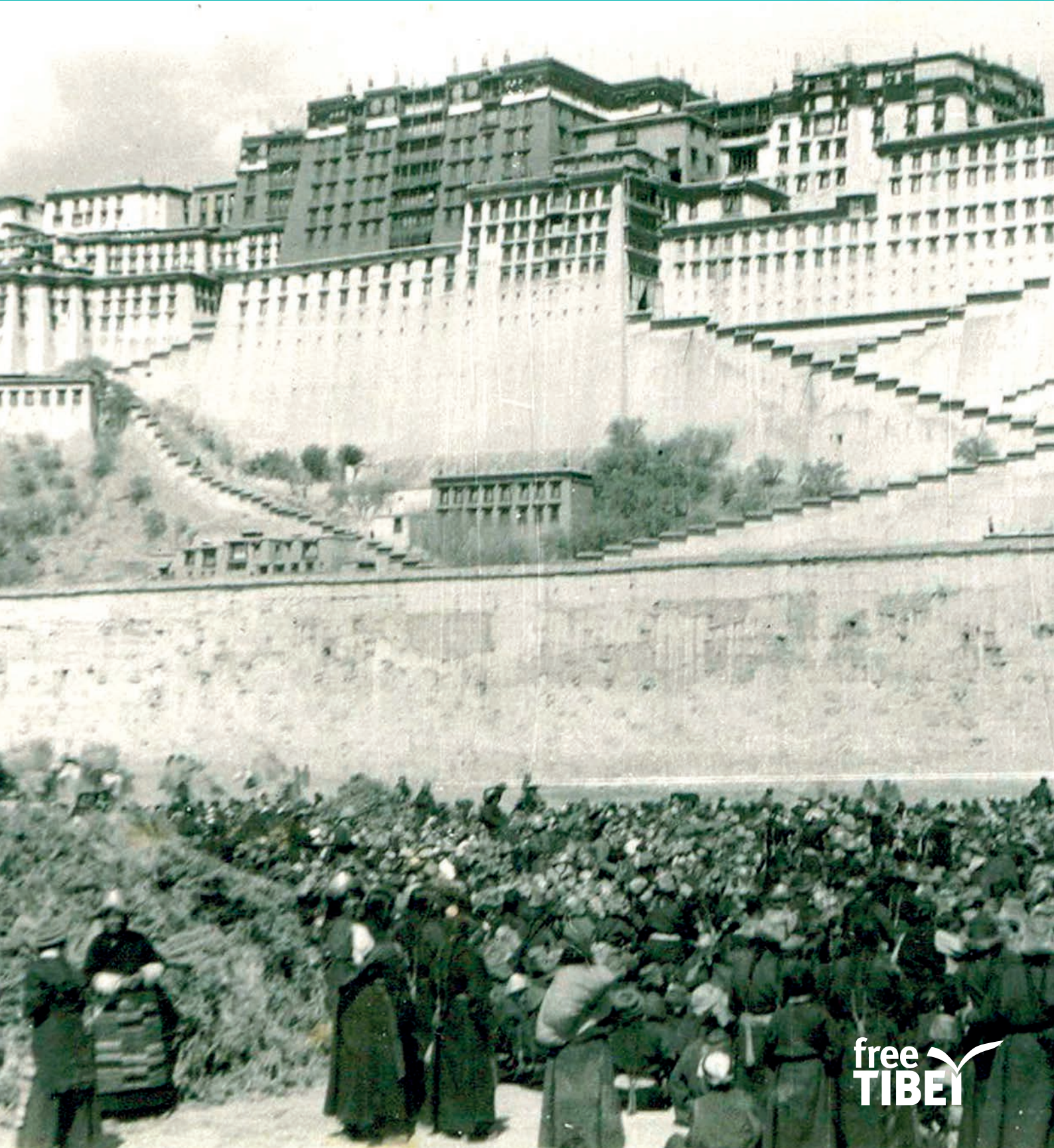


FREE TIBET

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free
TIBET

• Remembering 10 March 1959 • Premier of *The Crossing* • Taking Tibet on tour •



Free Tibet Director
Eleanor Byrne-Rosengren.

Dear friends

2018 was a strong year for us, not least because we were able to announce victory in our Liverpool FC campaign. Corporate campaigns are particularly difficult to win so we were delighted with the result. Let's hope we can repeat that success with Google! As well as having a lot to live up to in campaigning terms, 2019 is another significant anniversary year – this time the 60th anniversary of the 1959 uprising.

The anniversaries of Tibet's freedom struggle can be difficult sometimes. It's important to get the tone right. It's not as though we want to celebrate the length of the struggle – we'd much prefer it to be over. Naturally, we want to honour those who have given their lives and those who have suffered as political prisoners. But one of the more difficult and perhaps most important things to do is to communicate our belief in Tibet's future.

It's been a long time – 60 years since the uprising and almost 70 years of occupation. The number of Tibetans who remember living in a free Tibet is dwindling. Most Tibetans alive today were born in exile or

under occupation. Fortunately, this has done nothing to dim their passion for their homeland and the Tibet movement is full of bright, young Tibetans who are determined to keep fighting and campaigning, no matter what. Our job is to make sure they continue to have international support.

