



Tibet Groups in Canada

March 1, 2017

Hon. Chrystia Freeland
Minister, Global Affairs Canada
125 Sussex Drive
Ottawa, ON K1A 0G2

Tibetan National Uprising Day:
Stand with Tibetan human rights defenders

Dear Minister Freeland,

On March 10, the Tibetan community in Canada and around the world will commemorate the 58th **Tibet National Uprising Day**. Rallies and vigils will honour the thousands who died in March 1959 while peacefully expressing their devotion to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and their unease with Chinese policies in Tibet.ⁱ

March 10, 1959 also symbolizes the flight of the Dalai Lama into exile in India from where he has steadfastly promoted the values of non-violence, tolerance, and universal responsibility. For his commitment to such ideals, he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 and Honourary Canadian Citizenship in 2006.

The Tibetan people continue to face intimidation, detention and imprisonment for the free expression of opinion, for the practice of religion, and for the exercise of cultural traditions. Approximately 2000 prisoners-of-conscience linger in China's prisons.ⁱⁱ Many are held without charge, are denied due process, or experience torture in detention.

We, the representatives of Tibetan community associations and non-governmental organizations across Canada, ask that the Government of Canada speak out for human rights defenders in Tibet. In particular, we request Canadian intervention on behalf of four prisoners-of-conscience whose cases are summarized below:

- **Gendhun Choekyi Nyima (the 11th Panchen Lama)** (m): On May 15, 1995, the Dalai Lama named 6 year-old Gendhun Choekyi Nyima as the 11th Panchen Lama. On May 17, 1995, Chinese authorities abducted the child and his family. No charges have been disclosed and no trial is known to have taken place. China has admitted holding the Panchen Lama on numerous occasions including at the United Nations. Yet, despite numerous requests from UN special procedures and world governments, including Canada, there is still no information as to the whereabouts or safety of the Panchen Lama. *Request:* Canada should urge permission for international observers to visit the Panchen Lama and his family.
- **Druklo / Shokjang** (m): Tibetan writer and blogger Druklo, also known by his pen-name Shokjang, was detained on March 16, 2015 by national security police officers



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at a hotel in Rebkong, Amdo, eastern Tibet (Ch: Tongren County, Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai province). On February 17, 2016 Shokjang was sentenced to 3 years by the Malho Prefecture “Middle Court”; no details of the charges against him have been released. Shokjang is a prominent Tibetan writer and blogger known for his critical and thought-provoking articles about the current situation in Tibet, including about the forced resettlement of Tibetan nomads.

Request: Canada should ask authorities to disclose the charges against Shokjang.

- **Yeshe Choedron (f):** The 57 year old retired medical doctor was detained in 2008 after protests broke out in Lhasa on March 14. On November 7, 2008, the Lhasa People’s Intermediate Court sentenced her to 15 years’ imprisonment for allegedly providing “intelligence and information harmful to the security and interests of the state” to “the Dalai clique’s security department”. No additional details are known. Sources report that Choedron has not been permitted visits from her children since her sentencing. Request: Canada should seek China’s permission for family visits.
- **Tashi Wangchuk (m):** Tashi Wangchuk (m) aged 31, was detained on January 27, 2016, after he was featured in a *New York Times* video (“A Tibetan’s Journey for Justice”). In the video Wangchuk advocated on behalf of Tibetans who wished to learn and study in their mother tongue. Although he explicitly told the NYT that he was not calling for Tibetan independence, he was indicted in January 2017 on charges of “inciting separatism,” and now faces up to 15 years in prison. Request: Canadian should request permission to observe Tashi Wangchuk’s trial.

We know from past experience that inquiries from foreign governments such as Canada can have a positive impact on the well-being of prisoners in Tibet. That is why we are appealing to you, on the occasion of the 58th Tibetan National Uprising, to use both bilateral exchanges with Chinese officials and joint action with like-minded governments to pursue the individual cases presented in this letter.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Tenzin Gyurme, President
Tibetan Cultural Society of British Columbia

Tashi Rubling, President
Tibetan Association of Alberta

Sonam Chokey, National Director
Students for a Free Tibet Canada

Sonam Lankar, President
Canadian Tibetan Association of Ontario



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Kalsang Dolkar Gyaltzen, President
Tibetan Women's Association of Ontario

Gyaltsok, President
Ottawa Tibetan Community Association

Namgyal Dolma, President
Tibetan Cultural Association of Quebec

Carole Samdup, Executive Director
Canada Tibet Committee

cc: Arif Virani MP, Chair, Parliamentary Friends of Tibet
James Maloney MP, Vice Chair, Parliamentary Friends of Tibet
Garnett Genuis MP, Vice Chair, Parliamentary Friends of Tibet
Randall Garrison MP, Vice Chair, Parliamentary Friends of Tibet

ⁱ For the sequence of events leading to March 10, 1959, see:
http://tibet.ca/_media/PDF/en/March_10_The_Lhasa_Uprising.pdf

ⁱⁱ For a current database of Tibetan prisoners, see Tibetan Centre for Human Rights & Democracy at
http://www.tchrd.org/tchrd_pdb/