

Cover Story:

March to Tibet: Rekindling the Spirit of Tibetan People's Uprising Movement

The start of the 2008 Beijing Olympics will mark nearly five full decades since the 1959 uprising in Tibet that challenged China's illegitimate occupation and resulted in the forced escape of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Neither side has overlooked this most important historic moment in time. The Chinese government views this summer's games as a golden opportunity to finally gain acceptance as a global leader. China's communist officials hope that the shadows of propaganda and immeasurable human rights violations inside Tibet will be invisible as the international spotlight focuses on the historically peaceful spirit of the games. On the flip side, Tibetans living in exile in India see this as a timely occasion for a jump-start to a 50th anniversary commemorative rebirth of the Tibetan People's Uprising Movement.

The Return March to Tibet was cooperatively organized by the five largest Tibetan Non-Governmental organizations (NGOs): The Tibetan Women's Association, The Tibetan Youth Congress, the Gu-Chu-Sum Movement of Tibet, The National Democratic Party of Tibet and Students for a Free Tibet (India). The goal:

assemble a group of dedicated Tibetans willing to take control of their own future



4th January Press Conference

by committing to a unified and non-violent protest in the form of a walk from Dharamsala, India to Tibet. The march would be an announcement to the world of the Tibetans' unrelenting desire for freedom inside Tibet. In particular, it would be a nation-wide movement to garner the support of Indian citizens and

decision-makers to increase pressure on the Chinese government.

The embryonic idea for the march was planted on January 4th of 2008 with an official unified declaration from all five of the NGOs stating that the Tibetan People's Uprising Movement would be reborn through a series of strategic campaigns. Their demands were four-fold: The unconditional return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Tibet, a dismantling of the colonial occupation of Tibet, the release of all Tibetan political prisoners and the cancellation of the 2008 Olympics in Beijing. Dr. B. Tsering, President of the Tibetan Women's Association, was one of the co-organizers of the march. She suggested "In this moment of extreme crisis, Tibetans in India and around the world must stand together in solidarity with Tibetans inside Tibet and condemn the Chinese government's vicious attacks against our people. As reports of arbitrary arrests, beating, and disappearances in Tibet increase, we are calling on the Indian government and the international community to use their diplomatic influence to press for an immediate withdrawal of Chinese troops from Tibet and the release of all Tibetan protesters."



Marchers at New Delhi

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In addition to reviving the spirit of the 1959 Tibetan National Uprising and the protesting of China's illegal occupation of Tibet, the march to Tibet was also envisioned to challenge China's insistence that Tibetan people, once departed from their homeland, are no longer permitted to return. In reality, the right of a refugee to return to his/her home country has a solid base in international law. According to Article 13(2) of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights "*Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country*". The right persists even when sovereignty over the territory is contested or has changed hands. The marchers were willing to give up everything in order to exercise this right. Young and old, they represented a wide range of Tibetan society - from monks and nuns to laymen and even a few western supporters.

In particular the Tibetan Women's Association is proud to boast the strong presence of over sixty-five female march participants. The decision to partake in the march resulted in huge personal sacrifices for these brave women. Material possessions were sold, occupations and studies were abandoned and teary goodbyes were said to parents, husbands, children and dear friends.

March

The March to Tibet began on the 10th of March with 100 highly energetic core marchers setting off from Tsuklagkhang temple carrying images of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Gandhiji, two of the world's greatest and most famous proponents of peaceful, non-violent action. The march was the spark that ignited a bonfire of support from Tibetans around the world who rose up to commemorate the 49th Anniversary of the Tibetan

National Uprising Day. In Dharamsala, His Holiness the Dalai Lama spoke of the growing gravity of the situation inside Tibet only hours before the marchers set off on their journey.

The high spirits of the marchers quickly dissolved that evening as they reached the Sara Institute of Higher Tibetan studies and were confronted by the local Kangra police who had been ordered by the Indian Government to step in and put an immediate stop to the march. Consequently, a restraining order was imposed that strictly forbade the marchers to continue their protest outside the Kangra district. An Indian journalist asked whether the restraining order permitted the marchers to continue to protest freely within Kangra, to which the answer was affirmative. Contradicting this statement, all the marchers were arrested at Dehra, which is well within the borders of Kangra district. In addition to the 100 core marchers, 20 to 30 support marchers were also present. As the police moved in, the marchers sat down and formed a human chain. The police forcibly arrested them,