So let's all use this anniversary as a hook for bringing new people into the movement. Free Tibet will be organising a range of outreach activities but our supporters can play a significant role. If each of you convinced just one new person to support Tibet, the combined effort would be thousands of people and that would be amazing.

With best wishes

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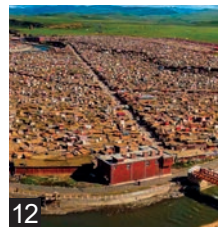
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Our vision is a free Tibet in which Tibetans are able to determine their own future and the human rights of all are respected.

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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Front cover photo:
Women at the Potala Palace
12 March 1959.



Remembering 10 March 1959

The day that
changed Tibet
forever.

On 10 March, Tibetans around the world will take to the streets to march, protest and celebrate their culture. This annual observance will take on a special significance this year, the sixtieth anniversary of the 1959 Tibetan Uprising.

When your history is as rich and fraught as Tibet's, every year seems to be an anniversary. The past few years have seen the thirtieth anniversary of the 1987 protests, which led to the formation of Free Tibet, and the tenth anniversary of the uprising of 2008, one of the most significant events in the country's recent history. The 1959 Uprising belongs in this same category. It changed everything.

Despite having invaded Tibet and overpowered its army in 1950, the Chinese Communist Party leadership had failed to force Tibetans to accept its rule and, by 1959, was facing, in the Party's own words, "nearly full-scale rebellion".

The rebellion would explode that March. The Dalai Lama was still a young man but the spiritual and political leader of Tibet. When

Chinese authorities invited him to a performance by a dance troupe at the military barracks outside of Lhasa, and insisted that he come without his bodyguards, fears spread among the Tibetan government and the Tibetan

people that a plan was in motion to abduct or possibly even assassinate him. On 10 March, thousands of Tibetans surrounded the Dalai Lama's residence, the Potala Palace, to prevent him from leaving. The protests spread and intensified over the following days.

The protests were suppressed with overwhelming force, including live gunfire and shells, resulting in the deaths of tens of thousands of Tibetans. During the protests, the Dalai Lama was able to escape from the palace, disguised as a Chinese soldier. Many believed that he had perished in the violence until news came of his successful escape to India following a 15-day trek over the Himalayas. Tens of thousands of Tibetans followed him into northern India and tens of thousands more would make the journey in years to come.

Unable to return to Tibet, the Dalai Lama has lived for the majority of his life in Dharamsala in northern India, where his worldwide reputation as an advocate for Tibetan freedom, non-violent resistance and understanding between peoples has only grown. He has overseen the creation of a democratic Tibetan government in exile and attempted to mediate a solution to Tibet's future with China.

When Tibetans gather every 10 March, they remember the Dalai Lama's journey and the sacrifice of the thousands of protesters in 1959. Next year, the anniversary that they will turn their minds to will be that of the invasion of 1950, the year that their country and their freedom were taken away. Seven decades of occupation and oppression have failed to dim Tibetans' dreams of freedom. This March, and for as long as freedom takes, we will stand with them.

L-R: Tibetans and Tibet supporters commemorate 10 March in London; The Dalai Lama (centre, sitting, in darker clothing) during his escape from Tibet to India in 1959.



Searching for answers



Google's deal with China and our plan to stop it.

Free Tibet launched a campaign in December to challenge a plan by Google to help the Chinese government censor the internet and whitewash its human rights record in Tibet.

Google have been developing a search engine called 'Dragonfly' for China since spring 2017. Dragonfly is being designed to comply with the Chinese Communist Party's repressive internet censorship laws, blocking web pages that discuss forbidden topics including 'human rights', 'democracy' and 'Tibet'. It is also set to comply with China's laws on collecting personal information of users, linking searches with personal phone numbers and other identifying data. Google executives originally denied that the project existed, but the company's chief privacy officer, Keith Enright, publicly acknowledged Dragonfly was in development during a hearing with US lawmakers about online privacy.

Google has in the past shown concern over cybersecurity and freedom of information. The company famously pulled out of China in 2010 after a hacking scandal, stating that it did not want to engage in "political censorship" and that restrictions imposed on Google's activities by the Chinese government "strike at the heart of an open internet". The Chinese authorities have not eased internet censorship in the country since. On the contrary, President Xi Jinping has called for more government control over the internet and has overseen the passage of a cybersecurity law which makes it easier for authorities to track internet users and punish them for posting prohibited content. Critics of Project Dragonfly

fear that Google's anti-censorship stance has been quietly dropped as it seeks to tap into the most populous country in the world.

The campaign launched on 10 December, Human Rights Day, with online press conferences in London and New York. Thousands of people watched the two online events, which featured speakers from Free Tibet, Tibet Action Institute, Human Rights Watch and the World Uyghur Congress. Former Google employee, Jack Poulson, also joined us to explain his opposition to the project, which prompted his resignation in 2018. Poulson is one of several current and former Google employees to voice their opposition to the project. Staff of the tech company have circulated messages of protest, leaked information and organised strikes directed at Google and its plans for Dragonfly.

