

# FREE TIBET

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free  
TIBET

Locked down...  
for 70 years

• Community spirit • Life under lockdown • Beijing's progaganda •



# Dear friends...

The world has changed a lot recently due to COVID-19. Six days after I started at Free Tibet, we had to shut the office down. Immediately, we were thrown into supporting each other working remotely and establishing what it meant for our finances. From our research team in Dharamshala, we heard worrying reports about the Chinese government using the pandemic as an excuse for yet another crackdown on the Tibetan people.

There have been a few powerful rays of hope. We won our long-standing campaign to stop *The Telegraph* newspaper carrying the outrageous lies of the 'China Watch' supplement. We seized the momentum and launched further campaigns against other propaganda in other publications. The international Tibet movement embraced our campaign and we are now working with groups across the world to support the launch of national campaigns to stop Chinese propaganda.

Attitudes to the Chinese Communist Party have hardened worldwide due to their disastrous handling of the early stages of the COVID-19 outbreak. We are noticing that MPs are more attentive than before when we speak about China's human rights abuses in Tibet. The advocacy environment for our cause is more promising than it has been for years. This is something we will capitalise on now that we have merged with the influential Tibet Society, who coordinate the All Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet (see page 10).

On top of that, you, our supporters, rallied behind us despite the lockdown. Our Tibet Match fundraiser exceeded expectations. You signed our campaign to stop Chinese propaganda, making it a success. Campaigning for Free Tibet can seem like a tough job, especially during a pandemic and a lockdown. But we are seizing opportunities that come our way and winning victories that make a difference. And we are doing this thanks to your support.

With best wishes



Sam Walton, Free Tibet Chief Executive



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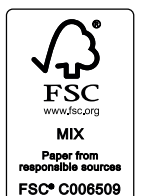
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Our vision is a free Tibet in which Tibetans are able to determine their own future and the human rights of all are respected.

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:** Lhasa, 5 February 2020. Monks at the Gandan Temple attend a prayer service to support coronavirus-infected areas.  
© Chogo/Xinhua/Alamy







# Community spirit

Tibetans and Tibet supporters gather for Uprising Day.

Cries of “Stop the killing in Tibet” and “Free Tibet” rang through the streets of London on 10 March, as Tibetans and Tibet supporters marched through the city to mark the 61st anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising.

The images will be a familiar sight to Tibet supporters, although perhaps a strange one given the lockdown and social distancing measures that we are currently living under, and which had been introduced by the end of that month.

At a gathering outside parliament, Tibetan community leaders saluted the memory of the Tibetans who rose up against the Chinese occupation in 1959. They also recalled China’s brutal reprisals and the daring escape of the Dalai Lama into exile in India. The crowd was joined by Tim Loughton MP, a longstanding supporter of Tibet. In a powerful speech, Loughton noted, “If this demonstration were happening in Lhasa, it wouldn’t last very long”. “This is such an important cause, and remember,

you have many friends,” he added, shortly before the marchers set off.

Upon reaching their destination, the marchers crowded outside the entrance of the embassy to vent their opposition, facing down security guards and police, who stood impassively with their automatic weapons. It was a spontaneous moment of defiance from the UK’s small but vocal Tibetan community. A rally opposite the embassy featured solidarity speeches from two people with first-hand experience of Chinese Communist Party repression: Rahima Mahmut from the World Uyghur Congress and Shao Jiang, a Chinese dissident who lived through the 1989 massacre at Tiananmen Square.

The demonstrators then dispersed, with many attending a nearby event where members of the community commemorated the sacrifice their compatriots made 61 years ago and acknowledged the repression that Tibetans face in Tibet today. It was a powerful event, fully displaying the sense of community and defiance towards China’s brutal regime.



# Campaigns update...

## 25 years of shame

17 May marked a sad and shameful milestone: 25 years since the abduction of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the Panchen Lama. There has been no trace of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima since his abduction in 1995, with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) refusing to reveal his location, instead replying only that he is “happy” and “doesn’t want to be disturbed”.

This year, CCP officials added some further embellishments, stating that the Panchen Lama has completed higher education and now has a job. The United States government is pressing Beijing to allow its officials to meet him, a request that has so far been met with silence.

