

FREE TIBET

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**free
TIBET**

• Land of the Unfree • Beyond Belief • Grand Theft Tibet • Destroying Heaven •

“ I might joyfully and voluntarily serve my sentence, but I never want to be a person without regard for the lives of his brothers and sisters. Come to that, I would do the same for our Chinese brothers and sisters.”

Shokjang – jailed Tibetan writer



Free Tibet Director
Eleanor Byrne-Rosengren

Dear friends

I've recently returned from the Seventh International Conference of Tibet Support Groups, which was held in Brussels during September. It was wonderful to have Tibet supporters and campaigners from so many different parts of the world coming together in one place and there was a real sense of energy throughout the event. There were plenary sessions, academic lectures, campaign planning workshops and a little time for networking. One of the things that came out of the conference was a collective sense of the need for urgent action on Larung Gar.

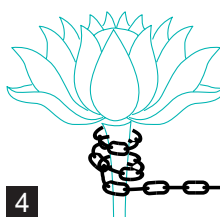
One of the largest Buddhist institutions in the world – and some would say also one of the most beautiful – Larung Gar has recently been subject to demolition and evictions ordered by the Chinese government. You can read the full story on page 13. The image of Larung Gar featured on the front cover of this magazine captures a peaceful moment before any of the current troubles and is also available on our Christmas cards. Like all of our merchandise, the proceeds from the sale of Christmas cards help to fund our vital campaigning work. Over the next few months, Free Tibet will be working with a couple of

partner organisations to lead international action against the demolitions and try to protect this site, which is treasured by so many Tibetans.

All of the information which we have on Larung Gar has come to us from our partners in the Tibet Watch research team. Tibet Watch is celebrating its 10th Anniversary this year and events will be taking place in both London and Dharamsala to commemorate the occasion. The relationship between Free Tibet and Tibet Watch is one of the key drivers behind our ability to campaign effectively and we're all looking forward to celebrating with them.

We're also looking forward to all of the campaigns and activity we have planned over the next few months. This will include seeing our third 'Land of the Unfree' billboard go up in London in November.

Contents



4

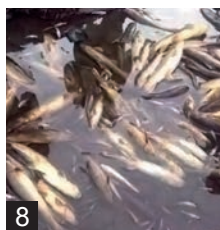
3 Land of the Unfree
Our new billboard campaign in New York and London

4 Beyond Belief
China's grip on religion in Tibet

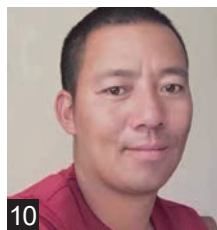
6 Tea for Tibet
Put the kettle on and raise funds!

7 Interview with Nyima Lhamo
Tenzin Delek Rinpoche's niece talks to us about leaving Tibet

8 Grand Theft Tibet
Environmental destruction in Tibet



8



10

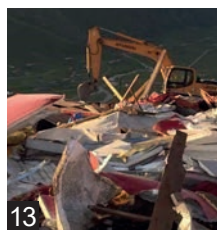
10 News Update
Khenpo Kartse released; All-women protest; US President meets the Dalai Lama again; Lomig and Shokjang

12 Campaigns Update
Tashi Wangchuk; Report urges policy change; Robed Resisters

13 Destroying Heaven
Larung Gar monastery in ruins

14 Letters

15 Supporter activities



13



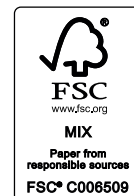
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Our vision is a free Tibet in which Tibetans are able to determine their own future and the human rights of all are respected.

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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Front cover photo:
Larung Gar Buddhist Academy
© Boonchet Ch / Getty Images





Land of the Unfree

Free Tibet's billboard campaign in New York and London.

Our billboard in Times Square (top) and Brixton (below).



Earlier this year, Free Tibet decided to try a new kind of fundraising project in order to raise money for something big. Something we couldn't have afforded to do on our own otherwise. We decided to try crowdfunding.

For those not familiar, crowdfunding involves asking a large amount of people to each donate a small amount of money towards a project. It is a relatively new, but potentially very powerful, way of reaching out to people who are excited about your project and want to invest in it.

Using the website Indiegogo we set out to raise money for a billboard campaign, the centerpiece of which would be placed in Times Square, New York. We gave ourselves just two weeks to raise the minimum \$6,000 USD we would need to buy a single placing in the world-famous New York tourist destination. However, we hoped we would exceed this target and planned to use any extra money to fund further billboards internationally.

The billboards show a map of Tibet made up of faces of people living in occupied Tibet who have carried out protests or other acts of resistance. Suggestions for who to include on the billboards

