

# **Testimony of Penpa Tsering, Representative of H.H. the Dalai Lama to North America**

## **Congressional-Executive Commission on China**

**December 7, 2016 Washington, DC**

Thank you for this opportunity to testify before the Congressional-Executive Commission on China regarding our recommendations to the next United States Congress and Administration on human rights in Tibet. This is my first testimony before the United States Congress following my appointment as Representative of H.H. the Dalai Lama to the Americas. Therefore, I would like to begin with offering the gratitude of the Tibetan people to the United States Congress for your consistent and strong support to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan issue.

Through its elections the United States and the American people have shown democracy in practice. Following the results, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has written to both President-Elect Donald Trump and Secretary Hillary Clinton. His Holiness further looks forward to meeting with the new President, just as he has done with the previous several presidents.

At the outset, for those who don't much about Tibet, I wish to present few basic facts. Some people feel that Tibet is a very small country nestled in the Himalayas. Factually, Tibet with close to 6 million Tibetans live on 2.14 Million Sq. Kms, roughly 23% of China's total landmass. Tibet has an average altitude of 4641 meters or 15226 feet above sea level. Tibetans call Tibet as the Land surrounded by snow mountains; westerners called Tibet as the roof of the world; Asians call Tibet as the water tower of Asia and today Chinese environmental scientists call Tibet as the third pole because of the amount of glaciers and permafrost that feeds all the major rivers of Asia.

### **Issues**

On the matter of our recommendations, while there has been a clear deterioration in the overall human rights situation in Tibet, I would like to raise the following four points that can have grave impact during the term of the next Congress and

Administration.

## **1. Religious freedom of the Tibetan people**

Several developments in recent times, which follow decades of oppressive policies, indicate that in order to fulfil their political agenda, the Chinese authorities are undermining the very existence of a genuine Tibetan Buddhist tradition in Tibet.

These include adopting regulations that give the Chinese Communist Party the absolute decision making authority on matters concerning Tibetan Buddhism, including promulgating legislation requiring all reincarnated Tibetan Buddhist leaders to obtain government approval. These measures are aimed at controlling and managing the process of the Dalai Lama's next reincarnation, in order to ensure the dominance of the Party state in Tibet. Chinese official media reports have confirmed that the CCP authorities view the matter of the Dalai Lama's reincarnation as "an important issue concerning sovereignty and national security." What the Chinese government has done to the Panchen Lama, who was kidnapped when he was 5 years old and has no longer been seen since then and replaced him with someone appointed by the Chinese Communist Party, is a stark reminder of what China intends to do.

Secondly, there has been increased and intrusive interference in the affairs of the Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and institutes. The most recent case is the demolition process taking place at the Tibetan Buddhist Academy of Larung Gar in Tibet - one of the world's largest monastic institutions with a population of thousands of Chinese and Tibetan practitioners - and the forced expulsion of several hundreds of monks and nuns from there. Larung Gar has in recent years become a vital center for the study, practice, and promotion of Buddhist teachings.

The most recent demolitions of monks' and nuns' dwellings began in July due to restrictions put in place by the Chinese government. According to information received from Tibet, hundreds of monks and nuns from Golog (Chinese: Guoluo) and Jyegudo (Chinese: Yushu) in Qinghai, Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) in Sichuan, and the Tibet Autonomous Region were among those forced to leave Larung Gar in late October this year. Officials and police arrived from their home areas to escort them. Many monks and nuns were compelled to put their thumbprints or sign a document which stated the following in Chinese: In accordance with the requirements of promoting regulation work in the Serthar County Larung Five Sciences Buddhist Academy, I left the Larung Five Sciences Buddhist Academy

and will, after returning home, as always continue to love the country and love religion, and abide by the law. I solemnly promise not to return to the Serthar County Larung Five Sciences Buddhist Academy, except to carry out relevant formalities during large-scale Buddhist activities.”

If we do not send a strong message to the Chinese authorities on this, it could be a precursor to many such demolitions of other Tibetan religious institutes.

