

## **AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL**

### **Public Statement**

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### **China: Return the body of prominent Tibetan monk Tenzin Deleg Rinpoche who died in prison**

The Chinese government must immediately return to his family the body of Tenzin Deleg Rinpoche, a prominent Tibetan Buddhist monk who died while serving a life sentence in Chuandong Prison in Sichuan province, in Southwest China or inform them of the whereabouts of his remains.

Tenzin Deleg Rinpoche, a Tibetan religious and community leader, was sentenced to death with a two year reprieve in 2002 for “inciting separatism”, which was then commuted to life imprisonment in 2005. He had been convicted in connection with several bombings in Sichuan province and had been detained for more than 13 years prior to his death on 12 July 2015, as reported by the Chinese authorities. Amnesty International had previously raised concerns that the trial of Tenzin Deleg Rinpoche fell far short of international fair trial standards, and that he was punished solely because of his peaceful religious and civic work with Tibetan communities.

The international community had consistently raised with Chinese authorities their concerns about Tenzin Deleg Rinpoche’s treatment while in detention including torture and other ill-treatment and most recently concerns for his health. The Tibetan community and the family of Tenzin Deleg Rinpoche made multiple requests for medical parole but received no reply from the Chinese government. During his 13 years in detention, the family was allowed to visit Tenzin Deleg Rinpoche only once, in 2013, and had no access to him before his death, according to the International Campaign for Tibet.

Following the news of his death, Tibetan organizations have reported large gatherings, in some cases more than a thousand people, to mourn Tenzin Deleg Rinpoche and call for the return of his body so that the family and the community could perform customary Buddhist religious rites.

Of great concern are reports from the Tibetan Centre of Human Rights and Democracy that on 13 July the police have countered the protests with excessive and arbitrary use of force, including the tear gas and gun shots.

The Chinese government must respect the right to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly and religion, and allow members of his family and community to gather to express their grief about the death of their religious and community leader. Police must facilitate assemblies and may not break up gatherings with unnecessary or excessive force.

Under international legal standards, the Chinese government must promptly return the body to the family or give them information about the whereabouts of the remains.