

“I have been  
wrongly  
accused”



## Tenzin Delek Rinpoche Urgent Plea for Medical Parole

**Name:** Tenzin Delek Rinpoche འཕམ་མཚོ་ལེགས་ [CH: 阿安扎西 Pinyin: A'an Zhaxi]

**Date of birth:** 1950

**Formal arrest:** April 7, 2002

**Charge:** Crimes of terror and incitement of separatism

**Sentence:** Death sentence with two-year reprieve; later commuted to life imprisonment and reduced to a term of 20 years; Expected release date not known.

**Current location:** Chuandong Prison, Sichuan Province

**Summary:** Highly respected community leader and advocate of Tibetan identity and culture.

**Status:** Known to be in extremely ill-health with a heart condition. He is eligible for medical parole which has been formally applied for by his family.

On 2 December 2002, the Kardze (CH: Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture Intermediate People's Court sentenced Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, a well-known and highly respected lama, to death with a two-year reprieve. His conviction was based on a confession obtained under torture by his alleged co-conspirator, Lobsang Dondrup, who was also found guilty and summarily executed on January 26, 2003. Tenzin Delek Rinpoche's case was commuted to a life sentence in 2005, and since then has been reduced to 20 years. During the trial, no evidence other than the confession of Lobsang Dondrup was offered to link Tenzin Delek Rinpoche to the bombings. Tenzin Delek Rinpoche maintained his innocence throughout.

**Tenzin Delek Rinpoche is in extremely poor health with a serious heart condition and high blood pressure.**

During a rare visit to see Tenzin Delek Rinpoche his family spoke to a doctor who was present; the doctor told them that he believed Tenzin Delek Rinpoche had a serious heart condition for which he needed surgery.

Tenzin Delek is also reported to have had a long period of dizzy spells and serious problems with his legs which have caused him to fall on a number of occasions.

**Tenzin Delek Rinpoche is eligible for medical parole<sup>1</sup>** under Chinese law. He is known to be chronically unwell and he has served over seven years of his sentence.

An official application for medical parole was made by Tenzin Delek's family in 2014. To date his family have not heard from the authorities about this legitimate application, and have not been granted visitation rights, as deemed the right of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche under Article 48 of The Prison Law<sup>2</sup>, since 2013.

## Eligible for Medical Parole

Tenzin Delek is not only eligible for medical parole but his application needs urgent attention. International Tibet Network member groups/ Global Tibet groups are appealing to governments to urgently press Chinese authorities to release Tenzin Delek Rinpoche on medical parole and allow him to receive the urgent medical assistance that he needs.

There are numerous examples of political prisoners held in China being released on medical parole following diplomacy by foreign governments who have raised specific urgent cases as a priority.<sup>3</sup>

The deteriorating human rights environment in Tibet must be given greater prominence by international governments. By publicly raising the case of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, with a specific ask for medical parole may not only afford him protection from further ill-treatment but significantly increase the prospects of him receiving the parole and medical care he so desperately needs.

**“ I am completely innocent... I have always said we should not raise our hand at others. It is sinful... I have neither distributed letters or pamphlets nor planted bombs secretly. I have never even thought of such things, and I have no intention to hurt others.”**

“ Despite his final conviction, no court documents have since been released by the court, shrouding the proceedings in secrecy.”

## Torture in Detention

Arrested on 7 April 2002, Tenzin Delek Rinpoche was held incommunicado for eight months from the day of his arrest until the time of his trial. Moreover, he had no access to the lawyer his family appointed for him, and despite his final conviction, no court documents have since been released, shrouding the proceedings in secrecy.<sup>4</sup>

After sentencing Tenzin Delek Rinpoche reportedly began a hunger strike to protest his unfair trial and the treatment he received in detention, which sources say include him being tortured by being shackled hand and foot and suspended from above.

The level of violence directed at Tibetan political prisoners is frequently extreme and results in Tibetans being left with severe scars following a period of detention, including paralysis, the loss of limbs, organ damage, and serious psychological trauma. <sup>5</sup> Often Tibetans whose lives might have been saved following torture die because of deliberate withholding of medical treatment. This is in contravention of both international and Chinese Criminal Law regarding medical access for detainees.

**Tenzin Delek Rinpoche is not a criminal – he is a prisoner of conscience.**

Tenzin Delek Rinpoche's imprisonment “was the culmination of a decade-long effort by the Chinese authorities to curb his efforts to foster Tibetan Buddhism, his support for the Dalai Lama as a religious leader, and his work to develop Tibetan social and cultural institutions. His efforts had become a focal point for Tibetans struggling to retain their cultural identity in the face of China's restrictive policies and its continuing persecution of individuals attempting to push the accepted boundaries of cultural and social expression.” [ADD LINK](#)

His treatment by Chinese authorities has been nothing short of a vicious act of cruelty.

## Sentenced for supporting Tibetan cultural identity

Before his arrest, Tenzin Delek Rinpoche sought to strengthen the Tibetan community, including by building schools, monasteries, and medical facilities, and by reaching out to the poor. Tenzin Delek Rinpoche supported the Dalai Lama, developed Tibetan cultural and religious institutions, and was also active in environmental protection, speaking out against deforestation practices that were harmful to the local community. Tenzin Delek's activism on this range of issues made him a target of the Chinese authorities, who for ten years attempted to limit his work and influence.

His influence remains strong despite having spent many years in prison. In 2009 over 40,000 local Tibetans in Lighthang signed their names to a petition urging the authorities to release Tenzin Delek Rinpoche. Signing the petition with a thumbprint of red ink, every single one of the 40,000 Tibetan signers was aware of the risk to their freedom and perhaps their lives by speaking out for the Tenzin Delek Rinpoche.

## Notes

1. Chinese Ministry of Justice, “Measures for Carrying Out Medical Parole for Prisoners”, 1990; “a prisoner who has contracted a serious, chronic illness that has not been successfully treated after a long period of time... and who has served at least one-third of a fixed-term sentence, is eligible for medical parole.”  
<http://duihua.org/wp/?p=2608>
2. Article 48 of The Prison Law of the People’s Republic of China, <http://www.china.org.cn/english/Judiciary/31277.htm>
3. Dui Hua, Medical Parole Prisoners to 2005 <http://duihua.org/wp/?p=2608>  
Tibetan Political Prisoners Medical Parole examples, [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1OVrL7HM3f3eBazrCCobhnmzXuZ5ZJUgqanFmSP\\_dH5Y/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1OVrL7HM3f3eBazrCCobhnmzXuZ5ZJUgqanFmSP_dH5Y/edit)
4. Report of the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, Leandro Despouy, 2005, <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G05/129/86/PDF/G0512986.pdf?OpenElement>
5. International Campaign for Tibet <http://www.savetibet.org/newsroom/torture-and-impunity-29-cases-of-tibetan-political-prisoners/#sthash.O4sqWf3K.dpuf>

[www.tibetnetwork.org/tenzindelek\\_medicalparole/](http://www.tibetnetwork.org/tenzindelek_medicalparole/)

“Advocating for the medical parole of a political prisoner represents a two-pronged humanitarian appeal: clemency is sought to help save the life of a detainee already believed to be illegally imprisoned for exercising protected rights.”

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