Free Tibet and our Tibetan friends have refused to play along with Beijing’s ludicrous claims and have repeatedly pushed for answers. Together, we have pressed the UK government, the United Nations, Chinese authorities and China’s embassies around the world to reveal the Panchen Lama’s whereabouts. We have focused the attention of the mainstream media on this and even helped bring Gedhun Choekyi Nyima’s face to BBC primetime audiences last year during a special episode of *The One Show*.

This year, we worked with several friends of Tibet to mark this anniversary, including the co-chairs of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet, Tim Loughton MP and Chris Law MP, both of whom provided statements in support of the Panchen Lama. Meanwhile, the Central Tibetan Administration, Tibet’s government in exile, held a series of events to mark this sad anniversary, including a candlelit vigil, which Tibet groups around the world, including Free Tibet, joined.

17 May was a day to reflect before we pushed on with our efforts to ensure Gedhun Choekyi Nyima is not forgotten. We will continue to remind the world that the CCP, a quarter of century ago, kidnapped a child. One day, we hope to see his face again.




Tibetans unveil an image of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima.



### Action

If you have not already done so, you can take and share our online action here: [freetibet.org/where-panchen-lama](https://freetibet.org/where-panchen-lama)





## We can make a material difference to those that are suffering in Tibet, says Free Tibet's new Chief Executive.

The site where British weapons manufacturer BAE Systems makes fighter jets may seem unrelated to the Tibetan struggle for human rights, but they are connected. The sale of these jets supports Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen, fuelling human rights abuses against Yemeni civilians. There are clear parallels between Saudi repression in Yemen and Chinese repression in Tibet.

Free Tibet's new Chief Executive, Sam Walton, knows both causes.

As a former peace campaign lead for the Quakers and a veteran activist, Walton has spent most of his life working to progress nonviolence. In 2017 he and a fellow Quaker broke into a BAE Systems site and disarmed several of the jets that were bound for Saudi Arabia. He has also spoken for Yemeni civilians at the UN Human Rights Council.

Now Walton hopes to advocate for Tibetans oppressed by Beijing.

"I grew up in a Quaker family, and I am a Quaker," Walton said. "I'm a lifelong campaigner. Some people get good at guitar, some people become fantastic athletes, and I just focus on campaigning. And that's all I've really done my whole life."

Walton said it "just felt completely right" to take the job as Chief Executive at Free Tibet because of his connection to nonviolence, his campaigns experience and the importance of the cause. He added, "We can make a material difference to those that are suffering in Tibet."

The new Chief Executive wants to see the voices of those in Tibet further represented and amplified by Free Tibet with more advocacy seen from the streets all the way to Parliament and the UN.

He sees important and impactful areas of advocacy ahead and believes that, alongside the violence and oppression, "China's complete disregard" for the environment on the Tibetan Plateau should be an area of focus for the organisation.

"We need to make sure that the environmental damage that China is doing in Tibet is being spoken about by Tibetan voices at the highest forums in the world," he said. "I'm really really excited to have this opportunity... Free Tibet needs to be a strident campaigning voice for Tibetans in the world."

Walton said he believes Tibet will be free but at a moment few see coming, like the fall of the Berlin Wall. He called for the struggle to continue with Free Tibet sparking more noise and nonviolent protest in the UK.

The new Chief Executive is not afraid to use nonviolent tactics to get attention and said he would like Free Tibet to have a big enough impact to force a major reaction from the Chinese government.

Walton concluded by looking to the future, and with a rallying cry to Free Tibet's supporters: "We will see you on the streets, and we will see you outside the Chinese Embassy".



## Shop news...

Thank you for continuing to support the Free Tibet shop. Our shop continues to offer a wide array of goods, from organic soaps and paper lanterns, to yoga pants and Tibetan flags. All goods are available to purchase online at [freetibet.org/shop](https://freetibet.org/shop)

Due to uncertainty over COVID-19, Free Tibet has followed government guidelines to keep staff and the public safe. Orders may therefore take a little longer to reach customers as the safety of staff remains our primary concern. We apologise for the inconvenience but would like to thank all customers who have supported Free Tibet and have placed orders to look forward to. We hope all customers are keeping safe.





# Life under lockdown

COVID-19 has seen Tibet hit with further repression.

The world's eyes have been on China this year, following the outbreak of COVID-19 in the city of Wuhan. Its rapid spread across China and the rest of the world will be a story known to every reader. As usual, less is known about Tibet, where the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has been trying to tighten its rule under the pretext of public safety.