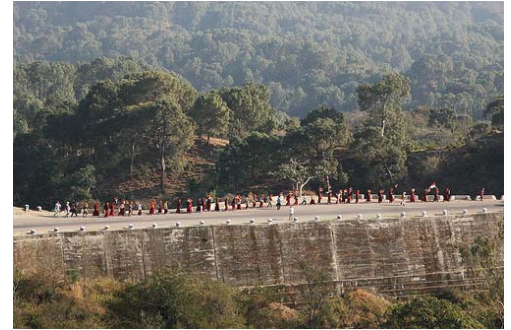


The marchers get arrested at Dehra ten at a time. Organizers and marchers alike had anticipated resistance from the Indian Government but no one imagined it would come at such an early stage.

The 49th commemoration of the National Tibetan Women's Uprising Day on 12th March 2008 was unprecedented with an

overwhelming presence of Tibetan women who marched from Tsuklagkhang to Kachari, Dharamsala, in show of solidarity with the 'March to Tibet'.

As news of more atrocities inside Tibet began to surface, 44 new core marchers set off from Dehra on March 15th. They



The march resumes from Dehra, H.P

were later joined by the 100 core marchers who were released after their two-week detention at Dehra. The following day thousands gathered at Tsuglakhang for another march down to Kachari. Additional displays of solidarity in Dharamsala included: candlelight vigils, the shaving of heads and an on-going hunger strike to be done in 24 hour shifts. Photographs depicting the recent and horrific human rights abuses occurring inside Tibet were also posted all over town.

April

The month of April opened on a positive note with the completion of the Avaaz.org petition signed by over 1.4 million people from across the globe. Avaaz.org is a global web movement that has created a new model of internet-driven advocacy and action. It connects people across all borders to bring people-powered politics to international decision-making. The petition was designed to appeal the presence of Chinese soldiers on Tibetan soil and was personally delivered to the

Chinese Embassy in New Delhi by Dr. B. Tsering, the President of Tibetan Women's Association. On her way back to Dharamsala she stopped just outside Karnal to visit the marchers who had completed a 27-kilometer walk that day. The goal for the following day was to rise at 6am in order to reach Devi Mandir, the



The marchers enter the Indian Capital City

100-kilometer mark in the distance left until their arrival in New Delhi.

As the march progressed, the media and communications team kept the marchers updated about the situations inside Tibet and its repercussion on the International arena. The unprecedented and growing global support for Tibet provided renewed encouragement for the marchers as well as all Tibetans who continue to suffer under China's repressive regime.

Delhi Police escorted the marchers safely into Majnu ka Tilla, the Tibetan Refugee Settlement in New Delhi on April 9th. The journey from Dharamsala – the Himalayan residence of the Dalai Lama and current seat of the Tibetan government in exile – to New Delhi took a full month to complete. In the end the marchers, passionately chanting, “Long live the Dalai Lama” and “Stop the killing in Tibet” were warmly welcomed on April 10th by over 3500 Tibetans at Jantar Mantar, turning the milieu into a tiny version of Tibet with traditional dances, prayer flags, butter lamps and a huge painting of the Potala. Also significant is that the day marked one month of non-violent protest inside Tibet.

In the wake of the recent tragic events in Tibet and following His Holiness the Dalai Lama's advice, Tibetan Women's Association along with three other NGOs collaborated with the Tibetan Government in Exile under the banner of the Tibetan Solidarity Committee and from 10th –17th April, the marchers actively participated in solidarity actions in New Delhi.

On April 25th the marchers celebrated the Panchen Lama's 19th birthday in an ashram in Bridge Ghat near the Holy Ganges River. A khatak ceremony accompanied a birthday cake for the Panchen Lama. In the late afternoon there was a screening of a documentary of the Panchen Lama's life, entitled “Tibet's Stolen Child”.

As the marchers reached Pakwara, Uttar Pradesh, about 9 kilometers outside Moradabad they welcomed 54 new people to the March. Upon reaching Moradabad on April 29th they paused to hold a prayer session to mark the 10th anniversary of Martyr Thupten Ngodup's sacrifice for the Tibetan cause.

With each new town along the way curious Indian crowds met the marchers and interested Indian townspeople who had seemingly endless questions to ask the monks dressed in maroon robes, carrying backpacks, sleeping mats and photographs of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Members of the Organizing Committee often took as much time as is needed to fully explain the Tibetan cause and the intended goals of the Return March to Tibet.

