
amnesty international

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

TIBET AUTONOMOUS REGION

Sentences for young Tibetan monks for a few minutes of protest

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A sixteen year old Tibetan novice monk is currently serving a three-year prison sentence for staging a pro-independence protest with another monk. The protest lasted only a few minutes.

The two young Tibetan monks, Namdrol and Phuntsog Legmon, were sentenced on 9 July 1999 by the Lhasa Intermediate People's Court to three and four years' imprisonment respectively. They were accused of "plotting or acting to split the country or undermine national unity" for shouting slogans for a few minutes in Tibet's capital city of Lhasa on 10 March. AI considers the two to be prisoners of conscience held solely for the peaceful expression of their political beliefs and calls for their immediate and unconditional release.

10 March 1999 marked the 40th anniversary of the 1959 uprising in Tibet. Around this time, police security was extremely tight, particularly in Lhasa, in anticipation of Tibetans attempting to mark the anniversary.

Between 2 and 3pm on 10 March, Phuntsog Legmon¹, aged 16, and 21 year-old Namdrol² are reported to have entered the east side of the Barkhor, the route around Lhasa's main temple, the Jokhang. Some reports say that initially they were carrying the banned Tibetan flag. They then reportedly raised their fists into the air and began shouting "Free Tibet", "Tibet is not part of China", and "Chinese go back to China".

¹ Layname Tseten Norbu

² Layname Sonam Choedrak

Within minutes Phuntsog Legmon was reportedly detained by five blue-uniformed police officers from the Barkhor police station and taken to the south-west corner police station.

Namdrol reportedly tried to run away but was caught and was taken to a police station at the far western corner of the Barkhor. Reports say that the police beat the monks with batons and fists while detaining them. They were then taken to Gutsa detention centre and, since their trial, are reported to be detained in Drapchi prison.

Phuntsog Legmon is originally from Toelung Dechen county; he was sentenced to two years' deprivation of political rights in addition to his prison sentence. Namdrol, from Phenpo Lhundhup county, was deprived of his political rights for one year. They are both monks at the Taklung Monastery in Toelung county near Lhasa.

In November 1999, the international community will celebrate the 10th anniversary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, one of the major human rights treaties signed and ratified by China. The Convention provides enhanced human rights protection for children under the age

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

- ◆ urging the immediate and unconditional release of Phuntsog Legmon and Namdrol;
- ◆ expressing concern that Namdrol is only sixteen years old and is reportedly being detained in an adult prison;
- ◆ stressing that a peaceful protest by two people, lasting only a few minutes, does not represent a genuine threat to national security;
- ◆ reminding the Chinese government of its obligations under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to respect the right of children to "freedom of thought, conscience and religion" and to ensure that that imprisonment of juveniles is used "only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time";
- ◆ expressing concern about reports of their ill-treatment while in police custody and seeking assurance that they are treated in accordance with international standards for the treatment of prisoners.

Please send appeals to:

President of the People's Republic of China

JIANG Zemin Guojia Zhuxi

Beijingshi

People's Republic of China

Telegram: President Jiang Zemin, Beijing, China

Salutation: Your Excellency

Chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Regional People's Government

Legchog Zhuren

Xizang Zizhiqu Renmin Zhengfu

1 Kang'angdonglu

Lasashi 850000, Xizang Zizhiqu

People's Republic of China

Telexes: 68014 FAOLT CN or 68007 PGMVT CN

Salutation: Dear Chairman

Telegram: Chairman, Regional People's Government, Lasa, Xizang Zizhiqu, China

Salutation: Dear Chairman

of 18.

KEYWORDS: RELIGIOUS OFFICIALS - BUDDHIST1 / JUVENILES / FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION / PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE / PHOTOGRAPHS

This document is sent to China and CHIRAN Coordinators for action by groups. It is sent to Sections for information only. Check with the East Asia Sub-Regional Team if sending appeals after 12 November 1999.

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