As one of the most closed off societies in the world, occupied Tibet has long been in a state of lockdown. Its people have endured heavy restrictions and surveillance for decades. However, COVID-19 brought about an extra layer of censorship and repression. After a sluggish response to the outbreak, the Chinese government introduced restrictions to Tibet in February. When they appeared, the emphasis was as much about monitoring and restricting online activity as it was on stopping the spread of the virus and protecting lives.

The CCP's long-standing priority in Tibet has been the stability of its rule. This has meant shutting down protests, criticism or anything else that could challenge its authority. The pandemic has been the latest pretext to tighten its control. In February, a seven-point notification was posted by Chinese authorities in the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), stating that authorities would be monitoring any rumours or false information on the internet. Anything that

they deemed as undermining or endangering "national security" or "national unity" was "strictly forbidden" and would be met with a forceful response. Criticism of the CCP or its response to the outbreak was also forbidden.

Authorities have been sure to follow through with the threats, with several cases of Tibetans being arrested on suspicion of spreading "false" rumours or for critiquing the CCP. What these rumours and criticisms were is anyone's guess; no information about the cases has been made publicly available. In addition to this, Chinese authorities were mobilised to set tight restrictions on WeChat, China's state-controlled online messaging application.

Authorities shut down 75 WeChat groups across two townships, and are likely to have repeated this process all across Tibet. Meanwhile, 298 WeChat groups were ordered to register with authorities and another 223 were forced to submit letters pledging they would be properly administered and would not spread rumours.

Throughout the pandemic, the Chinese government has sought to silence critics and protect its reputation, which was further tarnished among its own people due to its slow and secretive response to the virus outbreak in December. Censors in China struggled to contain the outcry online, with citizens explicitly

Above: Monks attend a prayer ceremony in Lhasa.



The pandemic has been the latest pretext to tighten its control.

blaming the government. Dr Li Wenliang, the whistleblowing doctor, warned his colleagues of the virus that month, and even tried to warn of the spread publicly. In response, Chinese authorities were content for police to detain him and force him to sign a confession admitting he had been spreading rumours. Dr Li died of the virus on 7 February. Since then, the Party has made a rare admission that mistakes were made, cautiously praising his bravery and criticising the police. This is as much accountability as one can expect from the CCP.

By mid March, the Chinese government felt confident enough to relax the restrictions in Tibet, lifting the lockdown in Lhasa. Again, the decision appeared to have more to do with protecting the Party and presenting an image of “business as usual” in Tibet than any considerations of public health.

An integral part of the “business as usual” strategy was restarting Tibet’s tourist economy, which has been a project for over a decade and has seen growing numbers of Chinese citizens visit every year. According to official figures, over 30 million people visited Tibet in 2018. Many of Tibet’s monasteries, often referred to as tourist sites, were hastily re-opened, despite the fact that sites like the Chaksam Kha Monastery could attract up to 4,000 visitors per day.

The relaxations and prospect of mass tourism returning to Tibet sparked fears of a second, larger wave of the virus among Tibetans, who may have privately objected to the clampdown on government criticism, but at least felt protected by the lockdown. Such concerns were dismissed and ignored and many Tibetans were ultimately forced to go back to work due to the lack of financial support from the government.

On the international stage, the rush for China to declare victory over COVID-19 and return to normal allows the CCP to take much of the credit and pave over its initially disastrous response, as well as its ongoing human rights abuses. Helping European countries with their recovery has become a key part of its diplomatic strategy, despite widespread concerns that China has vastly under-reported its COVID-19 death count.

From disregarding the concerns of Tibetans, to exploiting the lockdown to impose harsher rules, to making mass arrests, the Chinese government has responded to the pandemic by increasing suppression and surveillance on the people of Tibet. Tibet is not alone; at the time of writing, new measures were being prepared to prevent protest in Hong Kong, again using the pandemic as an excuse. More international pressure than ever will be needed to halt these encroachments.

# Timeline

**17 November 2019**  
First suspected case of COVID-19.

**30 December 2019**  
Dr Li Wenliang warns his colleagues of a possible outbreak of an illness similar to severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS).

**February 2020**  
Chinese authorities in the TAR post a seven-point response to the outbreak.

**7 February 2020**  
Whistleblowing doctor Li Wnliang dies from COVID-19.

**Early March 2020**  
Tibet Watch confirms that at least two townships in eastern Tibet were subject to heavy WeChat restrictions.