## **2. Restrictions of Freedom of Movement**

From 2012, following the imposition of tough new measures restricting travel in Tibetan areas since the 2008 protests, Tibetans began to face tightening restrictions on their travel abroad, through restrictions on the issuance of passports, including to receive Buddhist teachings from the Dalai Lama, or to study abroad. This is in contrast to the increasing number of Chinese citizens being granted passports and being able to travel abroad with ease.

Since the Dalai Lama is giving an important Tibetan Buddhist teaching in India in January 2017, many Tibetans in Tibet wanted to travel there. In addition to the already existing restrictions for Tibetans in getting a passport, in the last few weeks, Chinese officials have confiscated passports from those Tibetans who have managed to secure one.

Some Tibetans who have already arrived in Nepal and India for pilgrimage and for attending the Buddhist teachings in January have already been ordered to return, and the authorities are as well pressuring their families in Tibet.

China’s discriminatory policy on Tibetan freedom of movement also includes Tibetan Americans who wish to travel to Tibet for pilgrimage or to meet their relatives. The Chinese Embassy and consulates in the United States adopt a different processing system for Tibetan Americans that includes intensive investigation and often end up with denial of visas.

## **3. Use of Counter-terrorism measures to control Tibetans**

In Tibet, despite the absence of any violent insurgency, an aggressive ‘counter-terrorism’ drive has been underway resulting in the militarization across the Tibetan plateau. By conflating the expression of distinct religious and ethnic identities with ‘separatism’, and blurring distinctions between violent acts and peaceful dissent, the Chinese government is using counter-terrorism as a

justification to crackdown on even mild expressions of religious identity and culture in Tibet.

In line with a ‘counter-terror’ campaign, the Chinese authorities have rolled out new systematic and long-term security measures in Tibet as part of an intensified control agenda.

While rigorous and oppressive measures, including an increase in Communist Party personnel at ‘grass roots’ levels, have been in place since the 2008 protests in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), these measures to eliminate dissent and enforce compliance to Chinese Communist Party policies are now being increasingly observed in the eastern Tibetan areas of Kham and Amdo.

Since October 2011, Chinese authorities have sent tens of thousands of government and party cadres to thousands of villages, religious institutions and neighborhood to monitor and surveil local Tibetans, organize anti-Dalai Lama themed political indoctrination campaigns, and entrench and expand the influence of the CCP in Tibet.

#### **4. H.H. the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan issue**

On the overall issue of Tibet, the position of His Holiness the Dalai Lama remains unchanged in key areas. His is commitment to the Middle Way is unwavering. He is not seeking independence for Tibet but, rather, genuine, meaningful autonomy for the Tibetan people within the People’s Republic of China reached through a negotiated settlement with the Chinese leadership. He has strengthened democratic values within the Tibetan community in exile, including in handing over all his political authority to the elected Tibetan leadership.

#### **Diplomatic and Political Actions that have worked:**

##### **1. Presidential meeting with His Holiness the Dalai Lama**

Successive Presidents of United States have met with His Holiness the Dalai Lama and expressed their support for the Middle Way Approach. This sends a very strong signal to the Chinese authorities that the Issue of Tibet is on the highest of agenda in US-China relations.

##### **2. Appointment and the role of Special Coordinator on Tibet**

Having a special coordinator on Tibetan Issues in the State Department as mandated by the US Tibet Policy Act of 2002 and its annual report on the status of Sino-Tibet negotiations indicates the importance that US Administration attaches in resolving the Tibetan issue in a non-violent, mutually beneficial negotiated solution without pre-conditions.

### **3. Hearings and reports of the commissions**

Meetings of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Sikyong, and the Speaker of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile with bipartisan, bicameral congressional Foreign Relations Committee; hearings and reports by CECC and Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission helps in informing the congress of the Tibetan perspective of the situation inside Tibet and possible solutions.

### **4. Financial Aids**

Financial Aids from State Departments to the Tibetans through USAID, PRM and Scholarship Programs for education, health, social and economic development of Tibetans helps in the preservation and promotion of Tibetan identity.