The campaign has been met with a significant response. Over 50,000 people have already sent emails to Google CEO Sundar Pichai, and an international day of action in January saw protests by Tibetans and Tibet supporters outside Google offices around the world.

Since the launch of the campaign, Sundar Pichai has testified before the United States House Judiciary Committee, telling its members that "right now there are no plans to launch a search engine in China". Media reports also suggest that Google's senior executives may be preparing to shelve the project. But we are taking nothing for granted; our plan is to keep campaigning until we are sure that Google has scrapped Dragonfly once and for all, and that it has committed to a vision of a freer, fairer internet for all.

Top: A protester holding the campaign logo interrupts Google CEO Sundar Pichai's hearing before the House Judiciary Committee in December. Below: Google's former headquarters in China.



Go le

Stop Google Censorship



THE CROSSING

Free Tibet premieres new animated short film telling one Tibetan's story of her flight into exile.

In September of 2017, Free Tibet launched our most ambitious crowdfunding campaign yet – to raise £10,000 to finance an original animated short film about Tibet. We received overwhelming support and ended up with over £15,000 in funding!

Since then, we have been hard at work, engaging with writers, animators, sound designers and others to bring our vision to life. We are pleased to announce that the film is now completed and was premiered online on 19 December.

A journey into exile

Every year Tibetans make the perilous journey across the Himalayas, the world's highest mountain range, into India. They are fleeing the persecution they face in their homeland, which has been occupied by China for more than 60 years.

The Crossing follows one such Tibetan refugee as she attempts this dangerous trek and explores why she is forced to leave her country behind.



You can watch the film at: freetibet.org/thecrossing or call the office and we'll send you a DVD.

Celebrating a loved one

Donating in memory is a unique and touching way to remember someone 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 or equivalent to Tibet Watch and a personalised prayer flag will be stitched and hung in the beautiful landscape of Dharamsala, close to the Dalai Lama's residence – an auspicious place for Tibetans. You'll receive pictures of your flag before they are hung by a member of the team.

To donate in memory via phone with a credit or debit card, please call Josey on 0207 324 4614, or you can donate online at www.freetibet.org/support/in-memory. If you have any questions please email josey@tibetwatch.org



Campaigns update...

Universal Periodic Review

Thank you to all of our supporters who took action in autumn to ask their governments to speak up for Tibet at the United Nations.

In early November, China underwent its third Universal Periodic Review (UPR) at the UN Human Rights Council. At the UPR, UN member states raise specific human rights abuses directly with the country under review. Countries also make specific recommendations on how to rectify these abuses, a useful form of political pressure.

Given that the Chinese government is responsible for a huge number of human rights violations, we were keen to make sure that countries found space to raise the abuses in Tibet. In the months leading up to the review, we held meetings with the UK's Foreign Office and staff at the embassies of Denmark, France and New Zealand. We also wrote to governments around the world. We were joined by nearly 2,000 of you, who contacted your governments, urging them to raise Tibet at the review.

Our efforts paid off; at China's review in November, nine states gave particular focus to Tibet, including Australia, Denmark, France, New Zealand and the UK. The USA called on China to end its interference in the selection of religious leaders, including Tibetan Buddhist lamas, while Germany demanded that Tibetans' freedoms of expression, culture and religion be respected. 12 recommendations were issued on Tibet in total, an increase on China's previous review in 2013, when 11 recommendations were issued mentioning Tibet, and the review in 2009, when there were four.

While government representatives and diplomats held the official discussions behind the doors of the United Nations Human Rights Council headquarters in Geneva, around 1,000 people, including Tibetans, Uyghurs and supporters, gathered outside, protesting against Beijing's human rights abuses.



Protesters outside the UN in Geneva in November.

4 March: Tibet Lobby Week

This March, Free Tibet supporters up and down the United Kingdom will be meeting with their members of parliament to raise human rights in Tibet. For the first time, our annual Tibet Lobby Day will be extended to a Tibet Lobby Week. During the week of 4 March, supporters are encouraged to make appointments with their MPs, either in London or in their constituencies, to tell them about Tibet, or to write to them. This year we are encouraging supporters to raise access to Tibet and freedom of expression, both topical issues.

For readers in the UK, an insert is provided with this magazine should you prefer to write to your MP than meet them. Simply add your MP's address to the front with a stamp and send it straight to them. You can, of course, write a letter to your MP in your own words. If you do not know who your MP is or how to reach them then you can locate them by entering your postcode into this website: www.theyworkforyou.com/mp/. You can also contact our Campaigns Team directly at campaigns@freetibet.org or by phone on 020 7324 4605.



For those planning to meet their MPs for the first time, we also have resources to help you, including how to plan a meeting and good talking points to use when telling them about Tibet. Get in touch and we will do what we can to help you.

Lobby Week is a UK event, but readers around the world who wish to contact representatives in their country should feel free to contact the Campaigns Team. We can inform you about any lobbying events in your country or assist you with writing a letter.