**12 March 2020**  
10 Tibetans in Lhasa are arrested for offences related to the lockdown.

**23 March 2020**  
Lockdown in Lhasa lifts.

**Late March 2020**  
Chinese authorities announce intention to lift restrictions across the People’s Republic of China (not just Tibet).

**8 April 2020**  
Wuhan lockdown officially ends.

**15 June 2020**  
After nearly two months with no new infections, Beijing reported 79 new cases, the city’s biggest cluster of infections since February.

**December 2019**  
Initial outbreak in Wuhan, China.

**January 2020**  
Dr Li Wenliang is silenced by Chinese authorities.

**4 February 2020**  
Coronavirus reaches Tibet: first reported case of COVID-19 in the TAR.

**19 February 2020**  
Seven Tibetans are arrested on charges of spreading misinformation about the virus.

**4 – 5 March 2020**  
Police officers and grid workers mobilised to search online activity in 16 villages and 5 monasteries.

**18 March 2020**  
Some roads reopen in Tawu County.

**30 March 2020**  
The Lhasa City Buddhist Association announces the reopening of temples and monasteries in Lhasa.

**3 April 2020**  
Three Tibetans are detained for five to ten days and fined 500 yuan for spreading coronavirus “rumours.”

**19 April 2020**  
Australia calls for an inquiry into the origins of the pandemic, including China’s handling of the initial outbreak in Wuhan.



# Are you reading Beijing's propaganda?

The Chinese Government is paying major western news outlets to publish its propaganda.

Chinese government detention centres “offer hope” to young Uyghur Muslims. They were set up to transform people influenced by extremism, improve their “job skills, languages and knowledge of the law.”

Tibet supporters will immediately see what is happening here: Chinese Communist Party (CCP) propaganda, seeking to cover up the fact that between one and two million Uyghurs are being held by China in forced re-education camps. This story was featured in two state media outlets, *China Daily* and *Beijing Review*.

What may be surprising is that stories from these outlets do not just appear in China; they also find their way into international media, including outlets in the UK. In recent years, *The Daily Mail* and *The Telegraph* have run stories by *China Daily*, while *The Economist*,

with an estimated international reach of five million readers per week, has repeatedly run articles from the *Beijing Review*. These articles appear in UK media because the Chinese government pays for them to do so. The money it spends buys it reach and credibility.

Reporters Without Borders recently ranked China 177 out of the 180 countries on its Press Freedom Index. But major western news outlets are now complicit in what some have called a media blackout in Tibet, through the promotion of this propaganda.

According to one report, *The Telegraph* was paid £750,000 a year to run a monthly supplement called *China Watch*, featuring stories by *China Daily*. This arrangement was responsible for bringing headlines such as “Democratic Reform in Tibet: 60 Years On” and





# Can you help?

"Tibet is a Better Place Than It Used to Be" into the homes of its readers.

Free Tibet repeatedly raised this propaganda with *The Telegraph*, asking why a UK newspaper needed to parrot lines written by a repressive government. While we never received a reply, this year we did receive some exciting news: *The Telegraph* finally cut ties with *China Daily*. This is a victory for Free Tibet, the Tibetan people and those who oppose human rights abuses.

*The Telegraph* joins *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* in dropping these propaganda supplements from its newspapers. The latter two newspapers appear to have been punished by Beijing, which has refused to renew the press credentials of some of their journalists, meaning they can no longer report from China.

Campaigns thrive on momentum, so Free Tibet is now pushing for other newspapers to ditch the propaganda. We have pressed *The Economist* and also *The Wall Street Journal*, one of the United States' and the world's most important business newspapers. We hope that both will follow *The Telegraph* and end their publication of regurgitated CCP material.

So far, over 4,000 people have sent an email to the editors of these newspapers. Free Tibet is also building a coalition of groups to increase the pressure. This includes the International Tibet Network, the World Uyghur Congress, the Australia Tibet Council and activists from China, Hong Kong and Taiwan

Free Tibet wants to see paid-for headlines like "Training centres in Xinjiang offer hope" disappear from our media. You can get involved online by visiting the campaign page at: [www.freetibet.org/china-watch](http://www.freetibet.org/china-watch)

These articles appear in UK media because the Chinese government pays for them to do so. The money it spends buys it reach and credibility.

We all need the news. Media outlets provide information, advice, scrutiny, and a sense of reassurance and security. Yet, a great deal of evidence gathered by Free Tibet indicates this is a false sense of security. Investigations have uncovered that the Chinese government has influence over newspapers in **at least a dozen countries** where newspapers agree to print CCP chosen content, in return for a fee.