### **5. Bills and Resolutions**

We believe that the introduction of the Reciprocal Access to Tibet bill has built some traction in allowing congressional delegation and journalists visits to Tibet.

### **6. Congressional and State Department visits to Tibet and Dharamsala**

The congressional delegation's visit to China and Tibet provided first hand understanding of the situation inside Tibet and more intimate dialogue with the local leaders. Similarly, visits to Dharamsala also sends a strong signal to China.

### **Suggestions to the new Administration and the Congress:**

1. The United States has played a pivotal role in highlighting the human rights situation in Tibet and in encouraging the Chinese Government to improve them. Human rights will be respected if China implements internal reform. US Government need to publicly express concern for the human rights situation in Tibet to send a clear signal to China that this is an integral part

of US policy on China

2. Advocate for the release of Tibetan political prisoners. The US should advocate for the release of specific Tibetan political prisoners languishing in Chinese prisons. In the past, efforts by the United States and other governments have led to the Chinese authorities releasing some Tibetan political prisoners who were able to come to the United States for medical treatment and rehabilitation. My office will be pleased to provide some names of Tibetan political prisoners.
3. An early implementation of the Tibetan Policy Act, including the designation of the US Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues at a senior level within the State Department so that the new Administration has its contact person on Tibet in place for effective coordination of work.
4. The Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act before the House could also help to promote access to Tibetan areas for U.S. officials, journalists, and citizens. Currently, travel restrictions imposed by the Chinese government on Tibet are more severe than for any other provincial-level entity in China. The approval of the Global Magnitsky Act by the US Congress will send the right message to Chinese officials responsible for human rights violations in Tibet.
5. The Administration should impress on China the need to establish US Consulate in Lhasa
6. The incoming President should meet with His Holiness the Dalai Lama at the earliest opportunity in keeping with precedents
7. The congress and the Administration could raise with the Chinese leadership their discriminatory policies towards the Tibetan people, particularly in the matters of religious freedom and freedom of movement.
8. The Administration should monitor China's misuse of counter terrorism policies in Tibet leading to the denial of fundamental rights of the Tibetan people. As and when necessary this needs to be raised publicly.
9. Preserve funding for Tibet-related programs in the Department of State & Foreign Operations Appropriations bill, including economic development; humanitarian assistance; Tibetan language broadcasts through Voice of America and Radio Free Asia; and scholarship and exchange programs. These small but indispensable investments in Tibetan communities support the Dalai Lama's vision of preserving Tibetan identity during these difficult times until a negotiated agreement is reached.
10. The congress should organize more bipartisan, bicameral visits to Tibet and Dharamsala

11. Above all, proactive support at the highest level of Government to encourage the Chinese authorities to resume dialogue to resolve the Tibetan issue, as mandated by the Tibetan Policy Act, will eventually improve the human rights situation of the Tibetan people.

I thank you for the opportunity to testify before your Commission and look forward to answering any questions you have.



## Priority list: Tibetan Political Prisoners at Risk

### International Campaign for Tibet - October 2016

---

#### **Druklo (Shokjang)**

Name: Druklo (pen-name Shokjang)

Chinese: 雪江

Status: Sentenced to 3 years in February 2016

Druklo, more widely known by his pen name Shokjang, is known for his reflective and thought-provoking articles on issues of contemporary concern such as ethnic policy and settlement of nomads. There was widespread dismay when he was detained by security police in Rebkong (Chinese: Tongren) on March 19 2015, with numerous netizens expressing their sadness. On 17 February 2016, he was sentenced to three years in prison in a court in Xining, the provincial capital of Qinghai. Details of charges are not known, although one source in exile said that he believed it was connected to ‘separatism’. In the days leading up to his arrest, Druklo wrote a blog post about an intense build up of Chinese security forces in the Rebkong area.



