to preserve some of our nation's culture. The entire Tibetan ethnic nationality and culture is at risk of disappearing.”



How you can help

Visit www.freetibet.org/tashi-wangchuk to find out how to contact your government or elected representatives to ask them to press for Tashi Wangchuk's release, as well as for the latest updates on the campaign.

From top: Outdoor Tibetan lessons; A screenshot of the article and video. Opposite page: Tashi Wangchuk in Beijing.

Fundraise for us

Raising money is a fun, rewarding and unique way to contribute to Free Tibet. The money you raise will enable us to continue campaigning for a free Tibet.

Why fundraise for Free Tibet?

Fundraising for Free Tibet isn't just about the money. It's about going the extra mile, putting in time and inspiring others to give to the cause. It's about linking a personal challenge, hobby or talent to a need. It's about teaming up with friends and colleagues and raising awareness. It's about that feeling you get when you run the last mile of a marathon or sell the last cupcake in a bake sale. **It's about doing something you believe in.**

We want to hear your ideas!

If you want to get physical, why not take part in a local sports event or organise your own? If you are good at baking, how about holding a bake sale at work or at school? Are there any events going on in your local area where you could fundraise with a lucky-dip, raffle or an auction?

We have an A-Z of fundraising ideas and would love to hear yours too. You can download our Fundraising Guide from our website at www.freetibet.org/fundraise

To get in touch with Kavita to discuss your ideas or to request a free fundraising pack, you can email Kavita@freetibet.org or call her on 020 7324 4615.



Karine and Virginie raise the Tibetan flag at the Summit of Mt Blanc, July 2015.

Online activism:

Using the internet to enact change and how you can help!

When it comes to activism in the modern world, no discussion would be complete without mention of the web. The internet and social media have revolutionised how we communicate, organise and participate, and together we can utilise these new tools to make real change.

As an example, let's look at Twitter. It seems like a simple enough idea: you sign up with an account and can then post short messages, up to 140 characters long, on a public forum where everyone else can see them. But these small messages (called tweets) can have big impact.

Free Tibet has a Twitter account with over 17,000 people regularly following our updates. This allows us to talk to people from all over the world about Tibet, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. We tweet up-to-date news from Tibet, comment on current events, publicise our web content and events, raise awareness of campaigns and much more. Sometimes when we break news from Tibet, the first that people learn about it is seeing the tweet from us.

When someone sees a tweet they like they can re-tweet it to their followers, who could then re-tweet to their followers, expanding the reach of the message exponentially as it picks up momentum. Only a few weeks ago our Tashi Wangchuk campaign was retweeted by Edward Wong of the *New York Times*, providing a link to a further 48,000 people. Thirty-four of those followers then retweeted it to their followers and so onward it goes. Some Twitter users' followers count in the millions so the potential for spreading information is huge.

In 2014, Free Tibet managed to have almost 100 dummy accounts set up by China suspended from Twitter. They were trying to use Twitter's reach to spread false information and propaganda about Tibet, but we were able to stop them.

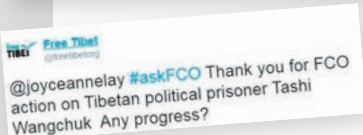
Join the conversation

Twitter is a two-way street, so our followers can talk right back to us. This allows us to get feedback, ideas and news from people all over the world; be they supporters, researchers or members of the public. This means we can publicly address those who have the power to make change, such as governments and corporations, on a platform where everyone can see their response (or lack thereof). We recently sent a tweet to Baroness Joyce Anelay, Minister of State, asking her about the Tashi Wangchuk case publicly. She replied that she would raise this case at the next UK-China Human Rights Dialogue. When enough people come together to question these powerful figures, the pressure to make a statement or change policy can be overwhelming.

So why not join us?

- Get your own Twitter account in seconds at www.twitter.com, if you don't already have one, then follow us on Twitter at www.twitter.com/freetibetorg.
- If you find something we post interesting, share it with your friends, both online and in person.
- Most governments, corporations and public figures have a Twitter account. So if someone can influence or make change for Tibet, ask them about it.
- Talk to us! Twitter is a great way for us to be able to hear directly from you. Have any ideas for a campaign? Have some information for us? Let us know.

There are many other ways you can participate in the Free Tibet movement online. You can visit www.freetibet.org for the latest news, join our mailing list for regular email updates, or follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/freetibetorg.