Free Tibet is campaigning for newspapers to drop their agreements with China. Your donation today can propel this campaign and make it go global. Together we can achieve more successes like *The Telegraph*. You have the power to help reach more newspapers and shine a spotlight on China's secrets and plays for power. The goal is to free all newspapers and readers from China's influence. Don't sit back and accept this encroachment on your freedom to information.

Please give today to take back control of your news. You can visit [freetibet.org/ccp-propaganda](http://freetibet.org/ccp-propaganda) to give today or use the form that accompanies this magazine.

CHINA DAILY MAY 27, 2016

## ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW CHINA WATCH

The supplement, prepared by China Daily, People's Republic of China, did not involve the news or editorial departments of The Age.

### IN WORDS AND PICTURES AT EXHIBITION LAUNCH, CHINA BECOMES AN OPEN BOOK, P2

### BIG-SCREEN EXPERIENCE MOVIE CHAIN IN NEW HANDS IS LOOKING AFTER PATRONS, P4

## Trade deal's benefits are already flowing

Wine, beef and seafood producers are among many who are counting their gains. **Zhong Nan** reports.

**FACTS**

Barely five months after the trade agreement between Australia and China came into effect, the two nations have already seen significant gains. Australia's largest ever trade deal came into force on May 27, 2016, and the agreement will provide into sustainable growth focusing on Asia's fast-growing economies.

Under the agreement more than 80 percent with the proportion ranging 64 percent in 2019 and 80 percent in 2020.

Analysts say the trade pact will provide the two countries' trade ties as both state burgeoning growth focusing on Asia's fast-growing economies.

Wang Shouren, vice minister of commerce, said the China Australia free trade agreement not only covered China's strong industries, but also extended collaboration in areas such as infrastructure, energy and services.

Trade between the two countries was worth \$14 billion last year, with exports to Australia rising 10 percent to \$40.34 billion thanks to infrastructure machinery manufacturing and garment sectors.

SEE 'ACCORD' ON PAGE 3



# News update...

## Stronger together

You will probably have already spotted the news of Free Tibet's new Chief Executive (see page 5), but we are proud to report a second exciting development for the organisation. This summer, Free Tibet completed a merger with Tibet Society.

Established in 1959, only weeks after the Dalai Lama's successful escape to India, Tibet Society is the world's oldest pro-Tibet group. For decades, it has specialised in parliamentary work, research and advocacy, and is respected by Tibetans around the world.

In recent years we have collaborated increasingly closely with Tibet Society, jointly winning several key campaigns. This includes convincing Liverpool Football Club to scrap its sponsorship deal with the exploitative company Tibet Water and pushing Google to scrap its controversial plans to launch a censored search engine in China. By making this partnership formal, we will strengthen our ability to raise Tibet with the UK government, as well as our campaigning work. We look forward to reporting on many more joint successes in the future.



## Torture victims denied treatment

Free Tibet has learned of the recent deaths of two political prisoners after they were denied medical attention.

Gendun Sherab, a monk, died on 18 April in his native Sog County in central Tibet. He was arrested in Lhasa in 2017 after sharing a message from the Dalai Lama on the messaging application WeChat. Under Chinese Communist Party rule, evidence of loyalty to the Dalai Lama is strictly punished.

During his time in prison, Gendun was beaten, causing severe and life-threatening injuries. He was released from prison after three months, but continued to struggle and was blacklisted from accessing various health facilities in Lhasa, depriving him of the medication he needed. This reportedly prompted him to return to his home in Sog County where he sought traditional Tibetan medicine, which ultimately could not help his recovery.

Meanwhile Choekyi died in May from a longstanding illness. Prior to his arrest, Choekyi was a monk at Phugu Monastery in Serthar County, eastern Tibet. He was arrested and imprisoned in June 2015 after he was caught making a special garment for the Dalai Lama's 80th birthday.

Choekyi was known to have been in poor health before his arrest, but was nevertheless subjected to brutal treatment and hard labour in prison, damaging his liver and kidneys. Reportedly, his weak health was noticed by prison authorities, but he was not given any medical consultation or treatment. Even after his release in January 2019, he was not allowed to go to Lhasa to see a doctor of his choice and was also stopped from consulting doctors in the nearby city of Chengdu. He died on the afternoon of 7 May, aged 43.