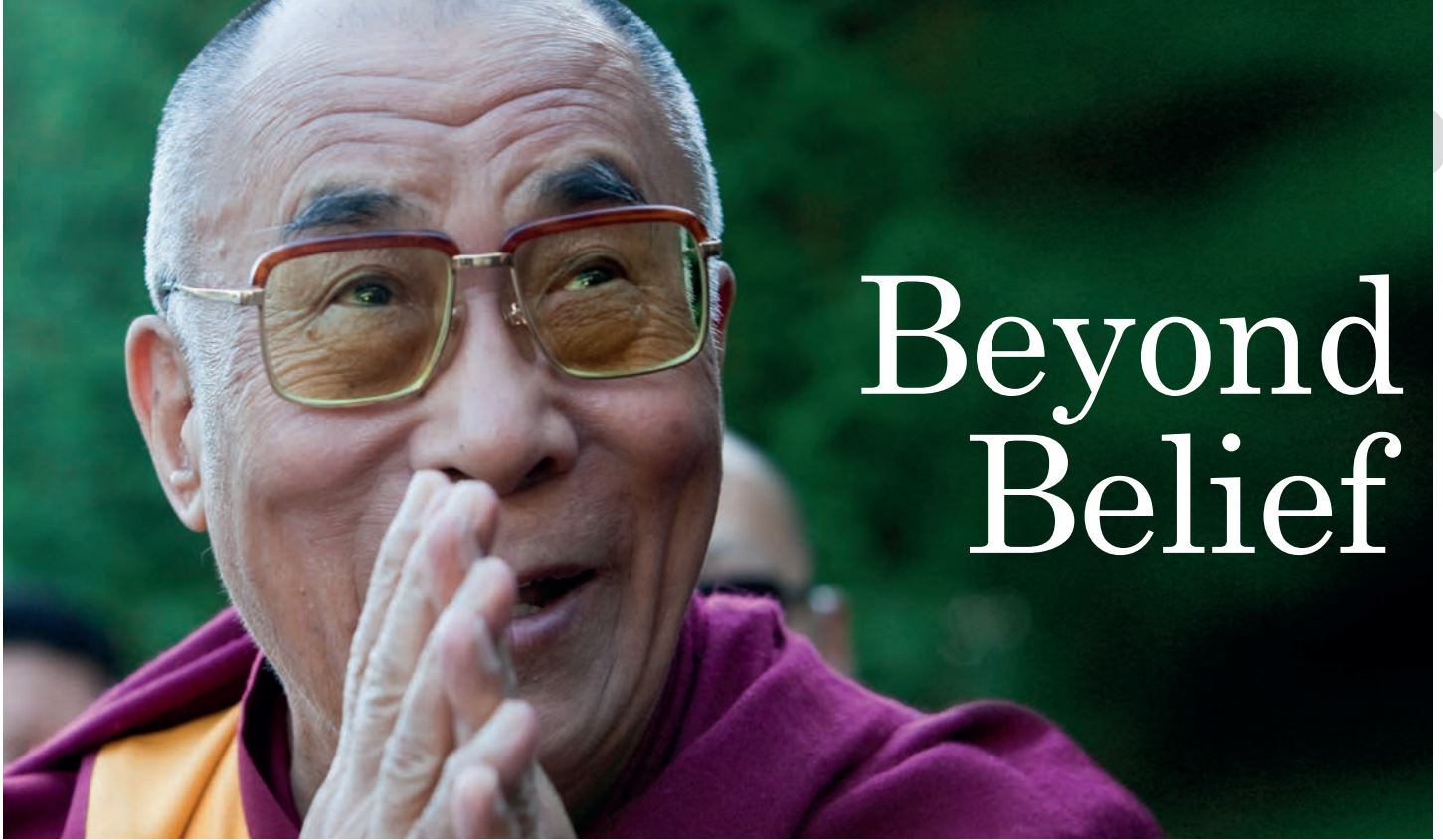
were provided by those who donated to the project. The overlaying text simply reads "Land of the Unfree". We hope the billboards will help to raise public awareness about Tibet, the occupation its people live under and the ongoing Tibetan resistance to Chinese rule and human rights abuses.

Thanks to our incredibly generous supporters we raised almost \$8,000, which was enough to not only secure our New York spot but also place two more billboards in London.

The Times Square billboard ran for two weeks in August, placing the issue of Tibet in front of the 360,000 pedestrians who pass through every day. A second billboard ran concurrently outside the busy Brixton Station in London and yet another London billboard is due to go up on the iconic Camden High Street during November.

As it turns out, August was a particularly good time to put our billboard in Times Square as the Chinese government had also bought space there. They used it to play a three-minute-long propaganda video on constant rotation. The video hit back at an international tribunal that in June rejected China's claims to territory in the heavily-contested South China Sea.

Thank you again to everyone who supported us throughout this campaign. With your help, we will continue to fight for Tibet until it is a Land of the Free.



Beyond Belief

Free Tibet's campaign to break China's grip on religion in Tibet.

On 21 July the Panchen Lama, the second highest religious authority in Tibet, stood beneath the rain outside Shigatse's historic Tashi Lhunpo Monastery and began to conduct the Kalachakra ceremony. This was the first time in over 50 years that the Kalachakra, one of the most venerated religious rituals in Tibetan Buddhism, was being conducted in the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region and the organisers rose to the occasion. Four giant LED screens and a speaker system beamed the sights and sounds of the four-day ritual to the audience of 50,000 Buddhists, many of whom had travelled great distances to attend the ritual, which they believe would activate the seed of enlightenment lying dormant in each of them. Such a historic occasion should have been a landmark in Tibet's history, but there was one problem – the man presiding over this ritual was not the Panchen Lama.

The real Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, has been missing for 21 years, having been abducted in 1995 while Beijing installed its own handpicked Panchen Lama, Gyaltsen Norbu. The son of Communist Party officials, Gyaltsen Norbu was raised in Beijing and has rarely visited Tibet. Tibetans refer to him as the “fake” Panchen Lama or Chinese Panchen Lama. However, when he arrived at the Panchen Lama's traditional residence in Shigatse last month to assume the biggest religious role yet granted to him, he was fulfilling the destiny that had been envisaged for him over two decades ago and staking his claim as the highest Buddhist authority in Tibet.

The two decades which Beijing has spent carefully nurturing the Chinese Panchen Lama raises an apparent contradiction: why would the avowedly atheist Chinese government take

such a keen interest in the religious affairs of six million Tibetans?

The reason is that Beijing understands the importance of religion to Tibetans and the role it plays in their resistance to Chinese occupation. Tibet's Buddhist monks and nuns are key figures in the resistance due to their role as community leaders and the central role that Tibetan Buddhism has played throughout Tibet's history. The leaders and institutions of Tibetan Buddhism offer an alternative to the authority of a regime that tolerates no opposition or dissent. Subduing monasteries, monks and nuns and controlling how Tibetans practice their religion is central to China's plans for eliminating Tibetan resistance. The Chinese government wants to co-opt Tibetan Buddhism, and it plans to go right to the top.