Tibet's monasteries: indomitable, irrepressible, intolerable



They are places of religious devotion, but also noisy political activism; monuments from Tibet's history, but also the key to its future. To Chinese authorities they are "intolerable". Tibet's monasteries, and the role they play in Tibet's resistance, are the focus of a recently-published report by Tibet Watch.

Tibet's "Intolerable" Monasteries covers the historical and modern-day role of Tibet's monasteries, a story completely intertwined with the story of Tibet itself.

Monasteries have long held great religious and cultural significance for Tibetans and, due to their respected status and close ties to local communities, monks and nuns have often taken on the role of community leaders. They run educational projects, orphanages and old people's homes and help preserve Tibet's unique culture and language. Under the occupation, where the police, regional and local governments serve the Chinese Communist Party, Tibet's monasteries remain one of the few institutions in Tibet that Tibetans feel they can trust.

For these reasons, monasteries are key in standing up to Chinese rule. Far from being detached from the world or passive, monks and nuns have been deeply involved in organising and leading protests since 1950. Many have been arrested and tortured as a result of their activism. Even seemingly non-political activities like teaching the Tibetan language can be an act of resistance when Tibet's unique culture is under threat.

Invasion of the monasteries

Monastic activism has led to increased Chinese scrutiny. Monks now have to live under the scrutiny of surveillance cameras installed in their monasteries. Monasteries are routinely subjected to inspections for signs of loyalty to the Dalai Lama and

[Tibet's monasteries remain one of the few institutions in Tibet that Tibetans feel they can trust.](#)

“The nuns all went on hunger strike [...] We did our prayers and chanting and we did not give in.”

A nun from Jhada Gon Palden Khachoe Nunnery, speaking anonymously

to police raids. Thardhod Gyaltsen, a monk from Driru County, a hub of political resistance in Tibet in recent years, was one such victim. He is currently serving 18 years in prison after police allegedly discovered him storing images and recordings of the Dalai Lama, both prohibited under Chinese law, during a raid on his monastery. Another monk told Tibet Watch how, following the 2008 protests, his monastery was locked down by the military, with so many soldiers inside and outside the building that it felt “more like an army cantonment” than a place of worship.

China's plans

As the report explains, the Chinese government has long-term plans for Tibet's monasteries and Tibetan Buddhism in general. They have identified Tibetan Buddhism as a key force in Tibetan nationalism and, therefore, the resistance to China's occupation. Authorities have expressed their desire to see Tibet's monasteries converted into centres of Chinese patriotism, flying Chinese flags and displaying portraits of Communist Party leaders. By breaking the bond between monasteries and their surrounding communities, authorities hope that resistance will ultimately fizzle out. This plan goes to the very top – the Chinese government has made it clear that when the time comes to pick the next Dalai Lama, it will be Beijing that makes this decision, not Tibetans.

Defiance

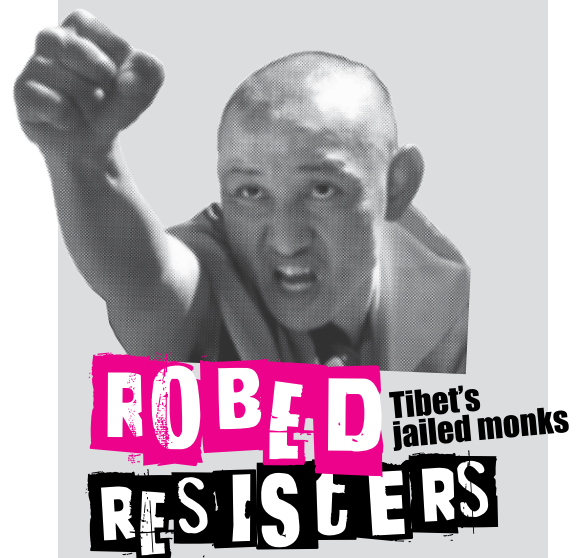
Tibet Watch's report also features inspirational testimonies from monks and nuns who stood up to Chinese authorities, embodying the spirit that

lives on inside their monasteries' walls. Some have paid for this resistance by having to flee Tibet, leaving their homes and their fellow monks behind. Jamyang Jinpa, a monk from Labrang monastery in Gansu Province and now in exile in Dharamsala, told Tibet Watch about how he and several fellow monks disrupted a visit to his monastery by foreign journalists and Chinese officials in April 2008 by flying a large Tibetan flag, prohibited under Chinese rule, in the middle of their tour. As a result of the demonstration, the monastery was temporarily closed and 280 monks were arrested.