Tashi Phuntsok (above)  
and Choekyi (below).

## Prisoner released after five years

Amid the tragic news, there was some hope in the form of a prisoner release. Sonam Dhargyal from Ngaba County in eastern Tibet was released on 30 March after serving five years in prison. Sonam was arrested in 2015 after he went to a religious festival with a flag and a picture of the Dalai Lama. Images of the Dalai Lama have been outlawed across Tibet.

Sonam is reported to be in normal health and has reunited with his wife Dhargyal and their three children. Upon his return to his village, residents welcomed him with applause and burned incense.

## Ethnic Unity Law threatens punishment, promotes marriage

China's controversial new Ethnic Unity Law entered into force in May. The law makes it mandatory for "ethnic unity" between Tibetans and other ethnic groups to be promoted in Tibet. According to Chinese state media, these new regulations should "safeguard national reunification, strengthen ethnic unity and take a clear-cut stand against separatism".

The law is part of longstanding efforts by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to undermine Tibetans' unique identity and culture by cracking down on Tibetans who advocate autonomy or independence. In 2014, Chen Quanguo, the Party Secretary of the Tibet Autonomous Region, stated that "ethnic unity" was the most effective way to incorporate Tibet into the People's Republic of China.

Among the new regulations is a requirement for religious groups to incorporate the ideological doctrine of the Chinese state into their religious practice and to promote teachings that are "conducive to ethnic unity". The law also stipulates that individuals should be punished if they undermine ethnic unity and progress by "spreading rumours", "producing information" or "holding a stubborn or determined attitude".

While the law threatens Tibetans with punishment, authorities have also offered rewards to Tibetans who embrace ethnic unity, most notably by encouraging marriage between people of different ethnicities in Tibet. Potential rewards include scholarships for children who are born from these relationships and cash rewards.

September has been announced as a month for the promotion of ethnic unity, while schools, colleges, the military, non-government organisations and other institutions including social media groups have been told to propagate the message of support for mixed ethnicity marriage.

## Protest leaders pass away

There was further sad news from Tibet due to the passing of two respected Tibetans who led protests challenging the CCP.

Environmental activist Tashi Phuntsok passed away on 17 March in Lithang County in eastern Tibet. He is known to his fellow Tibetans for his role in leading protests against deforestation in Nyachukha County in 1993, a protest attended by some 500 people. When police attempted to arrest Tashi Phuntsok, there was public outcry, resulting in his release.

In April 2002, he was arrested due to his connections with the late Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, a senior monk, community leader and environment defender who is highly regarded by Tibetans to this day. Tashi Phuntsok was sentenced to seven years in prison, where he was severely beaten and tortured. He developed a pulmonary illness while in prison and the deterioration in his health was so grave that he was released after serving only one year of his sentence. In March this year, he was taken to hospital in unknown circumstances and passed away soon after.

Tsering Bhakdro, a native of Lhasa, passed away at his home in Lhasa in April. Tsering Bhakdro enrolled in Ganden Monastery in Lhasa at a young age. In 1992, he and his friends spearheaded protests against a CCP political re-education campaign that targeted Tibetan Buddhists who were loyal to the Dalai Lama. The group took to the street, carrying a banned Tibetan national flag and shouting slogans calling for the return of the Dalai Lama and Tibetan independence. The protesters were arrested at the scene by the local Public Security Bureau, beaten and detained for five months. During this period, they were repeatedly subjected to interrogation sessions with beatings and threats. Tsering Bhakdro was sentenced to eight years in prison, which he served in Lhasa's notorious Drapchi Prison. He was released in May 2000 and lived in Lhasa until his death on 26 April at the age of 51.



Tsering Bhakdro.



# Uncorrupted and unafraid

A-Nya Sengdra's  
search for justice.

Justice is a rare and precious thing in Tibet, and securing it comes with dangerous risks. In the case of A-Nya Sengdra, his willingness to challenge authority has resulted in detention, torture, prison, and most painfully of all, the loss of his brother.

According to some estimates, there are at least a thousand political prisoners in Tibet and Tibetans can be detained for the smallest provocations. A-Nya, a nomad and community leader in Gande County in eastern Tibet, was nevertheless committed to challenging corruption among local authorities. In 2014, he and other local Tibetan nomads founded the Public Affairs Forum, an organisation dedicated to holding local authorities to account for abuses of power.