A thorn in Beijing's side

For China, Tibetans' loyalty to Tenzin Gyatso, the 14th Dalai Lama, is a threat to its rule. From exile he has continued to inspire peaceful resistance to China's occupation and human rights abuses, and has kept the Tibetan cause alive on the international stage. Beijing has responded by demonising him. Recently this has included equating him with Saddam Hussein and claiming he supports Islamic State. Inside Tibet, China has punished Tibetans for owning portraits of the Dalai Lama or calling for his long life and return to Tibet. But what China really wants to do is replace him.

China's atheist government already claims exclusive control over all matters of reincarnation in Tibetan Buddhism. In 2007 it decided that all reincarnations would be determined by the State Administration for Religious Affairs and stipulated that all “reincarnate lamas” would

The Dalai Lama has made it clear that only he and Buddhist authorities can determine how his successor will be chosen.

have to be registered and approved by the state. One Communist Party official after another has asserted that when the time comes to choose the next Dalai Lama this responsibility will not be a matter for Tibet's Buddhists, it will be a decision for Beijing alone.

The Dalai Lama has made it clear that only he and Buddhist authorities can determine how his successor will be chosen. He has long been committed to consulting with religious authorities and Tibetans to determine his succession and has even suggested that he might not reincarnate at all and will be the final Dalai Lama. Beijing has described his position as "blasphemy" and a "betrayal". He will reincarnate, they say, and he will reincarnate into the man that they want him to be.

A Dalai Lama selected by Beijing will not be expected to develop any of the spiritual or intellectual qualities traditionally associated with the role. Beijing wants someone compliant, hoping that by selecting a puppet religious leader it will neutralise the political opposition from Tibetans devoted to the Dalai Lama and also undermine the authority and stature of his legitimate successor.

What we can do

China's political interference in religious affairs demands a political, as well as a religious, response. For this reason, Free Tibet has launched its Beyond Belief campaign to mobilise support for this fundamental aspect of religious freedom. The campaign asks Free Tibet's supporters to express their support for the Dalai Lama's position: that the right to choose his successor is a matter for Tibetan Buddhists, not something to be dictated to them by Beijing. Free Tibet will take this public show of support to world leaders, who have often been all too willing to turn a blind eye to Beijing's human rights abuses in Tibet, and all too fearful of the diplomatic implications of meeting the Dalai Lama. They do not question the position and authority of the current Dalai Lama as the leader of Tibetan



Buddhism, but a future Dalai Lama manufactured by China would present them with a severe dilemma: offend China by rejecting their candidate or offend natural justice by accepting him.

The Beyond Belief campaign will give these leaders an opportunity to show their support for freedom of religion and Tibet's beleaguered Buddhists by saying now that they will do the right thing. Free Tibet is campaigning for governments to state clearly that they will not dignify such a choice with recognition or an audience with their officials. Free Tibet believes that any government making such a statement will be taking concrete action to support Tibetans when this pivotal moment in their history comes.

So far, over 9,700 Free Tibet supporters have signed the statement. This amazing response has been echoed by MPs, religious groups and human rights organisations. Free Tibet is hoping for further support from people of all religious backgrounds, creating a united front that will make it clear to Beijing that its carefully constructed plans to control Tibetan Buddhism will fail, and also let Tibetans know that the world is on their side and that they can look forward to the future with hope.

Action

Learn more about the Beyond Belief campaign, and add your name to our action, at: www.freetibet.org/beyond-belief



Thank you for your support and generosity.

660

of you gave to our Beyond Belief appeal

9,700

petition signatures calling for religious freedom in Tibet

£15,503

amount given to the appeal



November 2016 is all about Tea for Tibet.

Put the kettle on, bake a cake and raise some money for Free Tibet. Simple!

Our new initiative is a tea-riffic way to get involved. It's a great chance to catch up over a cuppa and a slice of something delicious in support of Tibet. The money you raise will directly contribute to our vital campaigning work.

Your Tea for Tibet can be intimate or elaborate. You can host it at home, at work, at university or at a local venue (e.g. a library). You could organise one with a Free Tibet local group, or open it up to the public. You could have a traditional tea party, serve up some Tibetan specialities or host it in a local pub and serve cocktails with your cupcakes. You could charge a fee for attending, or sell items separately. The possibilities are endless.

To register your Tea for Tibet or to find out more, call Kavita on 020 7324 4615 or send her an email at Kavita@freetibet.org.

You'll receive a Tea for Tibet pack (including Free Tibet flyers, magazines, badges and a flag).

Read more on our website:
www.freetibet.org/teafortibet

Free Tibet staff enjoy a cuppa.



Interview with Nyima Lhamo



Nyima Lhamo arrived in Dharamsala on 24 July after an 18-day journey from Tibet. The niece of the late Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, she had taken the risk of crossing into India in order to be able to speak freely about her uncle and to seek justice for his death.

Tenzin Delek Rinpoche was one of Tibet's most high profile political prisoners and was in the 13th year of a 20-year sentence at the time of his death. There was considerable international concern about his health while in custody and various national governments made interventions as well as NGOs. However, all requests for medical parole were denied.

Upon her arrival in Dharamsala, Nyima Lhamo was formally welcomed by staff from the Gu-Chu-Sum Movement Association of Tibet, the Tibetan organisation for former political prisoners. A few days later she spoke at a press conference organised by the Department of Information and International Relations of the Central Tibetan Administration, Tibet's government in exile. She also spoke exclusively to the Tibet Watch field team.

