

Further Information on UA 277/06 (ASA 17/054/2006, 12 October 2006) Excessive use of force/Fear of safety

CHINA **About ten children, aged between approximately eight and 15 (names unknown)**
About 15 others

Killed: **Kelsang Namtso, (f), a nun, aged 17**
An unnamed Tibetan boy

A group of Tibetans who were detained in September 2006, when they were trying to flee from China to Nepal were tortured in custody. According to members of the group who were released, the older teenagers and adults were beaten with rubber batons and electric-shock prods. The younger children were not beaten, but were interrogated. It is not clear if all those who were detained have been released or if some still remain in custody.

On 30 September 2006 a group of approximately 70 unarmed Tibetans who were trying to flee China were shot at by the Chinese border control troops at Nangpa pass in the Himalayas. The Nangpa pass is a commonly used escape route for those fleeing China to Nepal. The shooting was witnessed by an international group of mountaineers who videotaped one person, a 17 year old nun Kelsang Namtso, die at the scene and two others fall. At least 25 members of the group, 10 of whom were children, were taken into custody while the rest managed to escape to Nepal. According to one of the detainees who later managed to flee from Tibet, those detained were first taken to a detention centre in Dingri but were transferred to Shigatse after a few days. Altogether they were kept in custody for periods ranging from several days to several months, and some may still remain in custody. Parents of the children were allowed to collect them from detention for a fee between 100 yuan (US\$12) and 500 yuan (US\$60). In Shigatse, the younger children were assigned to do cleaning work and the older teenagers and adults were assigned to construction work.

Following international pressure, the Chinese authorities admitted that one person had died at the shooting, and that two others, one of whom later died from "lack of oxygen" were taken to a local hospital for medical treatment. It is believed that one of them is a young Tibetan boy named Kamsang Namgyal. The authorities claimed that the troops had shot at the group in self-defence and that this is part of "normal border management".

At the time of the shooting there were reports of up to six further casualties but these reports remain unconfirmed.

Background information

Freedom of religion, expression and association continue to be severely restricted in Tibet, and as result many are imprisoned for peacefully exercising their basic human rights. As elsewhere in China, arbitrary detentions, unfair trials and torture and ill-treatment remain commonplace. According to the ICT, between 2,000 and 3,000 Tibetans flee China every year via Nepal to India. About a third of them are children who are sent to Tibetan schools in India, while many others are monks and nuns seeking religious education. Tibetans fleeing China have been shot at by both the Chinese and Nepalese military personnel before, but this is the most severe incident that has come to public attention in recent years.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Chinese, English or your own language:

- calling for an official investigation into the allegations of torture, with a view of bringing those found responsible to justice;
- calling on the authorities to clarify whether all those detained at Nangpa pass on 30 September 2006 have been released; to clarify the names, whereabouts and legal status of those who may remain in detention;
- calling upon the authorities to release those who may still be detained immediately and unconditionally; unless they are charged with a recognisably criminal offence;
- condemning the reported shooting of civilians by Chinese border control personnel;
- urging the authorities to confirm the identity of those who died or were injured in the shooting, and adequately compensate the victims or their families.

APPEALS TO:

Prime Minister of the People's Republic of China

WEN Jiabao Guojia Zongli

The State Council

9 Xihuangcheng Genbeijie

Xuanwuqu

Beijingshi 100032, People's Republic of China

Email: **gazette@mail.gov.cn**

Salutation: **Your Excellency**

Minister of Public Security of the People's Republic of China

ZHOU Yongkang Buzhang

Gong'anbu
14 Dongchang'anjie
Dongchengqu
Beijingshi 100741, People's Republic of China
Fax: +86 10 63099216 (it may be difficult to get through, please keep trying)
Salutation: Your Excellency

Chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Regional People's Government
Jampa PHUNTSOG Zhuren
Xizang Zizhiqu Renmin Zhengfu
1 Kang'angdonglu
Lasashi 850000
Xizang Zizhiqu, People's Republic of China
Salutation: Dear Chairman

COPIES TO:

Secretary of the Tibet Autonomous Regional Party Committee
Shuji
Zhonggong Xizang Zizhiqu Weiyuanhui
Lasashi, Xizang Zizhiqu, People's Republic of China
Salutation: Dear Secretary

and to diplomatic representatives of China accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 20 March 2007.*****