The work of the Public Affairs Forum was strong and confrontational. Local authorities had earmarked public funds to house and support nomads removed from their pastures. When it turned out they were misusing this money, and that nomads were not receiving it, A-Nya led efforts by over 200 Tibetans to

sue the local government. He also held authorities to account on environmental issues, such as illegal mining and the hunting of endangered animals.

The eyes of the government were on A-Nya, and in September 2018, police halted his car and arrested him. A-Nya was beaten and detained for several days without access to a lawyer. When his lawyer, Lin Qilei, saw him in October, he noted that A-Nya had lost weight and was “a shadow of his former self”. Although A-Nya’s health would recover, he would spend over a year in detention without trial. In the days following his arrest, nine other nomads who worked with A-Nya would be arrested, including his brother Jimtri.

On the outside, Free Tibet and other Tibet groups led efforts to have him released, contacting everyone from the media to embassies in China. A-Nya has become one of the most prominent Tibetan cases in recent years. The authorities continued to play dirty; they charged A-Nya with “provoking trouble” and “organising a mob to disturb social order”, broadly-worded state security crimes. They delayed A-Nya’s trial, refused to grant him bail and in late 2019, even contacted Lin Qilei to ask for his help in fabricating a third charge of fraud against A-Nya. Lin Qilei refused.

On 6 December 2019, A-Nya stood trial, alongside eight of his fellow nomads. One person was missing: Jimtri, who had been taken from his detention centre to hospital with an unspecified condition a week before the trial. The trip to the hospital was Jimtri’s last journey. It is still unknown what happened to him during this period.

The trial took two days and saw A-Nya sentenced to seven years in prison. With typical defiance, he and Lin Qilei have refused to accept the verdict and plan to appeal. By the time you are reading this, this appeal is likely to have taken place. And while it is perhaps too much to hope that the conviction is overturned, there is hope. International pressure has contributed to Tibetans’ receiving shorter sentences, led to improved prison conditions or, according to prisoners who have since been released, given them hope and the strength to endure life in prison.

You can follow any updates online at [freetibet.org/news](http://freetibet.org/news)





# Tibet's mother

Remembering  
Tendol Gyalzur.

**W**e have run several obituaries in this magazine, but we would like to highlight one person's extraordinary life: Tendol Gyalzur, a Tibetan orphan who fled her homeland and then dedicated her life to helping others, and who died this year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. During her lifetime, she would care for some 300 children.

Tendol Gyalzur was born as Tenzin Dolkar in Shigatse in southwest Tibet in December 1951. She was a child when the 1959 Tibetan Uprising erupted in Lhasa, only to be met with overwhelming force from the occupying Chinese army. She joined thousands of Tibetans in escaping her occupied homeland through the Himalayas, first to Bhutan and then into India. Her parents and brother did not survive the uprising. At the age of seven she was an orphan, although when she arrived at the refugee camp in northern India, the staff had to guess her age based on the number of baby teeth she had remaining. She was raised in an orphanage run by the Dalai Lama's sister until 1963, when she was assisted in relocating to southern Germany by the Tibetan government-in-exile.

In Germany, she grew up with Tibetan orphans in a children's village, and when she was older, earned a degree in nursing. There she would meet her husband, Losang Gyalzur, another Tibetan living in exile. The couple moved to Zurich after their marriage, where they raised a family.

In 1990, Tendol Gyalzur returned to Lhasa for the first time since her escape, three decades earlier. Her life would again be changed by this

city, this time by the sight of two young children foraging for food in the rubbish. "It was the first time in my life that I realised that the only thing I wanted to do was to fight for the rights of these abandoned children", she recalled in 2009. She collected funds from the Tibet Development Foundation, donations from her friends in Europe and her own savings, and within three years had established a private orphanage in Lhasa. The orphanage did not discriminate based on ethnicity, accepting Tibetans but also other children, including Han Chinese. At first it supported six children, but over the years grew to house nearly 60.

She followed this by founding another orphanage in Losang Gyalzur's birthplace, Shangri-La. She also supported a school for nomadic herders in eastern Tibet in an area currently governed as Sichuan Province. The three centres were kept running through private donations, but also due to Tendol Gyalzur's pragmatism; in order to keep the orphanages running, she had to cooperate with Chinese officials. This approach at first frustrated her family, who helped fund the projects by selling Tibetan food at a stall back in Zurich.