Tibetfest returns

A public celebration of Tibetan culture and activism

The second year of Tibetfest drew audience members from far and wide, with as many familiar faces taking part in our celebration of Tibetan culture as new ones. We were keen to fit as much as we could into the day, contrasting traditional views of Tibet with newer contemporary ones.

Monks from the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery were central to the event, spending the day delicately creating a sand mandala in the middle of the venue. The creation of the piece culminated with a ceremony of its destruction – symbolising the Buddhist notion of the impermanence of life.

We ran a variety of workshops including yoga, meditation and circle dancing. There was also a traditional music workshop where participants were introduced to the Dranyen, a stringed instrument similar to a lute. And, thanks to their popularity last year, we welcomed the return of Tibetan Mastiff Rescue UK.

Tenzin Tsundue, visiting all the way from Dharamsala, and London-based poet Patrick Cash jointly presented a powerful seminar on protest poetry and explored the themes arising from poetry written by Tibetans inside Tibet. Both poets also gave performances of their own work. We were also pleased to host the UK's leading Mongolian Khoomii singer, Michael Ormiston.

There was also an activism element to the festival, with Free Tibet's Campaigns Team creating an exhibition on religious freedom in Tibet. It detailed the effects of modern day Chinese Communist Party rule on Tibet's monasteries and nunneries.

This year's Tibetfest was a true testament to why it is so important that we celebrate Tibetan culture in a way that reflects its diversity, uniqueness and strength. Thank you to all who attended.



From top: Dressed up as a snow lion; the traditional Black Hat Dance; Tibetan Mastiff Zeus with Belinda; Creating the Mandala.

Taking Tibet on tour

Our autumn speaker tour won over supporters old and new.

One of our most important aims at Free Tibet is to spread the word about Tibet – the country, its occupation and what we can do to push back. In October, just over a week after we hosted a second successful Tibetfest, we hit the road on a tour that took us all over the UK.

One of the trickiest parts of talking to new people about Tibet is deciding where to start. As an organisation dedicated to ending the occupation and defending the human rights of the Tibetan people, it might seem obvious to talk about what we see in our day-to-day work – testimonies of arrests, torture and the daily hardships that Tibetans face. Extensive public opinion polling in 2017 taught us that if people learn about the occupation and the abuses, even in one or two news stories, they care and they want to do something.

However, there is another side of Tibet, the side that includes Tibetan Buddhism, the beauty of its landscape, its complex but intriguing language and its distinctive artwork. This too can draw people to our cause. For this reason, we decided to incorporate poetry from inside Tibet into our tour. Living under such an oppressive occupation means that freedom of expression is severely stifled, but through poems, often smuggled out of Tibet, we can hear Tibetans express themselves in their own words.

Our tour also coincided with the tenth anniversary of the 2008 Tibetan Uprising. The wave of protests that swept across Tibet that year was an important turning point in Tibet's history and we knew that we had to commemorate this.

Combining these elements into an accessible event, for both new people and long-standing supporters, would be a challenge. Fortunately, we have carried out enough events to have a sense of what works and this time could also count on the help of two exceptional individuals to help us bring Tibet's history and culture to life.

Wangden Kyab, the Research Manager from our partner organisation Tibet Watch, escaped from Tibet in 1998 and since then has distinguished himself as a journalist and a researcher. The information he sends from his office in Dharamsala, northern India, to our office in London forms the basis for our news stories, press releases, public reports and underpins our campaigns. We decided it was high time that Wangden shared his encyclopedic knowledge of Tibet with the UK public.

Alongside him was activist and writer Tenzin Tsundue. A magnetic public speaker, Tenzin can switch from tales of his childhood as a refugee in northern India to evocative descriptions of the rain in Dharamsala. Or he might bring up the various different prisons where the police have found space for him over the years – the price he has been forced to pay for his activism.

At each of the events, starting with our opening night in Bristol's Hamilton House, we would open with poems from *Burning the Sun's Braids*, a compilation of poetry from Tibetans inside Tibet. The poems describe the daily lives of Tibetans under occupation and their yearning for freedom, captured through quintessentially Tibetan metaphors such as Tibet's hardy and indomitable yaks.

Extract from *In Memory of Wild Yaks*

by Nyen (aka Jangtse Dhoko)

Before the red wind raged,
That bend on the mountain was
where the wild yak roamed.
Today, my grandfather stares
at the bend
Remembering that animal
called the wild yak.

Wild yaks have a very
strong nature,
Wild yaks do not like
oppression and occupation.
Wild yaks dance on the palms
of red hands.
Wild yaks lick the red hands to
death with their tongues.
Wild yaks do not make
secret deals.

The team arrive in Bristol for the first day of the speaker tour; Kora by Tenzin Tsundue; The final day of the tour in Manchester.