A nun from Jhada Gon Palden Khachoe Nunnery, speaking anonymously, told Tibet Watch's researchers that police subjected her nunnery to a political re-education campaign following a protest by the nuns. She went on to note that the nuns “all went on hunger strike and did not eat a morsel for days and nights [...] We did our prayers and chanting and we did not give in.” Dozens of nuns were later expelled from the nunnery for refusing to criticise the Dalai Lama. The following year, authorities expelled a further 106 nuns and demolished their living quarters. The destruction left many of the nuns homeless and seeking shelter.

Efforts by the Chinese state to restrict and disrupt the activities of Tibet's monasteries have only served to reinforce opposition to Chinese rule. All the evidence suggests that they will continue to be centres of resistance in Tibet.

Tibet's "Intolerable" Monasteries can be found on Tibet Watch's website, along with the organisation's past reports at www.tibetwatch.org/reports



Robed Resisters update

There has been mixed news on monks featured in our Robed Resisters campaign. Jigme Guri, a senior monk from Labrang Monastery whose case is also featured in *Tibet's "Intolerable" Monasteries*, was taken to hospital in March under suspicious circumstances. Currently serving a five-year sentence for ‘splittist activities’, in January he told his family that the prison authorities were planning to take him to hospital, even though he was not ill. Since his transfer to prison, they have not been permitted to visit him.

Jigme Guri (pictured) has been imprisoned several times, including one term in 2008, during which he nearly died from torture. His current prison term is due to end in September this year.



In better news, Phurbu Tsering Rinpoche, who was reported to have been in very poor health last year, was released from prison in April, six months before the end of his sentence. Phurbu Tsering Rinpoche was serving an eight-and-a-half-year sentence after nuns at the monastery where he was abbot staged a demonstration in 2008. His current health condition is not known.

Action

To support our Robed Resisters campaign, highlighting the plight of jailed monks and nuns, visit www.freetibet.org/robed-resisters

Where does your money go?

If you've been sent this magazine, it probably means you've made a financial contribution to Free Tibet. For this, we who work for the organisation are very grateful. If you give us a regular donation then particular thanks goes to you, as you may have been supporting us for years or even decades. In fact, our longest running Standing Order started in 1990! Unlike some larger organisations, Free Tibet does not have tens of thousands of donors. Instead, we rely on a smaller number of very committed people so this type of long-running support is essential when it comes to funding our work.

But what do we do with your money?

Well yes, some of it does go towards keeping the lights on in the office, ensuring our systems remain protected from Chinese cyber-attacks, and yes, just like everybody else, the staff here do need a certain amount of tea and coffee to function. But, of course, most of our resources go towards supporting our campaigning work. It's here that we are having a real impact and it's here where your money is making the difference.

In 2015 alone, Free Tibet placed more than 80 stories about Tibet in the international media. We helped organise effective protests during Chinese president Xi Jinping's UK visit, sent hundreds of messages of solidarity to Tibetan political prisoners, exposed the Chinese government's influence over our school system, and provided detailed evidence on torture in Tibet to the United Nations in Geneva. All of this is thanks to our supporters and their generosity.

All support of any kind – financial or otherwise – is hugely appreciated, but it's regular donations (either Direct Debits or regular credit card gifts) that allow us to operate as a professional organisation. They mean we can effectively plan bigger, more powerful campaigns and ensure our resources are most efficiently used. They ensure our vision for a free Tibet endures.

Not a regular giver? Complete and return the form that came with this magazine (UK only), or visit www.freetibet.org/join



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'UK schools advance Chinese propaganda,' activists say

Primary and secondary schools are advancing Chinese "propaganda" without proper scrutiny, campaign groups have claimed

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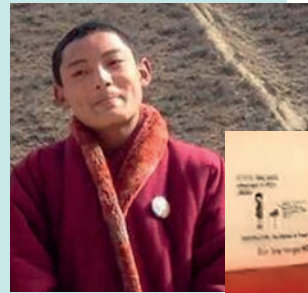
From top: Protest in Parliament Square during visit of Xi Jinping, October 2015; a *Telegraph* report on Free Tibet's Confucius Classrooms campaign; presenting evidence to the UN in Geneva with torture victim Golog Jigme; political prisoner Bangri Tsamtrul Rinpoche.

News update...

Self-immolation protests inside and outside Tibet

On 29 February, 18-year-old Kalsang Wangdu set himself alight in Nyarong County. He reportedly called for “Tibet’s complete independence” while he was on fire. Despite efforts by passers-by to put out the flames, he died on his way to hospital. Kalsang Wangdu was the first Tibetan to set himself alight inside Tibet since Tashi Kyi in August 2015.