*More information at:*

<https://www.savetibet.org/popular-courageous-tibetan-blogger-sentenced-to-three-years-in-prison/>

<http://www.savetibet.org/popular-tibetan-blogger-asserts-his-innocence-in-letter-from-prison/>

#### **Tashi Wangchuk**

Name: Tashi Wangchuk

Chinese: 扎西旺秀

Status: Detained since January 2016

Tashi Wangchuk, 31, has been detained by police in his home area of Jyegudo (Chinese: Yushu) in Qinghai since 27 January 2016, following an interview with the New York Times on Tibetan culture and language, published as an article and video in November 2015 (the video is available at:[http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/29/world/asia/china-tibet-language-education.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/29/world/asia/china-tibet-language-education.html?_r=1)). He faces charges of ‘separatism’, although he has not advocated Tibetan independence, and has said that Tibet should have greater regional autonomy, especially in





the issue of language, under Chinese governance. According to information from the lawyer cited by the New York Times, the police concluded an additional investigation at the prosecutors' request on 25 August 2016, and handed over those results. Prosecutors must now decide whether the case should go to court. Tashi Wangchuk is being held at the main detention center in Yushu (in the Tibetan area of Kham), where he lives with his elderly parents.

More information at: <https://www.savetibet.org/imprisoned-tibetan-language-advocate-tashi-wangchuk-faces-false-separatism-charges/>

### **Thamkey Gyatso**

Name: Thamkey Gyatso

Chinese: 坦科加错 (Tan-Ke-JiaCuo)

Status: Sentenced to 15 years in

Tibetan Buddhist monk Thamkey Gyatso, from Labrang Tashikyil monastery, is serving a 15-year sentence following his involvement in peaceful political protests in 2008 and possibly also linked to his writings for literary journals. Thamkey Gyatso, who is in his early thirties, was arrested on April 29, 2008 in Labrang, following the major protests in March, 2008. Although he was known to be in good health before his detention, the right side of Thamkey's body is now paralyzed and he can no longer walk. *"His right eye, ear, hand and leg are no longer functional,"* said a Tibetan source. *"He has received some medical treatment but nothing that has helped him to recover. He is unable to move and he just sits on a wheelchair. He can still speak slowly and recognize people."*



### **Lobsang Kunchok and Lobsang Tsering**

Name: Lobsang Kunchok

Chinese: 洛桑贡觉

Sentence: Sentenced to life in January 2013

In January 2013, a Tibetan monk named Lobsang Kunchok was given a death sentence suspended for two years (normally converted to life), and his nephew Lobsang Tsering sentenced to ten years for "intentional homicide" connected to the self-immolation of eight Tibetans in Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) - although five of the self-immolations never occurred. The two Tibetans were caught up in a new drive by Chinese authorities to criminalize the self-immolations in Tibet, and the severe sentences were the first to be imposed against individuals who have allegedly 'incited' or 'coerced' Tibetans to self-immolate. The sentences were handed down by the Intermediate People's Court of the Ngaba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture. On January 28, Xinhua had acknowledged that the two Tibetans were not represented by their own lawyers. Despite an assertion by a judge who told the Global Times that: *"authorities obtained sufficient evidence showing it [the alleged crimes] had been instructed by 'forces from abroad',"* no evidence was presented to justify the sentencing.



## Konchok Tsephel

Name in Tibetan (Wylie): Dkon mchog tshe ‘phel

Chinese: 贡觉次白, 贡却才培

Status: Sentenced to 15 years in November 2009

Konchok Tsephel, born in 1970, in Machu (Ch: Maqu), Gannan TAP, Gansu province. He was an official in a Chinese government environmental department and founder of the influential Tibetan literary website, *Chodme* (‘Butter-Lamp’, [www.tibetcm.com](http://www.tibetcm.com)), detained on February 26, 2009 and sentenced in November 2009 to 15 years of imprisonment after a closed-door trial at the Intermediate People’s Court of Kanlho (Chinese: Gannan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu province. From February to early November 2009, his family had no idea where he was. He was sentenced “on charges of disclosing state secrets,” according to reports from Tibet received by Tibetan exiles. Some of the charges are believed to relate to content on his website, which aims to protect Tibetan culture, and passing on information about last year’s protests in Tibet.