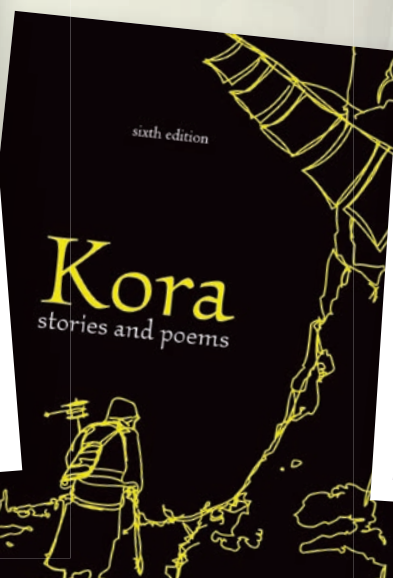
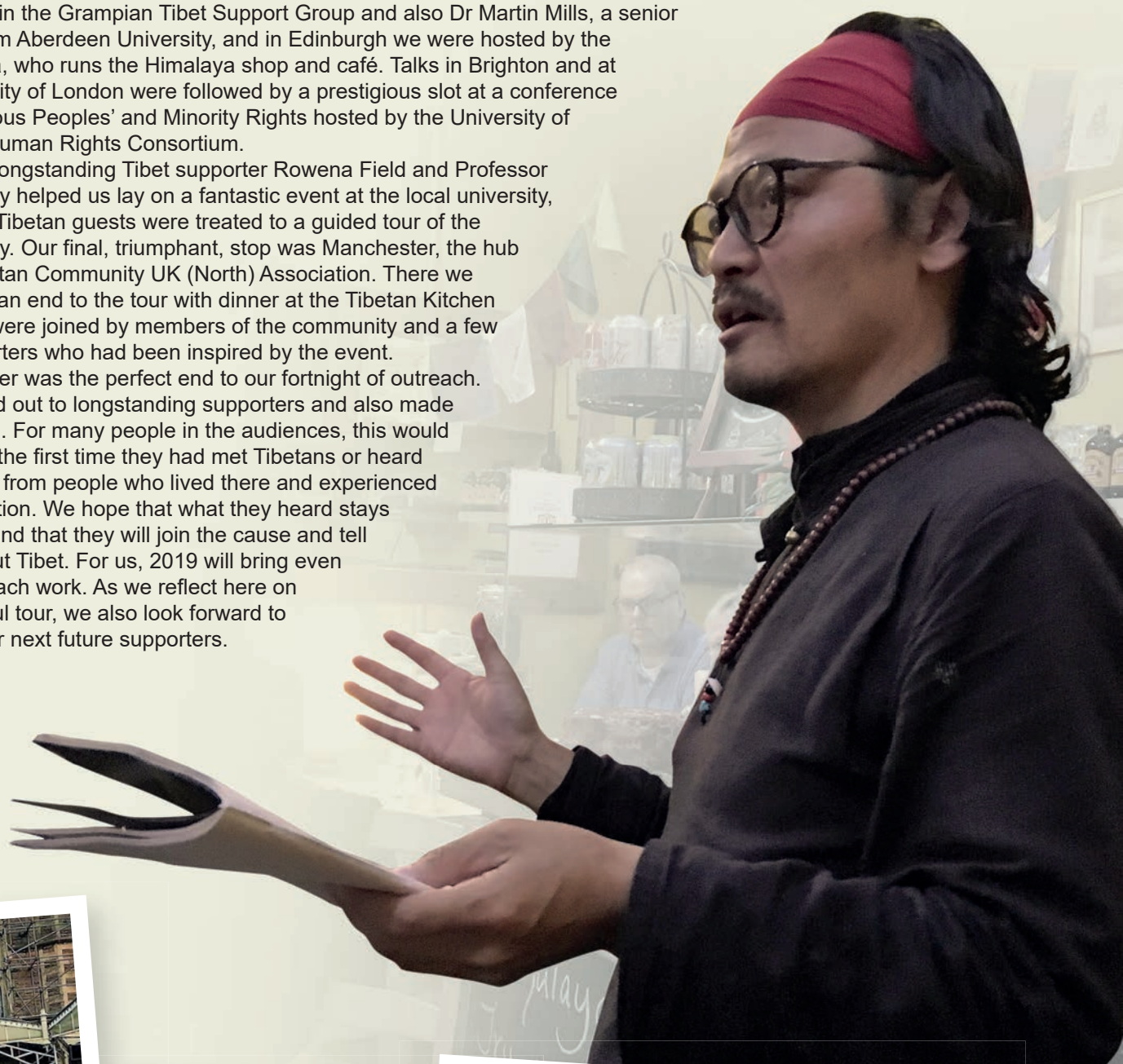


Next we would introduce the audience to Tibet's recent history, from basic facts about the country to the Chinese invasion to the protests in the 1980s, before a dialogue with Wangden about the 2008 Tibetan uprising and its legacy ten years later. The final section of the event was given over to Tenzin Tsundue, who read from his book of poems, *Kora*, and drew connections between Tibetan culture and resistance. Audiences loved it and at each of the venues there was no shortage of questions or comments or people wanting to hear more.