That same day, Dorjee Tsering, a 16-year-old Tibetan boy living in India, also staged a self-immolation protest. The flames were doused by his mother and he was taken to hospital with burns covering 95% of his body. While there, he recorded a video statement explaining why he protested and calling for Tibetan independence. Dorjee Tsering died on 3 March due to his injuries.



Kalsang Wangdu;
Dorjee Tsering.

Police intimidation

Chinese state TV in January carried footage of police in balaclavas raiding businesses in Dzoge County. The report showed police carrying cameras and batons and harassing customers in an internet café as well as other small businesses. In a thinly-veiled warning to Tibetans, the video stated that public security officials had “investigated the social stability situation to prevent incidents, for the welfare of the people.”

Online activity is closely monitored in Tibet. In March, three Tibetans were arrested in Matoe County for allegedly making online contact with Tibetan exiles. While authorities did not give an official reason, locals believed two men, Samdup and Rongsher, and one woman, Lhadon, were arrested due to their participation in social media discussions about the elections for the Tibetan exile government in India. In February, Tibetan activist and writer Shokjang (also known as Druklo) was sentenced to three years in prison for “disturbing social stability” after he posted a blog criticising a security sweep in Rebkong County, eastern Tibet.



Above: A still from
the police raid video.
Left: Shokjang, a
Tibetan activist
and writer.

Clampdown follows prayers for Dalai Lama’s health

Hundreds of Tibetans gathered in Drango, eastern Tibet, to pray for the health of the Dalai Lama on 26 January. The gathering – at which a large photograph of the Dalai Lama was prominently displayed – followed news that the Buddhist leader had flown to the US to undergo prostate treatment.

Possessing portraits of the Dalai Lama or honouring him in public are both prohibited by the Chinese government, although in some areas the ban is loosely enforced. Following the prayer service, however, shopkeepers in Drango were told to turn in photos of the Dalai Lama or face “severe punishment”. According to one media report, the ban formed part of a clampdown announced on illegal publications such as “pornography and images of the Dalai Lama”. A Chinese scholar equated Chinese people displaying images of the Dalai Lama to Americans showing pictures of Saddam Hussein.

Two senior monks from Drango, Pagah and Orgyen, were also arrested the week following the gathering. Their current whereabouts are unknown. In response, Free Tibet launched an urgent action, calling on the regional authorities to immediately release them.



Prayer service at
Chokri Monastery in
Trehor, Drango County,
January 2016.

...News update

China facing sustained criticism on human rights

Two major international reports have documented human rights abuses in Tibet this year. In January, the American human rights and democracy group Freedom House published its annual *Freedom in the World* report. The study listed Tibet as one of the 12 'worst of the worst' places in the world for political rights and civil liberties, alongside countries such as Saudi Arabia and North Korea. Only Syria ranked lower on the list.

The US State Department's annual *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* was published in April. It contained strong criticisms of China, stating that "repression and coercion markedly increased during the year against organizations and individuals involved in civil and political rights advocacy and public interest and ethnic minority issues." The lengthy section on Tibet was located within the China report and described repression inside Tibet, noting a wide range of human rights violations including extrajudicial detentions, disappearances and torture.



US Secretary of State John Kerry meeting the Dalai Lama.

Free Tibet puts UK government under pressure

In January, Free Tibet submitted detailed evidence to an inquiry by the UK Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee into the human rights work of the British government. In our submission, we outlined deep concerns that the government ignores criticisms of its policies from human rights organisations and is unclear what its goals are when working on human rights. We also criticised the government for stating that Tibet is part of China in its annual human rights report, arguing that the statement seemed to be an attempt to mollify Chinese anger about any criticisms of its human rights record in Tibet.

In February, the committee raised some of our concerns directly with Minister of State Baroness Anelay at a hearing. In its final report, the Committee repeated these concerns, calling on the government to provide far more information about its human rights work. This April, in its annual human rights report, the government removed its reference to Tibet's status as part of China and provided more information about its plans.

In March, the government backed a joint statement made by 12 countries at the United Nations Human Rights Council, condemning the recent deterioration in human rights across China. This was its most significant public intervention on human rights in China since well before President Xi's visit last October and follows sustained criticism from Free Tibet and other groups over its silence on the issue. In a tit-for-tat move, this positive development led China to postpone the scheduled UK-China Human Rights Dialogue.



Baroness Anelay.