"When I received my mother's call telling me my uncle had died, it was 12 July – the same day that it happened. My mother and aunt were already in Chengdu. They had been made to wait there for 10 days. It was like the big sky above was completely enveloped by dark clouds. That kind of finality is what I felt. The sense of loss was very strong."

Nyima Lhamo spoke openly about her relationship with her uncle and her emotions when she learned of his death. She also spoke about his importance to the local community and beyond, the value of his spiritual guidance but also his activism and humanitarian work. She provided fresh insight into the community response to his death and also the local government's reaction. She spoke candidly

of the difficulties she faced in travelling to Chengdu to join her mother and pay her last respects to her uncle.

"Orthok had already turned chaotic and protests had started. No vehicles were being allowed on the roads except for two wheeled motorbikes. They had put up barricades on the roads. I requested a bike rider to take me on their bike. So that way, I reached Orthok. From Orthok, I was accompanied by some monks to Nyagchuka. I had to act like I was not well so I pretended to be sick, since they wouldn't let anyone else pass through."

Nyima Lhamo faced a fresh set of challenges once she reached Chengdu. The police were initially unwilling to let her or any other relatives see Tenzin Delek Rinpoche's body and refused to provide any information about his death. It took a series of protests and appeals to change their minds.

"It was early morning of 16 July when we were finally allowed to go and see my uncle's body. The police took us there by car. I can't say exactly where it was but it took 4-5 hours to get there.

It was on a very high mountain top, at great altitude. It seemed like a cliff at first. The area was very steep and dangerous but still it was surrounded by police on all sides. ... So it was clear my uncle wasn't kept at the prison. They picked an isolated place and that's where they kept him."

In addition to speaking about her uncle, Nyima Lhamo talked about how she and her mother were arrested for sharing information with the outside world. Despite this she continued to send out information whenever possible. Finally she felt compelled to cross the border so she could share the truth in person.

The full report of Tibet Watch's interview with Nyima Lhamo is available on the Tibet Watch website: www.tibetwatch.org/reports

GRAND THEFT TIBET



Free Tibet hits back against the raid on Tibet's resources.

Imagine that the government decides a mine is to be built outside your home and you are powerless to stop it. You could even be arrested for speaking out against it. Assuming you aren't forced to move, you might begin to see your surroundings change drastically. Within the following weeks the place you call home is now full of giant holes, the water that you use to shower is diverted and your neighbours are getting sick from the fumes in the air, the industrial chemicals in their drinking water and the strange taste of their food.

Tibetans have faced all of these problems and more. Their environment, famously beautiful but also rich in minerals and raw materials, has been turned into a battleground between Tibetan communities who have stewarded the land for generations and the occupying Chinese authorities, hungry for resources.

The Chinese government has made no secret of its plans for these resources. Tibet's coal helps feed China's massive demand for fuel and its copper is used in the production of vehicles and electric cables. Vast deposits of precious metals like gold and silver are extracted through mining. Tibet's rivers, flowing from the roof of the world down into surrounding countries in south and south-east Asia, are a useful source of hydroelectric power for cities in eastern China, as well as being a key strategic asset that China has over its neighbours. Water from Tibet's receding glaciers is being bottled and marketed as luxury drinking water, while salt lakes contain valuable deposits of lithium.

Tibetans, denied the opportunity to responsibly manage their own resources, do not see any of the profits from these various lucrative

enterprises and some of the mining projects have been responsible for serious environmental damage. In 2013 the mining company China Gold International dumped toxic waste in the river near to its mining site in Gyama, about 40 miles away from Lhasa. The contaminated drinking water made local residents sick and even killed their livestock. A gigantic coal mine by Kingho Group in north-east Tibet encroached onto a natural park, making it illegal even under Chinese law. The mine wrecked grazing, previously rolling pastures and even put Tibet's rivers at risk by cutting them off from the flow of water from its glaciers.

Despite being under occupation and subjected to intimidation, arrests and possible torture, Tibetans continue to defy authorities and oppose further mining. When toxic chemicals used by the Ganzizhou Rongda Lithium company in Dartsedo County, eastern Tibet, found their way into a nearby river in April this year, locals took action. This was at least the third time that the site had leaked, killing fish and farm animals belonging to the local community. The residents protested to the local government and faced down a large and intimidating police presence, securing a temporary halt to Ganzizhou Rongda Lithium's extraction.

Tibetans refuse to tolerate this social and environmental destruction, and so do Free Tibet and its supporters. That is why we launched our Grand Theft Tibet campaign to resist this rampant regime of extraction. The campaign aims to highlight the damage caused by the theft of Tibet's resources and push back by targeting international companies that are involved. The campaign currently has two principal areas of focus: bottled water and lithium.

Bottled water: Profiting from purity

Water from Tibet's streams, or even straight from its glaciers, has become a valuable commodity in China, where bottled Tibetan water is now marketed as a high-end product and advertised as being spiritually and environmentally pure. After the Chinese government licenced a massive expansion of the water bottling industry, bottling companies surged into Tibet. In 2014 16 Chinese companies signed a deal with the regional government of the Tibet Autonomous Region in 2014 as part of the Chinese government's "Sharing Tibet's Water with the World" initiative. The expansion in production, which Beijing hopes will see ten million tonnes of bottled water produced by 2025, is being supported through large tax breaks for bottling companies and a lower extraction fee for Tibetan water than elsewhere in China.

Chinese companies are now taking water from different parts of the Tibetan Plateau, often with little regard for the environmental consequences or the rights of the Tibetan people from whom it is taken. Free Tibet has discovered that one of the companies is bottling water from a nature reserve, while another has been granted the right to ban grazing within 60 kilometres of its source spring.

