

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Heavy prison sentences for nuns in Tibet

2 February 1994

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Eleven nuns from Garu Nunnery, north of Lhasa, have been sentenced to terms ranging from two to seven years' imprisonment for their alleged part in a demonstration, which unofficial sources in Tibet claim never actually took place.

The nuns were arrested on 14 June 1993 in Lhasa¹ for apparently taking part in a peaceful pro-independence demonstration. However, according to sources from the city there were no reports of any demonstration in or near Lhasa that day and they believe the nuns were arrested before they managed to begin a protest.

The Chinese authorities have not made the sentences public, but according to unofficial sources Ngawang Dedrol, aged 25, and Phuntsog Choekyi, aged 22, were sentenced to seven years' imprisonment each; Ngawang Keldron, aged 19, to five years; Gyaltzen Sangmo, aged 24, and Ngawang Chendrol (also known as Ngawang Peldrol), aged 18, both to three years and Gyaltzen Kelsang, aged 23, to two years. The sentences passed against the remaining nuns are not known.

¹The arrests were cited on 12 August 1993 in Amnesty International News Service 96/93, *China: Amnesty International Fears Mass Arrests in Tibet as Military Surround Villages*, ASA 17/WU 10/93.

They are: Rinchen Drolma, aged 23, Ngawang Chime, aged 19, Ngawang Choekyi, aged 21, and Ngawang Palmo, aged 22. The date of the trial is also not known.

The 11 nuns were all taken to Drapchi Prison in Lhasa, officially known as the Tibet Autonomous Region Prison No. 1, where political prisoners whose cases are considered most serious are held. Of the 208 political prisoners believed to be in Drapchi, 49 are nuns, 124 monks and 35 laymen. Amnesty International is concerned that the Garu nuns may be prisoners of conscience, who have been harshly sentenced for allegedly participating in a demonstration or attempted demonstration.

Among those reportedly arrested on 14 June 1993 was Gyaltzen Pelsang, a 15-year-old novice also from Garu Nunnery, who is reported to be held in Gutsa Detention Centre. Amnesty International is concerned that Gyaltzen Pelsang is imprisoned solely for the non-violent exercise of the right to freedom of conscience and expression. It is also concerned that she is held in a detention centre where adults are also imprisoned. Although it is now believed that juveniles are housed in separate premises to adult detainees in Gutsa Detention Centre, it is unclear whether they are subjected to the same regime of work. If this is the case the conditions of her detention are in violation of fundamental international standards and in particular do not accord with the provisions of the *UN Convention on the Rights of the Child* to which China is a signatory.

In another report of a juvenile detention, Tenzin Dekyong, a 16-year-old novice at the Michungri Nunnery, was arrested on 13 March 1993 during a demonstration in Lhasa. According to unconfirmed reports she was beaten during the arrest and later taken to Gutsa Detention Centre, where she is still believed to be held. There is no further news of her situation.

Please send telegrams/telexes/express and airmail letters either in English or in your own language:

◆ *urging the authorities to disclose the charges made against Gyaltzen Pelsang, Tenzin Dekyong and the 11 Gutsa nuns, and call for their immediate and unconditional release if the charges are not based on recognizably criminal offences in accordance with international standards;*

◆ *expressing concern that Gyaltzen Pelsang and Tenzin Dekyong are detained in conditions which may not accord with the provision of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which China has signed.*

Please send appeals to:

Tibet Autonomous Region President:

Gyaltzen Norbu Zhuxi

Xizang Zizhiqu Renmin Zhengfu

1 Kang'andonglu

Lasashi 850000

Xizang Zizhiqu

People's Republic of China

Telexes: 68014 FAOLT CN or 68007 PGVMT CN

(Salutation: Dear President)

Telegram: President Gyaltzen Norbu, Lasashi, Xizang Zizhiqu, China

Tibet Autonomous Region Chief Procurator:

Yang Youcai Jianchazhang

Xizang Zizhiqu Renmin Jianchayuan

Lasashi

Xizang Zizhiqu

People's Republic of China

Telegram: Yang Youcai, Jiachayuan, Lasashi, Xizang Zizhiqu, China

This document is being sent to China and CHIRAN Coordinators for action by groups. It is being sent to sections for information only.

Please send appeals immediately. Check with the China Research Section at the International Secretariat if sending appeals after 30 April 1994.

KEYWORDS: RELIGIOUS OFFICIALS - BUDDHIST1 / WOMEN / LONG-TERM IMPRISONMENT / PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE / TORTURE/ILL-TREATMENT / PRISON CONDITIONS / JUVENILES
/ DEMONSTRATIONS /

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