There were countless highlights during the tour. In Aberdeen we were joined by our friends in the Grampian Tibet Support Group and also Dr Martin Mills, a senior lecturer from Aberdeen University, and in Edinburgh we were hosted by the lovely Reka, who runs the Himalaya shop and café. Talks in Brighton and at the University of London were followed by a prestigious slot at a conference on Indigenous Peoples' and Minority Rights hosted by the University of London's Human Rights Consortium.

In York, longstanding Tibet supporter Rowena Field and Professor Paul Gready helped us lay on a fantastic event at the local university, before our Tibetan guests were treated to a guided tour of the beautiful city. Our final, triumphant, stop was Manchester, the hub for the Tibetan Community UK (North) Association. There we celebrated an end to the tour with dinner at the Tibetan Kitchen where we were joined by members of the community and a few new supporters who had been inspired by the event.

The dinner was the perfect end to our fortnight of outreach. We reached out to longstanding supporters and also made new friends. For many people in the audiences, this would have been the first time they had met Tibetans or heard about Tibet from people who lived there and experienced the occupation. We hope that what they heard stays with them and that they will join the cause and tell others about Tibet. For us, 2019 will bring even more outreach work. As we reflect here on a successful tour, we also look forward to meeting our next future supporters.



News update...

Lodi Gyaltsen Gyari and Palden Gyatso rest in peace

Two of the most highly-respected advocates for Tibet, Lodi Gyaltsen Gyari and Palden Gyatso, have passed away.

Lodi Gyaltsen Gyari, the former Special Envoy to the Dalai Lama, died on 29 October. He lived through the Chinese invasion before escaping to India with his family in 1959. He went on to distinguish himself in the fields of activism, governance and diplomacy, helping to found the Tibetan Youth Congress, one of the largest Tibetan organisations in the world, serving as editor of Tibetan Freedom Press and then establishing the Voice of Tibet, now called Tibetan Review.

At the age of 30 he became the youngest ever Speaker of the Tibetan Parliament and in 1990 assumed the role of Special Envoy for the Dalai Lama in Washington DC. Between 2002 and 2010, he worked on the negotiations over Tibet with China, leading the Tibetan delegation through nine rounds of high-level dialogue. Upon his retirement in 2012, the US Senate passed a resolution honouring his service and commending his achievements. He also oversaw the work of the International Campaign for Tibet between 1991 and 2014, as the organisation's President and then as its Executive Director. He is survived by his wife, Dawa Chokyi, their six children and his grandchildren, along with his mother, four brothers and three sisters.

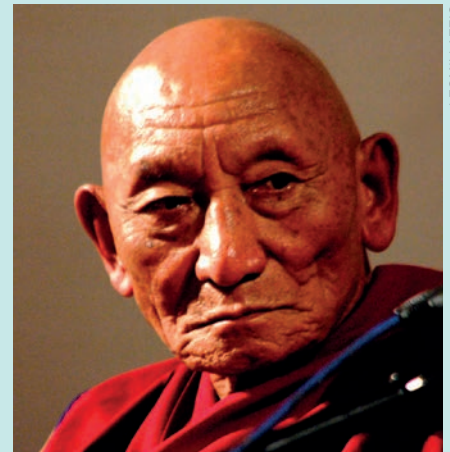
Palden Gyatso, a Buddhist monk and human rights defender, died on 30 November at the age of 85. Like Lodi Gyaltsen Gyari, he lived through the Chinese invasion, leading a group of fellow monks in protest in 1959. He was arrested and spent the next 33 years of his life in prison, where he was forced to undergo forced labour and repeatedly tortured.

After escaping Tibet in 1992, he sought to raise awareness of the human rights situation there. He toured the world, showing audiences torture instruments of the kind that were used on him during his time in prison and which he had smuggled out of Tibet. He also became the first Tibetan to address the United Nations, recounting his experiences in prison to the Human Rights Commission in 1995.

His autobiography, *Fire Under The Snow*, was translated from Tibetan into several languages and was adapted into a 2008 film of the same name.



Lodi Gyaltsen Gyari.



Palden Gyatso.

LEOMILLAEZIO

Former political prisoner dies

There was more sad news from inside Tibet with the death of former prisoner Shonu Palden on 30 September. He had been undergoing treatment for torture-related injuries which he suffered while incarcerated.

Shonu Palden was first arrested in 2012 on the charge of instigating protests during the 2008 Tibetan uprising. He was then kept in detention for several months, during which time he was interrogated, severely tortured, and denied legal representation and contact with his family. He was later sentenced to two years and nine months in prison, where he suffered from harsh beatings, torture and medical negligence. His condition became critical, leading to his release, one year early, in 2013. After his release, Shonu Palden developed serious health complications, including breathing problems, weak eyesight and blocked arteries.

He was 41 years old when he passed away and is survived by his wife Tsering Dekyi and three children.



Shonu Palden.

Landslides hit Chamdo

In mid-October, the Driчу River, which flows through Chamdo prefecture in eastern Tibet, became blocked after a massive landslide. The resulting flooding saw over 13,000 people evacuated from nearby counties.