We have also established that the industry is being supported by western investors, who own millions of shares in Hong Kong-based Tibet Water Resources Ltd (TWRL). TWRL produces the high-end Tibet Spring 5100 brand and has strong links with the Communist Party of China. We have contacted all the major shareholders in TWRL to demand they sell their shares – so far, one has confirmed that it no longer holds shares.

We launched the bottled water campaign with a protest outside the London office of BlackRock, a multinational investment company. The protests attracted a great deal of attention from workers in the City of London, including a few sympathetic responses from BlackRock's own employees. Almost 2,000 Free Tibet supporters have contacted BlackRock to demand it sell its shares, though, at the time of writing, it has yet to respond.

Lithium: The new oil

Once thought to be worthless, lithium can now be found in rechargeable batteries in laptops, cameras and phones. Lithium ion-batteries are also a key source of power for electric vehicles, the production of which has shot up to meet rapidly-expanding markets around the world. It is little wonder that lithium is talked about these days as being the "new oil".

The salt lakes across Tibet contain some of the largest reserves of lithium in the world. One of them, Chabyer Tsaka, is particularly precious

for its natural deposits of lithium carbonate. In 2010 the Chinese electric battery and vehicle manufacturer BYD acquired a 20-year lease over the lake, effectively gifting the company its own ready supply of lithium.

BYD's acquisition of Chabyer Tsaka could only take place with the assistance of the occupying Chinese government, who have also promoted BYD heavily abroad. Chinese President Xi Jinping has accompanied BYD's director on state visits to Brazil and the UK. During his state visit to London last October he posed next to a BYD prototype electric double decker bus alongside the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge.

Transport authorities in 40 countries have purchased BYD electric buses. In August, London's transport authority, Transport for London (TfL), acquired 51 new BYD single decker buses to run on two of its routes in the city centre. In June, Free Tibet wrote to TfL, urging them to halt further orders of BYD buses, while more than 1,000 Free Tibet supporters contacted them via our website. In response, TfL have told us they conducted "an urgent investigation" which established that these buses do not appear to contain lithium from Tibet. They did not, however, address our concerns about BYD's actions in Tibet and, at the time of writing, we are preparing to apply political pressure on the Mayor of London, who has ultimate responsibility for transport in the city.



Above: Free Tibet protest outside BlackRock's office in London; Tibetans protest against a new power plant on grazing land in Ngaba.
Below: Dead fish near mining site in Dartsedo County, early 2016; Extraction site in the Gyama valley.



News update...

Khenpo Kartse released

The religious leader and high-profile political prisoner Karma Tsewang, commonly known by his title Khenpo Kartse, was released in June this year after serving a two-and-a-half year sentence. Free Tibet campaigned for his release after his arrest in December 2013.

An abbot from Japa monastery in Yushu County, Khenpo Kartse is widely popular among Tibetans for his Buddhist teaching, community work, environmental activism and promotion of the Tibetan language. He was arrested in December 2013 and charged with harbouring fugitive Tibetan monks wanted by the Chinese police. His arrest sparked major local protests and international attention. Pressure from international actors, including Free Tibet, is likely to have contributed to him receiving a relatively short prison sentence.

Khenpo Kartse has been under surveillance since his release and is required to stay with a relative in Yushu. He is prohibited from returning to his monastery. He released a photo of himself on social media and a poem, thanking those that were concerned about him and assuring them that he is now in good health. His condition had deteriorated during his time in prison, with reports that he was being denied essential medication.



Khenpo Kartse after his release, June 2016.

President Obama meets the Dalai Lama again

With so many nations kowtowing to China by refusing to meet the Dalai Lama, or even allow him into their country, it sent a strongly positive message worldwide that the USA's President Obama met with the Dalai Lama this June. Concerns over human rights and environmental damage were discussed in President Obama's fourth meeting with the Dalai Lama. The meeting was seen as broadly symbolic of US support for Tibetan culture and for progress in resolving the political situation in Tibet, although there was no notable change in the US stance on sovereignty, with the US government continuing to maintain that Tibet is a part of China. During the meeting, President Obama expressed support for the Dalai Lama's "efforts to raise awareness of the importance of limiting global warming, including to protect the Himalayan glaciers and the environment on the Tibetan plateau."



PETE SOUZA

President Obama greets the Dalai Lama, June 2016.

All-women protest in central Tibet

In June, around 100 women in Lhundrub County, about 45 miles north-east of Lhasa, held a peaceful demonstration against a government land grab. The protests were in response to a construction project threatening farmland around Gaden Chonkhor Township. The seizure of Tibetan land is a regular source of protest. The protesters were endeavouring to ensure the action was peaceful by keeping it strictly women-only, in the belief that the Chinese police would react more violently to a protest involving men. A further tactic was their holding a Chinese flag and a large photograph of the Chinese leadership, to highlight the failure of local authorities to respect their own environmental laws. There were no arrests or violence. Free Tibet is awaiting further news on whether the land grab has been averted.

...News update

Lomig and Shokjang

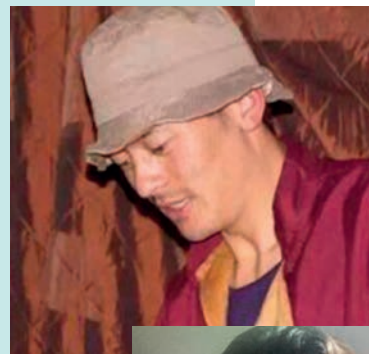
The Tibetan writer Jo Lobsang Jamyang, also known by his pen name Lomig, was sentenced to seven and a half years in prison in May. The precise date and circumstances of the sentencing are unknown, although the family of Lomig, 28, understand that he has been convicted of “sharing government secrets and attempting to divide the nation”. Neither his family members nor lawyer were allowed to be present for the verdict, which was handed down by Wenchuan People’s Court near Chengdu, Sichuan Province, over a year after his arrest in April 2015. During his detention, Lomig was moved between several secret detention centres where he was interrogated and tortured.

