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PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Tibetan prisoner of conscience dies in prison

26 July 1996

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According to a report received by Amnesty International, **Kelsang Thutob**, a Tibetan monk who had been imprisoned since April 1989, died at 4 o'clock in the morning on 5 July 1996, in Drapchi prison in Tibet's capital Lhasa. The report said he died due to illness for which he had not received medical treatment. Kelsang Thutob was 49 years-old. Sources in Tibet said he had been in good health before going into prison, but that none of his family are known to have been permitted to visit him in recent years.

Kelsang Thutob () is believed to have been suffering from generally poor health and high blood-pressure immediately prior to his death, but it is reported that he had not recently received any medical care. He was earlier reported to have been suffering from malnutrition and to have been ill-treated during his detention in Drapchi prison¹.

Kelsang Thutob (c) TIN

Previous information about Kelsang Thutob's imprisonment came from former detainees from Drapchi prison as his family had been denied access to him for several years. One former detainee reported that in 1992, Kelsang Thutob was working as a cook in the prison. In mid-1993 a relative was refused access to visit and was told that Kelsang Thutob was no longer detained at Drapchi prison. However, another former detainee reported having seen Kelsang Thutob there on 12 June 1993.

Before his detention, Kelsang Thutob had been a Buddhist monk at Drepung Monastery near Lhasa. He was detained in April 1989 while allegedly trying to flee the country. In November 1989 he was sentenced to 18 years' imprisonment by the Lhasa Intermediate People's Court, one of the longest sentences imposed on a political prisoner in Tibet in recent years. He was accused of "forming a counter-revolutionary organization and spreading counter-revolutionary propaganda" in the form of "reactionary literature" which "venomously slandered

¹ See Tibet Information Network, 26 July 1996.

China's socialist system characterised by the people's democratic dictatorship" and of attempting to "illegally cross the national border".

Nine other monks from Drepung Monastery, **Ngawang Phulchung, Jampel Changchub, Jampel Losel, Jampel Monlam, Jampel Tsering, Ngawang Kunga, Ngawang Gyaltzen, Ngawang Oeser and Ngawang Rigzin**, were sentenced at the same time to between five and 19 years' imprisonment², they were also accused of taking part in "counter-revolutionary" activities. The sentences were announced at a mass sentencing rally held on 30 November 1991. All ten monks have been adopted by Amnesty International as prisoners of conscience.

Among the "reactionary literature" that Kelsang Thutob and the nine other monks were accused of producing was a Tibetan translation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Other documents included reports on recent dissident activity in Tibet and on Tibetans shot and killed by police at a pro-independence demonstration.

The authorities have not so far disclosed any information about the circumstances and cause of Kelsang Thutob's death. Amnesty International is concerned at reports that he had been ill-treated in prison, that he was in poor health and was denied medical care. It is calling on the authorities to launch a thorough and impartial investigation into those allegations and to make the findings public. It is also calling for the immediate and unconditional release of the monks who remain in detention.

Amnesty International also remains seriously concerned about **Ngawang Choephel**, a 30 year-old Tibetan exile, reported to have been detained in Tibet for almost one year. Ngawang Choephel travelled to Tibet in July 1995 to make a film documentary about traditional Tibetan performing arts and was reported missing by his mother who had expected him to return to India in December 1995.

Ngawang Choephel

Ngawang Choephel is thought to remain in detention at Nyari Detention Centre in Shigatse. He was last seen there in October 1995 by exiled Tibetan businessman, Dorji Rinchen, who was detained there at the time and has since left Tibet. There has been no news of Ngawang Choephel since and he is not known to have been charged or tried.

² Three monks received five-year sentences which were due to expire in April 1994: Jampel Monlam and Ngawang Kunga have been released, Jampel Tsering is presumed to have been released.

Please send telegrams/telexes/express and airmail letters in English, Chinese or in your own language,

- ◆*express concern at the recent death in custody of Kelsang Thutob who is said to have been ill-treated in detention and denied medical treatment;*
- ◆*call for a thorough and impartial investigation into these allegations and the cause of his death, and ask the authorities to make public the result of the investigation;*
- ◆*urge the immediate and unconditional release of Ngawang Phulchung, Jampel Changchub, Jampel Losel, Ngawang Gyaltsen, Ngawang Oeser and Ngawang Rigzin and for confirmation of the release of Jampel Tsering;*
- ◆*urge the immediate and unconditional release of Ngawang Choephel unless he has been charged with a recognizable criminal offence.*

Please send appeals to:

*President of the Tibet Autonomous Regional People's Government
Gyaltsen Norbu Zhuxi
Xizang Zizhiqu Renmin Zhengfu
1 Kang'angdonglu
Lasashi 850000
Xizang Zizhiqu
People's Republic of China
Telexes: 68014 FAOLT CN or 68007 PGVMT CN
Telegrams: President of the Regional People's Government, Lhasa, Tibet Autonomous Region,
People's Republic of China
(Salutation: Dear President)*

*Governor of Tibet Autonomous Regional Prison No.1 (Drapchi Prison)
Jianyuzhang
Xizang Zizhiqu Di Yi Jianyu
Lasashi 850003
Xizang Zizhiqu
People's Republic of China
(Salutation: Dear Governor)*

*Director of Nyari Detention Centre
Nyari Kanshousuo Suozhang
Shigatseshi
Xizang Zizhiqu
People's Republic of China
(Salutation: Dear Director)*

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KEYWORDS: PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE1 / RELIGIOUS OFFICIALS - BUDDHIST1 / DEATH IN CUSTODY1 / ILL-HEALTH / TORTURE/ILL-TREATMENT / INCOMMUNICADO DETENTION / LONG-TERM IMPRISONMENT / RESTRICTION ON MOVEMENT / DETENTION WITHOUT TRIAL / DIRECTORS / PHOTOGRAPHS /

INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT, 1 EASTON STREET, LONDON WC1X 8DJ, UNITED KINGDOM