The high spirits of the marchers were matched time and again by the immense support given to them by the Indian people who were more than hospitable over the course of the month. From city to city people continued to show support for the Tibetan cause. Random acts of kindness



The marchers thank India

were a daily occurrence and came from farmers who allowed the marchers to use water from their wells for bathing, villagers who gave cow dung cakes to burn at night to rid the campsites of mosquitoes, managers of gas stations who provided drinking water, plaza managers who offered free showers, timber merchants who supplied electricity, doctors who brought tea and cold drinks and the countless people who offered up their properties as places of shelter. Despite the Indian government's obligation to stop the march, the Indian citizens exercised their freewill and, holding on to their democratic ideals, showed immense support to the marchers and to the Tibetan cause at large.

May

The first week of May saw the marchers' path drifting away from the heat of the Indian plains and into the light rain and cool breezes of the foothills. An almost tactile sense of cheerful optimism brought forth endless waves of patriotic songs along the way. On May 6th the RTWA and RTYC Nainital members along with the local Tibetan Community who lined the streets waving Tibetan flags and offering khata welcomed the group in Nainital. A genuinely happy confidence filled the hearts and minds of the marchers and increased with every new step forwards on the arduous journey towards the Tibetan border.



Tibetan People's Uprising Movement

Unfortunately the marchers were reminded of the impermanent nature of happiness when tragedy struck the group on May 10th with the death of devoted marcher and monk Pema Tashi. He drowned in the Kosi River at Kakri Ghat, Uttarakhand when he jumped into the cold and cloudy water of the river, apparently hitting his head on a rock. Grief was solemnly answered with a long prayer. The chanting prayers lasted throughout the night and into the early morning hours of May 11th when at 7am the body of Pema Tashi was draped in a Tibetan flag, placed on a mountain of *khatas*, and cremated. He will be remembered as a hard worker, a lover of jokes and a warm soul with a brave heart. The marchers sadly and quietly left the campsite after lunch and walked 18 kilometers to reach a roadside camp 8 kilometers outside Almora.

Camp was set up in Dhaulchini on the evening of May 15th and the marchers quickly became very wet victims of a strong rainstorm that flooded all the tents. Fortunately, officials at the Inter-Government College offered safe and dry accommodations to all. In the morning the marchers set out on a 31-kilometer walk. It proved to be one of the most exhausting days of the entire march.

On May 20th local police in the Pithoragarh district of Uttarakhand State interrupted the march. The sub-divisional magistrates who managed to temporarily stop the procession issued the following statement to the press: "We have requested the marchers to turn back from here and we are committed not to let them go ahead for their own security reasons." Despite the stern warning the marchers decided to continue their journey. On May 21st the organizers of the march met with local authorities and a meeting was subsequently called to update the marchers on the day's discussions.



The marchers set off from Seraghat

The following day eight new supporters from Kathmandu, Nepal joined the march. Everyone enthusiastically sang both the Tibetan and Indian national anthems before leaving Seraghat for Banspatan at 8am.

Unfortunately the marchers' luck ran out on May 22nd when 19 of them were detained by Indian authorities. Another 17 marchers were also believed to have been arrested and jailed without any formal cause after leaving the confines of the campsite to drink tea at a nearby shop. In an unprecedented undemocratic move by Indian authorities, five foreigners were issued deportation orders for "violating visa rules by participating in a religious activity". James Petersen, Lex Pelger and David Huang from US, Maryla Cross from Poland and Paul Christians Buntz from Norway were given only 3 days in which to arrange their individual departures from India.

On May 26th the 19 Tibetan marchers detained since May 22nd were released. March co-ordinator Lobsang Yeshe and core marcher Tenzin Tsundue had been staging a hunger strike since their detention and were briefly taken to a local hospital to receive medical attention upon their release. The other 17 marchers, who were also refusing food, were sent back to the campsite.