Prior to his arrest, Lomig was a popular and influential writer and was especially influential among young Tibetans. He wrote articles, gave talks and organised debates highlighting the grievances and plight of Tibetan people. Lomig was a critic of Chinese government policies in Tibet and wrote about the 2008 Tibetan uprising, environmental destruction and restrictions on freedom of expression. Local Tibetans believe that his writing and other activities were the real cause of his arrest.

The writer Druklo, known by his pen name Shokjang, also remains in prison, having been found guilty of “inciting separatism” and “disturbing social stability” in February this year. Shokjang appealed against his three-year prison sentence in April, writing a letter from his place of detention in Rebkong County, eastern Tibet. The appeal is a 12-page letter, handwritten in Tibetan and addressed to the Higher People’s Court of China’s Qinghai Province.

In the letter Shokjang argues that he is innocent and that the charges against him bear no relation to his writing: “If one talks about instigating separatism, I have not written even a word of separatism, much less instigated it. If I write about an incident in which I suffered harm, and that becomes an unfounded accusation against me, and I write an appeal to the court about the incident, that does not make me a separatist.”

Visit www.freetibet.org/news for the latest news for Tibet



Top: Lomig;
Below: Shokjang.

Celebrating a loved one

Donating in memory is a unique and touching way to remember someone special by honouring their life and supporting a cause that was important to them. The memory of your loved one will live on, fluttering in the wind of the Himalayas.

Give £100/\$140/€120 or more and a personalised prayer flag will be stitched and hung in the beautiful landscape of Dharamkot in Dharamsala, India – an auspicious place for Tibetans. You will also receive a picture of the flag. The flags are taken to be blessed by Buddhist monks and hung by Kunkey, a member of Free Tibet’s Dharamsala-based partner organisation Tibet Watch.

To donate in memory via phone, with a credit or debit card, please call Kavita on 020 7324 4615. Alternatively, send a cheque with your personalised message to Free Tibet, Grayston Centre, 28 Charles Square, London, N1 6HT. You can also donate online at www.freetibet.org/support/in-memory. If you have any questions please email Kavita@freetibet.org.



Campaigns update...

Tashi Wangchuk

Free Tibet has continued to campaign on behalf of the detained businessman and language advocate Tashi Wangchuk. Tashi Wangchuk, who featured in the last magazine, was arrested in January this year, one month after appearing in a short documentary by the New York Times about his quest to petition Chinese authorities to provide Tibetan language teaching. Tashi Wangchuk had started his campaign after worrying that his niece and other Tibetan children would not reach fluency in their native language following the forced cancellation of Tibetan classes in a local monastery.

Tashi Wangchuk went missing for two months after his arrest, but Free Tibet has since found out that he is being held in a detention centre in Yushu, eastern Tibet. He has been charged with “inciting separatism”, despite taking pains throughout his campaign not to criticise the Chinese government or demand Tibetan independence.

Over 2,000 Free Tibet supporters wrote to their foreign ministries, urging them to put pressure on their Chinese counterparts to guarantee his release from detention, and the governments of Germany and the United Kingdom have agreed to raise his case. The European Union has instructed its Chinese missions to follow the case and both the EU and Australia are considering raising his case in their forthcoming Human Rights Dialogues with China.

We have also collected over 350 messages of support from across the world, which have now been sent to Yushu detention centre. Free Tibet continues to follow his case.

New report urges policy change

A new report released this June calls on the UK government to take a far more robust stance with China on human rights. The Conservative Party Human Rights Commission’s report, *The Darkest Moment: The Crackdown on Human Rights in China 2013-2016*, highlights the sharp downturn in the human rights situation in China during the first three years of President Xi Jinping’s rule. The report also criticises the failure of the UK government to sufficiently raise concerns about human rights abuses with China. At the launch, the former Governor of Hong Kong and senior Conservative

politician Lord Patten heaped scorn on the idea that “kowtowing” to China is necessary to promote trade, describing it as “demonstrable drivel”.

Free Tibet contributed extensive evidence to the commission’s report, a large amount of which was incorporated into the report in a section devoted to Tibet. The section concludes by directly quoting Free Tibet’s submission, noting China’s current “effectiveness in implementing policies that have [...] restricted Tibetans’ ability to express opposition to its rule in both private and public spheres”.

The Commission calls on the UK government to place human rights at the centre of the UK’s relationship with China. It puts forward 22 recommendations including pursuing dialogue with the Dalai Lama, which China has hitherto strenuously avoided.

Robed Resisters

Our Robed Resisters campaign to show solidarity with Tibet’s imprisoned monks and nuns continues, with three new

cases since our last magazine. In June, thousands of supporters wrote to authorities calling on them to release the imprisoned monk Lomig, who you can learn more about in the news section of this magazine. In July, Free Tibet supporters wrote more than 400 solidarity messages to Sonam Lhatso, a nun who is serving a 10-year prison sentence for her role in a demonstration in 2008. Hundreds of supporters also signed letters to the local Chinese authorities, calling on them to release her.

Our current Robed Resister is Tsewang Choephel, a monk from Nyitso Monastery in Kardze, eastern Tibet. He has been in detention since May 2015 and is still awaiting a trial. The reason for Tsewang Choephel’s arrest is unknown. His arrest might be connected to the self-immolation of Kalsang Yeshe, a fellow monk and resident of Nyitso Monastery, which Tsewang Choephel witnessed. He also took part in protests immediately afterwards.

You can learn more about our Robed Resisters and take action on their cases here: www.freetibet.org/take-action/religious-political-prisoners



Our social media has reached some pretty exciting milestones in the last few months. Keep up with us on Facebook and Twitter and help us share information on Tibet with even more people!