Her humanitarian work did not escape the cruelty of the occupation, and in 2016, new laws restricting foreign organisations in the People's Republic of China led to the Chinese authorities taking control of her orphanages. By 2018, they had been closed down but the memory of her work for Tibet's children lives on.

Tendol Gyalzur died in Switzerland on 3 May 2020. She is survived by her husband, two sons and her grandchildren.



# Letters



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](mailto: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!

**Lan Yan is on Hay literary festival live online right now.**

**I am asking about Panchen Lama and freedom of Tibetan people.**

**I have posed the question to Hay Festival to please host a Tibetan speaker next year – I hope you will make your own approach to them and that you will suggest a Tibetan who can explain the real situation for Tibetan people – even Chinese people believe that what the authorities are doing is in Tibetans own interests – ie the propoganda is rife and this could be a chance to tell the truth.**

**Just a suggestion – stay safe.**

**Kind regards**

**Julia**

Hi Julia,

Thanks for getting in touch and letting us know about your efforts. We are always pushing for Tibetans to be given the opportunity to speak at public forums and we would be happy to follow up with the organisers of the Hay Festival to see if they can invite a Tibetan next time. There are few more compelling or effective ways to introduce Tibet to a new audience than for a Tibetan to talk about their country and their experiences.

Even though this is a difficult time for public events and gatherings, we have been holding a series of live events with Tibetans on online platforms, with panel discussions about Tibet's environment, the Panchen Lama, political prisoners and numerous other topics. The future is hard to see right now, but we are looking forward to the day when we can bring these discussions back to public spaces.

Thank you again, all the best,  
John

**I remember traveling in Tibet in 2016.**

**My route crossed the route of a trip that the false panchen lama was taking – and I saw that he travels with an armed guard and a medical emergency vehicle.**

**My guide, a true Tibetan who spoke freely since I was his only client on that trip, told me that the government is afraid that Tibetans will try to harm him.**

**But he pointed out that is not the way of Tibetans – they simply ignore him instead.**

**This almost made me feel sorry for the poor man.**

**Marian**

Thank you for writing to Free Tibet. We are glad to hear of your visit to Tibet in 2016 and hope you enjoyed your travels there.

It is sad to hear of the CCP's continuous parading of the Panchen Lama that they themselves appointed. Meanwhile, Tibetans all around the world still await answers about Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the real Panchen Lama, who was kidnapped in 1995 at just six years old.

This year, on 17 May, we marked 25 years since his disappearance - a truly sad anniversary for the global Tibetan community and their supporters. Here at Free Tibet, we have continued our work with others to keep his case going. Together, we have pressed the UK government, the United Nations, Chinese authorities and its embassies around the world. We thank all our supporters who have continued to help keep his case going.

Best wishes,  
Akanshya

# Supporter Spotlight

Free Tibet is lucky to have incredible supporters from all over the world. They're as diverse as the places they come from, but they all share one thing in common. The desire to see Tibetans able to determine their own future. In this edition we highlight some of the amazing people who stand in solidarity with the cause.

## Footballers in Chile support Tibet

The Free Tibet football team from Chile was created in 2006 to raise awareness of human rights in Tibet. Their kit stands out amongst their local league, with the Free Tibet logos and Tibetan flags covering their bright orange shirts. Although they are currently on a break due to coronavirus, they are looking forward to winning more matches and teaching people about the Tibetan cause in the future.



## Tim Loughton speaks out

Tim Loughton MP released a video statement on the 25th anniversary of the disappearance of the Panchen Lama. He expressed his support for Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and called for his immediate release.

Tim Loughton has been a friend of Tibet for years, and is the Chairman of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet. He introduced the Tibet Bill to parliament in 2019 to emulate the success of the USA's Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act. You can watch Tim Loughton's video message on Free Tibet's YouTube channel at [www.youtube.com/user/FreeTibetUK](http://www.youtube.com/user/FreeTibetUK)



## Supporting Tibet in Switzerland


René Aleesias has been supporting Free Tibet for over 30 years. He says, "The peacefulness of the Tibetans attracted me as a compassionate virtue... Tibet also fascinates me as a country because it has similarities with Switzerland: 'water castle'" – Tibet is often referred to as the 'Water Tower of Asia' due to its vast glaciers and rivers, and high altitude.

René shows his support for Tibetans by regularly attending demonstrations in Switzerland such as Tibetan Uprising Day on 10 March.



From top: The Free Tibet football team from Chile; Tim Loughton MP speaks at this year's Tibetan Uprising Day; René Aleesias.





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