510

of you gave to our
**Stop Torture in
Tibet** appeal

3,866

petition signatures
calling for the Chinese
Justice Minister to end
torture in Tibet

4,055

of you wrote directly
to your governments
demanding action

£11,489

amount given to the appeal

**STOP TORTURE
IN TIBET**

Thank you for
your support and
generosity.
Together, we can
end torture in Tibet.

Interview with Lhagyari Namgyal Dolkar

Free Tibet sat down with Lhagyari Namgyal Dolkar, the vice-president of the Gu-Chu-Sum Movement Association of Tibet, following her recent 'Blood on the Snows' speaker tour across the UK. Here she shares her father's story as well as some of her personal reflections upon the tour.

How did you come to be working with political prisoners at Gu-Chu-Sum?

I became a member of Gu-Chu-Sum in June 2003, a year after my father's death. He had also been a member. For me, personally, the organisation has a significant role to play in what I am and how I am today. I was brought up hearing about the lives of Tibetan political prisoners as I was growing up and I personally understood and felt the pain because it was my father sharing his daunting experience of more than 20 years in prison. After I joined Gu-Chu-Sum, I came across many former political prisoners who had gone through even worse torture and treatment than my father suffered, only for peacefully protesting against China with much courage and zeal. My empathy for them grew and it made me realise how the torture against Tibetans inside Tibet has been systematically increasing. It also became clear to me how each one of them is so crucial for the Tibetan freedom struggle.

Sharing the stories of former political prisoners was one of the key aims of the Blood on the Snows tour. Have you been able to contact any of them to pass on the responses?

I have already given feedback to some of those Gu-Chu-Sum members whose testimonies I shared and they were very thankful for the support. One also told me, "there are many more who are still going through worse torture than I did, and we have to do our best to show that we care."

What else were you hoping to achieve through the events?

The main objective was to reach a new audience and raise awareness. It was also crucial to break the myth that is created around Tibet or Tibetans as 'Shambhala' or 'beautiful happy people' respectively. Tibet is being methodically smashed in a most violent way and the Tibetans are crying out loud in different ways to wake the world leaders, the UN and the international community.

One of the strengths of the Tibetan freedom struggle has been the growing support and empathy from the international civil community so it was also a good opportunity for us to thank people and request them to continue. I was humbled by the enthusiasm of the Tibet supporters across the UK. However, like many of them said, there is a need to reach the younger audiences who are active in so many other issues. This tour made me see the importance of targeting the younger generation in awareness-raising campaigns.

This was your first time visiting the UK. What were your impressions?

It was interesting. It wasn't the Victorian classic UK I'd assumed it would be – that was me stereotyping the UK – and that was quite overwhelming, in a way. But I still loved it, especially the amazing people I met as I travelled across the country. It was inspiring to meet so many dedicated Tibet supporters who have been tirelessly using



Lhagyari Namgyal Dolkar was elected vice-president of Gu-Chu-Sum in September 2013. In April 2016 she became the youngest person ever to be elected to the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile.

their time and energy to raise Tibet on every platform and get more people involved. I think I should definitely come back for similar events in the future.

Is there anything you'd like to say to Tibet supporters in the UK?

We have seen three or four generations of Tibetans suffer horribly under China's rule and we, as global citizens, have the responsibility of not letting the next generation go through the same torture for simply speaking up against a wrong regime. We have been taught the essence of conserving our 'Tibetan-ness' and part of that is courageously fighting against the immoral and standing up for truth. We need to continue. We ought to increase our activism and let our leaders – who are working with the blood-stained Chinese regime – know that this has to stop. Each protest, each letter, each signature on a petition matters so much and means so much to the Tibetans around the world. It assures us that the world cares and that goodness is supported.

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!

**Hello, I am trying to access your website from Hong Kong to make a donation, but am unable to do so. Is this because of the so-called 'Great Firewall of China'? If so, are there any ways to get around this?
Identity withheld, Hong Kong**

You would be correct in presuming that the Free Tibet website is blocked by the Chinese government's censors. It is estimated that China employs up to 30,000 civil servants simply to monitor Internet traffic and remove anything deemed 'undesirable' from the publicly-accessible web. This includes not just Free Tibet, but also websites like Wikipedia and phrases such as 'democracy'. American Internet giants such as Google, Yahoo and Apple are happy to abide by China's censorship laws in order to do business in the country.

There are ways to get around the Great Firewall, but these are of course against the law in China (albeit perhaps not Hong Kong). You can find out more at www.greatfire.org.