## Topden

Name: Topden

Chinese: 刀登

Status: Sentenced to 5 years

Topden, a 30-year old nomad and writer who writes under the pseudonym Dro Ghang Gah, was sentenced to five years in prison for "keeping contacts with Dalai clique and for engaging in activities to split the nation". He was detained following unrest in the Driru region in Nagchu. Tibetan sources believe that his imprisonment was to punish him for writing a poem detailing the suffering of Tibetans in the county. The poem gives details of the crackdown including the incommunicado detention of a 69-year old layman, mining at a local sacred mountain, and the early years of Chinese rule in the late 1960s when thousands of Tibetans were starved, imprisoned and killed.



## Wangdu

Name in Tibetan (Wylie): Dbang‘dus

Chinese: 旺堆

Status: Sentenced to life in December 2008

Wangdu, who worked for an international public health NGO, was sentenced in December 2008 to life imprisonment after he allegedly shared information about the situation in Tibet. Wangdu, a former Project Officer for an HIV/AIDS program in Lhasa run by the Australian Burnet Institute, was charged with ‘espionage’ by the Lhasa City Intermediate People’s Court after he was detained on

March 14, 2008, the day that demonstrations turned violent in Lhasa. Wangdu was accused of collecting “*intelligence concerning the security and interests of the state and provid[ing] it to the Dalai clique...prior to and following the ‘March 14’ incident*”.



### **Migmar Dhondup**

Name in Tibetan (Wylie): Mima Dunzhu

Chinese: 米玛顿珠

Status: Sentenced to 14 years

Migmar Dhondup, who was also arrested in connection with the March 14 (2008) protests and has been sentenced to 14 years imprisonment, is in his early thirties and also worked for an NGO doing community development work. He is originally from Tingri (Chinese: Dingri), in Shigatse (Chinese: Xigaze), Tibet Autonomous Region. Migmar Dhondup, who speaks fluent English and is very well educated, also used to work as a tour guide. Like Wangdu, he was accused of collecting “*intelligence concerning the security and interests of the state and provid[ing] it to the Dalai clique...prior to and following the ‘March 14’ incident*”.



### **Yeshe Choedron**

Name: Yeshe Choedron

Chinese: 益西曲珍

Status: Sentenced to 15 years in November 2008

Yeshe Choedron was arrested in March 2008. On November 7, 2008, the Lhasa Intermediate People’s Court sentenced Yeshe Choedron to 15 years imprisonment after being convicted for “*espionage*” for allegedly providing “*intelligence and information harmful to the security and interests of the state*” to “*the Dalai clique’s security department,*” according to the Lhasa Evening News (an official party newspaper). She was 53 years old at the time of her arrest. In 2016, Yeshe Choedron was awarded the inaugural ‘*Tenzin Delek Rinpoche Medal of Courage*’ a new international Tibetan human rights defenders award created in memory of the late popular monk Trulku Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, who died in Chinese prison in July 2015.



## **Gartse Jigme**

Name in Tibetan (Wylie):

Chinese: 嘎孜久买

Status: Sentenced to 5 years in 2013

A respected Tibetan monk, Jigme Gyatso (also known as Gartse Jigme based on the name of his monastery in Amdo) was sentenced to five years in prison on January 3, 2013, after writing two books on the situation in Tibet and the suffering of Tibetan people. Gartse Jigme's third book, which was seized by police from the publishers' before printing, includes a discussion on the self-immolations in Tibet and Chinese policy. The sentencing of Gartse Jigme followed the screening of a new Chinese state media documentary seeking to blame exile Tibetans for the self-immolations in Tibet since 2009 (<http://www.savetibet.org/resource-center/maps-data-fact-sheets/self-immolation-fact-sheet>). The new propaganda video is part of a more aggressive and formalized drive against the self-immolations that has involved the imposition of long prison sentences to Tibetans accused of 'inciting' these actions. Gartse Jigme Gyatso was detained by police in his room at Gartse monastery in Tsekhog (Chinese: Zeke Xian) county in Malho (Chinese: Huangnan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture), Qinghai on January 3 (2013) and taken to Xining.