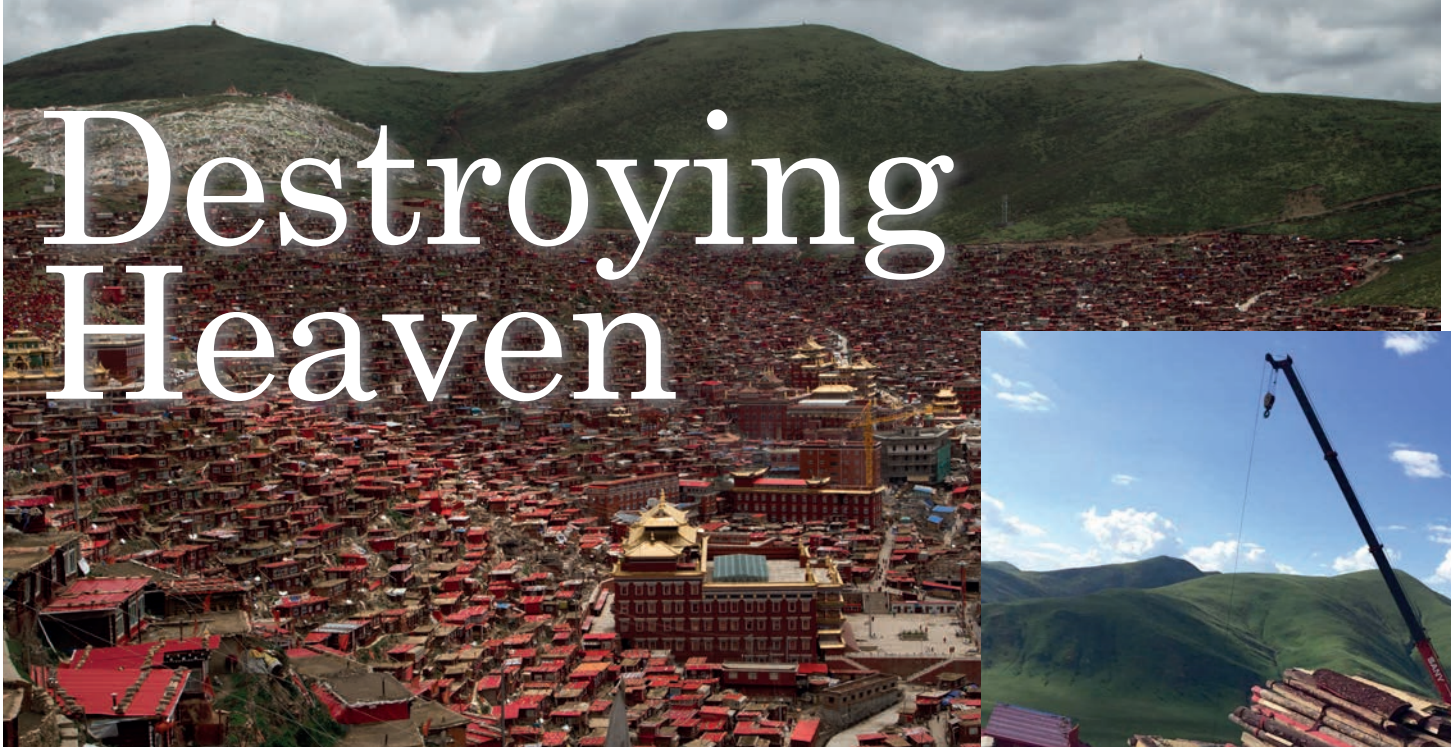
150k
followers on
Facebook

750k
the number of times our
‘Tibet – Know the Facts’
video was watched
online

44k
visits to our
website in July

16k
subscribers to our
email newsletter

Destroying Heaven



It was only a brief piece of film, a shaky panorama shot smuggled out of Tibet, eight seconds long. But the splintered wood and rubble from demolished buildings showed so much. It was the scene of wreckage from Larung Gar Monastery after the first round of demolition had taken place. Part of the largest centre of Tibetan Buddhist teaching in the world was now in ruins.

The demolition work began at eight in the morning on 20 July. A Chinese work team made its way to the site, located across a scenic cluster of hills in Sertar County, eastern Tibet. They were accompanied by government officials, police and security forces. They brought digging equipment and trucks, and laid down signs warning the inhabitants not to trespass. Then they set to work.

It was a knife to the heart of its residents, who were not consulted about the demolitions and removals, nor provided with any explanation for them before they took place. It was also extremely distressing to people across Tibet, who revere the site. “This very day of destroying heaven, the pain and hurt at my heart comes from deep inside with ceaseless tears”, wrote one Tibetan.

The demolitions were part of a plan, announced by the local authorities in Sertar County in June, to cut the population of the monastery in half, from 10,000 to 5,000, by late 2017. Every few months there would be targets to meet in terms of people to remove and buildings to demolish. The next target is October this year, when 1,200 people need to be removed. Penalties have been devised if these deadlines are not met, such as additional, punitive removals and even the razing to the ground of the entire site.

Renovated into rubble

Chinese authorities have sought to justify the demolitions and removals, claiming that they are essential measures to ease the overcrowding at Larung Gar. One of the residents questioned the logic, saying: “If its only option to solve the over population is destroying the houses then why is the same policy not implemented in the Chinese cities and towns where population is overcrowded? Where is the equality, rule by law, public welfare, religious freedom and equal rights of all nationalities?”

Above: Larung Gar monastery;
Right: Destruction of homes.