With regards to making donations to us from behind the firewall, unfortunately it is a little difficult. You can always call the office on +44 (0) 20 7324 4605, email us or write to us at the address on the inside-front cover. If you can freely access the website, however, then the easiest way is still to visit www.freetibet.org/donate.

Free Tibet has been very good about not sending us lots of mailings. We don't mind emails, and the Christmas catalogue, as we like to get cards from you, and that's all that's needed. I get annoyed with charities that constantly send things, as I think it's a waste of resources. Some still send loads of pointless mailings, but Free Tibet has been very good about it. Keep up the good work.

Bernie Bell, Orkney

Thanks Bernie. Great to hear you're happy with the amount of communication you receive from us. We know that different people want different levels of contact, and that listening to our supporters is really important.

Anyone can change their communication preferences at any time by calling 020 7324 4605 or emailing mail@freetibet.org.

Hey, Free Tibet! I was lucky enough to get down to WOMAD last year and was really delighted to see you guys there. Are you going to be returning in the Summer?

Tsering, Bristol

Hi, Tsering. We certainly are going to be returning to WOMAD Festival this year. Last year's festival was the first time Free Tibet made the journey down to Wiltshire in a few years and we thoroughly enjoyed it. It was an incredible opportunity to meet so many supporters, old and new, as well as to introduce Tibet – and what is happening inside Tibet – to a completely new audience.

The opportunity to advocate for Tibet on such a large scale isn't one we can pass up easily, so we'll be jumping into a van and heading back down in July. You'll be able to find us in the big, bright white tent with the Free Tibet logo – and, if we're honest, it'll probably be covered in prayer flags again too!

If you are coming to WOMAD, please make sure to stop by the Free Tibet tent to talk about our latest campaigns, sign a petition or even just to say hello.

For more information about WOMAD Festival, or to buy tickets, make sure to visit www.womad.co.uk. This year's festival will be taking place on 28-31 July in Charlton Park, Wiltshire.



Supporter activities



Raising the Tibetan flag in Milton Keynes

On 17 April, over 70 people squeezed into the Nipponzan Myohoji Buddhist Temple in Milton Keynes to watch the Tibetan flag being raised by the local mayor, Councillor Keith McLean, to the sound of the Tibetan national anthem. The day was filled with a number of activities including speeches from Chonpel Tsering, His Holiness the Dalai Lama's representative, and Kunchok Nyima, a Tibetan living in the UK. The event closed with a film screening and guests signing a birthday card to the 11th Panchen Lama.

From top: Celebrating Tibet in Milton Keynes; students' Tibet display, Netherlands; Rewalsar, India.

Raising awareness in the Netherlands

A group of six students from Sint Lucas College in Boxtel, Netherlands, held a Free Tibet stall at their college's annual cultural market. Sint Lucas is an educational institution dedicated to design and marketing. The students brought together their skills to create and display a series of poster designs to raise awareness of Tibet amongst their student body.



Talking about the lives of Tibetan women in exile

In March, Rowena Field from the York Tibet Support Group gave a talk for International Women's Week in which she discussed her experiences of working with exiled Tibetans in Rewalsar, northern India. For several years Rowena has worked on a project that provides financial support to members of the community, including children, the elderly, monks and nuns. The support helps them pay for their day-to-day living costs. It also helps members of the community buy medicine or train to find work. Rowena also brought back stories about the people she met and the challenges they faced living in exile.

You can read a blog by Rowena on the work she did during her trip, and the stories of the Tibetans that she met, on our website at www.freetibet.org/news



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

This year, on 10 March, Free Tibet marked Tibetan Uprising Day by attending a series of events. The day began with a wreath-laying ceremony at Westminster Abbey, to remember the victims who have lost their lives since the beginning of China's occupation of Tibet. This was followed by a protest held outside the Chinese Embassy building in London and a peace march through central London to Westminster Cathedral Hall, where a commemoration event took place including speeches and Tibetan cultural performances organised by the Tibetan Community in Britain.

On 12 March, Free Tibet held a Tibetan Uprising Day commemorative event at Regent Hall, London. Speakers included Lobsang Tsering, nephew of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche who died under suspicious circumstances last summer after 13 years of enduring torture in a Chinese prison.

The event also featured the screening of the short film 'Tibet Now', a display of Free Tibet's Robed Resisters campaign, as well as artwork from Tibetan children in exile, contributed by the Tibet Relief Fund.

We are delighted to welcome new Mi Tse supporters: Elaine Woodcock and Vera Baldwin



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