The following month, another massive landslide hit the same area, causing further flooding. According to Chinese state-run media, 25,000 people had to be evacuated into temporary settlements. 100 houses collapsed completely and over 843 houses were seriously damaged. Entire villages as well as the region's iconic 900 year old Polo Monastery were submerged.

Chinese authorities have been conducting excessive mining, development and dam construction projects in the area. There remain conflicting claims about the link between these developments and flooding, with Chinese sources claiming these incidents are natural and unrelated.



Floods in Chamdo.

International support for Tibet

In early October, the United States Congressional Executive Commission on China issued its 2018 Annual Report. The report highlighted a range of concerns about human rights in Tibet, including limits on freedom of speech and movement, political prisoners and torture. The work of Free Tibet, and our research partner Tibet Watch, was cited by the Commission, including our satellite imagery-based reports into the Jokhang Temple fire and the destruction of homes at Larung Gar Buddhist Academy.

Spanish authorities also stood up to Chinese pressure in early November, when organisers of a Madrid-based trade fair refused to bar high-ranking Tibetan political leaders, including Lobsang Sangay, the elected president of the Tibetan government-in-exile, from attending the event. The Chinese delegation subsequently withdrew.

Lobsang Sangay, as part of an official six-nation trip to Spain, Switzerland, Germany, US, Canada and Netherlands, delivered a speech at the event's opening ceremony. During the speech, he addressed Tibet's imperilled environment and its global significance. He also praised his Spanish hosts, including several Spanish legislators and the Mayor of Madrid, for providing him with a public platform.



Sikyong Lobsang Sangay.

Monks detained following protest

In September, Chinese authorities in Ngaba County detained five Tibetans from Gomang Monastery. The monks had unsuccessfully petitioned the local authorities to halt the construction of a new housing estate near Gomang Monastery, one of the most strictly monitored Tibetan monasteries in Ngaba. The group were asked to send five representatives to discuss their concerns at a district committee. Five arrests followed this meeting, although it remains unconfirmed whether the five delegates were the same five monks who were later arrested. To date, four remain in custody.



Tibetan monks from Gomang Monastery voice their concerns to a Chinese official.



A community under siege

Free Tibet is working to expose a decade of harassment at Yarchen Gar.

Of the many cruel acts committed in occupied Tibet in recent years, one of the most shocking has been the destruction caused to Larung Gar Buddhist Academy in eastern Tibet. Longstanding supporters may recall how Larung Gar, one of the largest and most prestigious Tibetan Buddhist institutes in the world, was subjected to a programme of demolitions, evictions and religious controls in 2016 and 2017. Thousands of homes were reduced to rubble and more than 4,800 residents were forced to leave.

As this destruction was taking place at Larung Gar, residents of Yarchen Gar, another huge Buddhist community in eastern Tibet, were also coming under increasing pressure.

Yarchen Gar is located among the mountains of north-western Sichuan Province, some 200 kilometres away from Larung Gar. Like Larung Gar, it was established in the 1980s and is now home to a sprawling community of over 10,000 Buddhists, the majority of them nuns.

There has been regular interference at Yarchen Gar over the past decade, with at least 3,000 people removed from the site since 2008. However, as with Larung Gar, the

level of harassment has shot up under the rule of President Xi Jinping. In August 2017, instructions were issued requiring the removal of 3,500 monks' and nuns' homes in order to clear space for an extensive network of roads. Some monks and nuns were reportedly forced to dismantle their own houses. A further order in September 2018 banned residents from renovating their homes. Any breach of these rules would see the house torn down.

At the same time, reports emerged from within the site of hotels being constructed, along with other tourist infrastructure. Police checkpoints were introduced at the entrance and between 2016 and 2018 the area, already isolated among the mountains, was closed to outsiders, making it tough to verify information about damage to the site.

However, we at Free Tibet are never ones to shy away from a challenge. Early analysis of satellite images taken at Yarchen Gar has revealed extensive demolitions of houses, important evidence that we can take to the United Nations and governments to press China to end its harassment of the residents of Yarchen Gar.

Top: Yarchen Gar in 2017 showing housing clearance and wider roads; Below: Satellite image taken in 2018 with new road network and tourist infrastructure clearly visible.

Seeing the truth, exposing the lies

Over the past two years Free Tibet has used satellite imagery to map the demolitions at Larung Gar, the fire damage to the Jokhang temple in Lhasa and the environmental destruction caused by lithium mining in Tibet. Now satellite images are confirming the true extent of the destruction and alterations to Yarchen Gar.

Support our efforts to stop Chinese meddling at Yarchen Gar at freetibet.org/yarchengar

APOLLO MAPPING

Flying the (digital) flag for Tibet

Take a look at your phone's emoji keyboard. There is an emoji for just about everything you can imagine – everything except Tibet.

In November, Free Tibet spearheaded the launch of a new campaign aimed at getting the Tibetan flag added to the official selection of emoji. To do this, we partnered with a young Tibetan activist named Pema Doma who longed to see her country, culture and identity represented alongside all the other flags of the world. We launched an online campaign centred on the hashtag #InsertTibetanFlag and asked people to show their support. The response was fantastic!