The authorities have also claimed they are renovating the monastery. Tibetans have heard this story before – in November 2015, 106 nuns from a nunnery in Driru County were forced from their residences out into the cold winter and left

to search for new accommodation, clearing the way for local authorities to carry out renovation work that nobody in the nunnery had asked for. The emptied residences were then destroyed with digging equipment.

The US state department has already expressed concern and there has been widespread anger and sadness in response to the demolitions, with Free Tibet’s reporting on the issue receiving extensive international coverage. Free Tibet supporters have also shared the reports widely on social media, expressing outrage at the devastation of Tibet’s history and culture.



Action

Support our campaign to halt removals before the October deadline.

Visit www.freetibet.org/urgent-action-larung-gar-buddhist-academy to sign our petition, contact a Chinese Embassy or write to your Foreign Minister.

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 – just wondering if you had any images for making protest banners? I’ve been searching the internet but haven’t had any luck. There’s a high-ranking government official staying in my town so if it had the correct Chinese characters that would be good.

Thanks. Identity withheld

Hi! Thanks for taking the initiative to do this. It is a great way to show Chinese authorities that Tibet is not being forgotten about. We don’t have any stock images we can send over, however, if you give the office a call (details on inside of the front cover) we can help you decide what the sign should say and one of our team will be able to translate it into Chinese. We can then email this over, or print it out and post it to you.

If you would like to take leaflets with you, we have a pdf of our ‘Know the Facts’ leaflet on our website here: www.freetibet.org/take-action/local, or we can send you leaflets in the post. We are always happy to help supporters take action in any way we can, so do let us know if there’s anything else we can help with.

Wasn’t there a time when Tibet actually ruled China? Around the Mongol times? Identity withheld.

As we currently define the two countries, Tibet has never ruled China. However, parts of what are now China fell within the territory of the Tibetan Empire during the 7th – 9th Centuries AD. Tibet was later incorporated into Mongol territory in the 13th Century, although much of it remained outside the direct bureaucratic control of the Mongol Empire.

Thanks for a great evening on Friday at the Summer Shindig. It was a lovely and interesting event. I’m sure a lot of hard work went into its planning and execution.

Warmest good wishes, Honey

Hi Honey, I’m glad to hear you had a good night. We all enjoyed it too! It’s great getting to meet up and chat with supporters and it was exciting to see lots of new people there too!



In Memory giving allows supporters to have a personalised prayer flag hung in Dharamsala in memory of a loved one (see page 11). This message came from a supporter who donated in memory of her husband.

Dear Kavita,

Thank you so much for your email and photos. As you can imagine it was quite emotional for me to see the prayer flag for my husband, and to see it hanging in Dharamsala. It means a lot to me, and I send huge thanks to all at Free Tibet who made it happen and especially to Kunkey in Dharamsala. I was very touched by her thoughtfulness and sensitivity – choosing an auspicious day, and also having the prayer flags blessed. I am also delighted that my husband’s prayer flag is blue – his favourite colour.

My husband and I spent seven weeks in Ladakh and Northern India in 2001, including about a week in Dharamsala, so seeing the prayer flag hanging there brings back many memories.

Do please pass on my most grateful thanks to Kunkey and all at Free Tibet who were involved in providing this beautiful memorial to my husband.

My very best wishes to you all.

Supporter activities

Flying Tashi the hot air balloon

Tashi the hot air balloon flew at the Bristol International Balloon Fiesta at the beginning of August and Ballonfiesta Barneveld in the Netherlands shortly afterwards. At almost 100 feet tall, Tashi is the largest Tibetan flag in the world. Images of Tashi at Bristol were featured by the BBC and the Guardian, amongst others. Meanwhile, Tashi's first flight in the Netherlands was covered in both local and international press, bringing attention to the situation in Tibet in a truly unique way.



Protest against the Chinese Ambassador in Bath

Free Tibet and the Bath Tibet Support Group teamed up on 18 May to protest the appearance of Liu Xiaoming, the Chinese Ambassador to the UK, who was giving a talk at the Bath Royal Literary and Scientific Institution. While members of the group carried out a peaceful demonstration outside the venue, a number of Tibetans and Tibet campaigners took their places among the audience for the talk.

Before the talk began, organisers requested that members of the audience remove or hide any Tibetan symbols such as scarves, t-shirts and other clothing. This seems to have been done at the ambassador's request.

In the question and answer session following the long talk, Ambassador Liu was confronted by Free Tibet's Campaigns Manager and several Tibetans, who raised questions about human rights abuses and the Panchen Lama, who is revered by Tibetans and has been missing since his abduction in 1995. The ambassador called him "just an ordinary boy", and claimed that Tibetans were now "much happier, live longer and are much freer", to which one activist retorted "not according to my family in Tibet". In an increasingly angry atmosphere, caught on film, the ambassador shouted "your cause is doomed to failure... you will never succeed. Period." Watch the full exchange here: www.freetibet.org/news-media/na/you-will-never-succeed-period



From top: Tashi at Bristol Balloon Fiesta; Protesting in Bath; Eliise cycles for Tibet.

Cycling for Tibet

One of our supporters, wanting to raise money and awareness for Tibet, set off on a journey to do just that. Cycling around her home country Estonia, she covered over 1000 kilometres and raised €506 for four Tibet support groups, including Free Tibet and Tibet Watch – Thank you Eliise!

If you would like to fundraise for Free Tibet, doing something you love like Eliise did, visit our Fundraise For Us page at www.freetibet.org/support/fundraise or contact Kavita on kavita@freetibet.org



For the latest information on activities by Tibet groups and contact details for the groups themselves, visit our local groups page 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

Free Tibet are delighted to welcome our new *Mi Tse* (life long) supporters: Allen G. Mason, Elizabeth Scott and Gayle Light.



Handmade Christmas Gifts

Browse our catalogue or visit
www.freetibet.org/shop