---

## **OTHER CASES OF CONCERN**

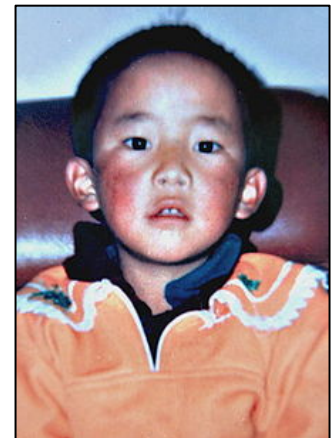
### **Gedhun Choekyi Nyima (11<sup>th</sup> Panchen Lama)**

Name: Gedhun Choekyi Nyima

Chinese: 更登確吉尼瑪

Status: Detained since May 1995 – Whereabouts unknown

Gedhun Choekyi Nima was just six years old when he was recognized by His Holiness the Dalai Lama as the 11th Panchen Lama, one of Tibet's most important religious leaders. Shortly after, on 17 May 1995, he and his family were taken into custody by the Chinese authorities. While they have admitted taking him, they have continually refused to divulge any information about him or his whereabouts, making his case an enforced disappearance.



### **Dhondup Wangchen**

Chinese: 顿珠旺钦 also 当知项欠

Status: Sentenced to 6 years, released, request family reunion by allowing him out of Tibet

Dhondup Wangchen was detained in March 2008, soon after he completed filming a documentary



(“Leaving Fear Behind”) featuring Tibetans in a Tibetan area of Qinghai expressing their views on the Dalai Lama, the Olympic Games, and Chinese laws. Police detained filmmaker him on March 26, 2008 in Kawasumdo (Chinese: Tongde) county, Tsolho (Chinese: Hainan) TAP, Qinghai province, and his assistant Jigme Gyatso, a Labrang (Chinese: Xiahe) Tashikhyil monk, on March 23 (Jigme Gyatso later escaped from prison to India, and is now living in Switzerland). The men filmed more than 100 Tibetans, most of whom chose to speak on camera without concealing their identities. The film was smuggled out of China prior to the film-makers’ detention. The documentary, featuring 20 of the Tibetans, was screened in August 2008. Police held Dhondup Wangchen for 3 months at Ershilipu detention center, near Xining city, and then in a hotel. He is believed to be still in Ershilipu, but there is currently no news on them.



*The film “Leaving Fear Behind” can be viewed in its entirety (around 25 minutes) at <http://woeser.middle-way.net/2008/09/leaving-fear-behind.html>*

**ICT United States**  
 1825 Jefferson Place,  
 NW  
 Washington, DC 20036  
 United States of  
 America  
 Phone: +(1) 202-785-  
 1515  
 Fax: (202) 785-434  
[info@savetibet.org](mailto:info@savetibet.org)  
[www.savetibet.org](http://www.savetibet.org)

**ICT Europe**  
 Vijzelstraat 77  
 1017HG Amsterdam  
 The Netherlands  
 Phone: +31 (0)20  
 3308265  
 Fax: +31 (0)20 3308266  
[icteurope@savetibet.nl](mailto:icteurope@savetibet.nl)  
[www.savetibet.nl](http://www.savetibet.nl)

**ICT Germany**  
 Schönhauser Allee 163  
 10435 Berlin  
 Germany  
 Telefon: +49 (0)30  
 27879086  
 Fax: +49 (0)30 27879087  
[info@savetibet.de](mailto:info@savetibet.de)  
[www.savetibet.de](http://www.savetibet.de)

**ICT Belgium**  
 11, rue de la linière  
 1060 Brussels  
 Belgium  
 Phone: +32 (0)2 609 44 10  
 Fax: +32 (0)2 609 44 32  
[info@savetibet.eu](mailto:info@savetibet.eu)  
[www.savetibet.fr](http://www.savetibet.fr)