Thousands of young Tibetans and Tibet supporters all over the world took part in the campaign by posting pictures of themselves with the Tibetan flag and explaining why the Tibetan flag emoji matters to them. We also crowdfunded over £5,000 in support of the campaign.



Free Tibet has researched and compiled a long and detailed proposal, outlining all the reasons why the Tibetan flag *must* be added as an official emoji. This was sent to the 'Emoji Board' – a committee made up of representatives from all the big tech companies who decide which emoji are added. We are pleased to announce that we have heard back from the 'Emoji Board' and they have agreed to table our proposal. It will now be brought before the entire committee who will decide the Tibetan flag emoji's fate.

Thank you to everyone who has supported this campaign so far! To follow the latest updates, and to see how you can help, find us on social media everywhere @tibetflagemoji.

Ethical gifts, handmade by Tibetans

Free Tibet is proud to be supporting a number of Tibetan artisans and cooperatives, who create a range of beautiful Tibetan gifts. Our hand-carved prayer wheels come from Kopan Monastery in Kathmandu, Nepal. Every sale of a prayer wheel helps to meet the cost of the living expenses, education and healthcare of the 800 resident monks and nuns. Our handmade paper lanterns come from Potala Gate, an organisation which works closely with Himalayan craftspeople to showcase the best Tibetan handicrafts.

Both are available on our online shop at shop.freetibet.org, where you can also read about more of the fantastic ethical suppliers we work with. Or order over the phone on 020 7324 4605.

Prayer Wheels

£11.95 / £9.95

Eternal Knot Paper Lantern

£14.95



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!

I'm looking at going travelling throughout Asia soon and was hoping to travel to Tibet via Nepal but have had second thoughts due to some of the anti-Chinese state sentiments I have shared. Am I being overly cautious or holding legitimate concerns?

Hi. Thanks for your question. If you want to travel to Tibet you have to apply for permission on top of your visa for entry to China. If the Chinese authorities are aware and have problems with things you have posted, then they will probably simply deny you permission to enter. If permission to enter is granted, you shouldn't have a problem. Just make sure that you don't post anything anti-China while you are in China or Tibet as this could get you in trouble.

Tashi Delek dear Free Tibet team. Since two years I have been studying Tibetan with my brilliant teacher in Berlin, whose address you gave me. I am sooo grateful to you ... thank you from the bottom of my heart for all you do to free Tibet, much appreciated. May all possibilities be open to you. Love, truth, simplicity, freedom, grace, compassion, peace, miracles and gratitude.

You're very welcome. While campaigning will always be our primary function, we're happy to help supporters where we can; linking them up with services or other like-minded individuals.

Hi there. Could anyone give us a short interview about the article you uploaded on your website about water diversion?

Thanks for your question. Engaging with the media is a big part of our work here. Please direct all media enquiries to John Jones, Campaign and Advocacy Manager: 020 7324 4611, john@freetibet.org.



I was really impressed and moved by the speakers on [your speaker] tour. I attended the talks in Brighton. I have tried to keep informed about Tibetan issues for the last ten years but how relevant and important the Tibet issue is for all of us, worldwide, suddenly became so real to me while hearing this discussed so deeply and carefully, live. Ecologically, psychologically, culturally – the repression and control of Tibet and Tibetans is an example of Chinese policies that put all of us at risk. I thank the speakers for the time and care they invested in these talks ... many thanks for the event.

Thank you for your kind comments. We worked hard on the tour, covering a lot of miles and many different venues so it's great to get such positive feedback. Readers can find a write-up of the tour on pages 8-9.

Supporter activities

Advent and Christmas events in York

Along with helping us with our speaking tour, members of the York Tibet Support Group also found time to put on two stalls in November and December. The group's annual Advent Fair, held in late November, is always one of their main fundraising events of the year and was once again well attended. A week later, the group held their Christmas stall at the home of group member Dee. The stall ran for two weeks in early and mid December. Secretary of the York Group and longstanding Tibet supporter Rowena Field has told us that both events were very popular, not only in terms of fundraising but also as a way of raising awareness about Tibet, with customers coming to buy Tibetan handicrafts and then staying to learn all about the country and its people.



Grampian Tibet Support Group marks Human Rights Day

The Grampian group, who also assisted us with our speaking tour, marked Human Rights Day on 10 December with a vigil in Aberdeen. Volunteers from the group asked members of the public to show their support for Tibetan political prisoners by signing greeting cards. The cards were then delivered to prisons in Tibet where these prisoners are being held. The group collected signatures for six prisoners, including health activist Wangdue and doctor Yeshe Choedren, both of whom marked ten years in prison in 2018. Despite the cold weather, the group managed to collect over 300 signatures from passers-by.



From top: Dee and Rowena at one of the York Tibet Support Group's stalls; Volunteers from the Grampian Tibet Group with their stall on Human Rights Day.

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.

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Free Tibet are delighted to welcome our new *Mi Tse* (life long) supporters:
Nigel Ward
Bryan Skinner
Stephan Hofmann

Find out more about becoming a *Mi Tse* supporter at freetibet.org/join-for-life



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