On May 27th Dr. B. Tsering, President of the Tibetan Women's Association along

with five other leaders were formally jailed: Tsewang Rigzin, President of Tibetan Youth Congress; Ven. Woeber, president of Gu Chu Sum; Chime Youngdroung, President of the National Democratic Party of Tibet; Tenzin Choeying, National Director of Students for a Free Tibet (India) and Lobsang Yeshe, coordinator were arrested. Police also seized and im-

pounded three food trucks carrying desperately needed supplies. Following the arrests approximately 1000 Indian police officers blocked the entrance to the marchers' camp at Banspatan. An ultimatum was then set: Turn back or risk being arrested. In a response that would have made Gandhiji himself very proud, the marchers immediately staged a sit-in. Their non-violent resistance included the chanting of prayers and the singing of the Tibetan na-



Marchers stage a sit-in protest

tional anthem. The stalemate lasted for about an hour before the displeasure concerning Tibetans living on Indian soil became increasingly obvious on both sides. Warnings are firm that "anti-Chinese acts will not be tolerated". Despite the repeated caveats Tsewang Rigzin, president of the Tibetan Youth Congress, stated that "We must continue to remind the world that Tibetans continue to face killings, beatings, arbitrary detentions and disappearances, an oppressive military presence and a terrible climate of fear under Chinese occupation".



June

After a 13-day standoff with police a steady rain was not enough to deter the 265 marchers from finally departing their campsite at Banspatan on June 4th. During the 16-kilometer walk to the town of Berinag, the marchers endured intimidation by truckloads of police who insisted on following the single-filed procession. It was not until their arrival at Berinag, a distance of only 180 kilometers from the Indo-Tibetan border, that on 4th June, all 265 of the marchers were arrested.



An arrested nun cries for help

On June 8th, the presidents and march coordinators were released and while TYC president Tsewang Ringzin, Gu-Chu-Sum president Ngawang Woebar, NDPT president Chemi Yungdrung and March coordinators Sherab Woesar and Tsering Choedup joined the 265 marchers detained at Poanta Sahib, TWA president Dr. B. Tsering, and SFT President Tenzin Choeying along with march coordinator Lobsang Yeshe led another group of 50 core marchers on Monday June 9th to march further towards the Indo-Tibetan border, the same day that orders to shoot were given to Chinese military troops stationed on the Tibetan side of the border. Despite the threat, the marchers remained committed to their goal of reaching Tibet and were determined to continue marching with confidence. They were excited and encouraged to see the snow-covered Hi-

malayan mountains on the horizon as they began their 21-kilometer walk to Gochar.

Arriving at Didihat on the 12th of June, the marchers were reminded of the hundreds of Tibetan refugees who had camped there during their escape from Tibet after the 1959 uprising. This particularly special connection renewed the inner strength of the marchers. “We are walking on the same road that our Tibetan brothers and sisters took when they were escaping Chinese persecution in Tibet,” said Tenzin Choeying, National Coordinator of Students for a Free Tibet, (India). “We are returning to Tibet, not because everything is fine there, but precisely because our brethren need our help to end China’s occupation.”

On June 14th the marchers rested at Askote where King Bhanu Raj Singh Pal invited the March coordinators to his palace for tea. He expressed his support for a Tibet and also invited all the marchers to lunch the following day.

On June 17th the remaining 50 marchers entered Dharchula, their last stop in India before crossing the Indo-Tibetan border.



The leaders brave the police presence to march forward

After over 100 arduous days of marching, hopes of reaching their homeland were dashed as they approached a police

blockade and were promptly arrested by Indian police.

One by one they were forced onto two separate buses with unknown destinations. Dr. B. Tsering, President of the Tibetan Woman’s Association, who was among those arrested, continued to place extreme faith in the cause and suggested that “India has the spiritual and moral duty to help Tibetans in their non-violent struggle against Chinese colonization. The Indian government must recognize that these Tibetans are not a threat to Indian security.” Since March 2008, the brutal suppression of peaceful protests eventually lead to rioting in the capital city of Lhasa and resulted in waves of public demonstrations across the country.

On June 19th Chime Youngdung, President of the National Democratic Party of Tibet, and Konchok Yangphel, Public Relations Officer of the Tibetan Youth Congress, held up Tibetan flags and a banner reading “Free Tibet Now” as they made a brave attempt to cross into Tibet near Shipkila Pass in Himachal Pradesh. Indian border patrols were quick to capture the two exiled Tibetans. Chime Youngdung defended himself by stating “We

have taken this action today to show our solidarity with our six million Tibetan brothers and sisters who are living under siege and being brutally oppressed by the Chinese authorities.”

When 21 Tibetans were detained in Reckong Peo on June 19th they began a hunger strike by refusing to eat or drink until they were either released or allowed to continue their journey. Another ten people were subsequently arrested in Rampur along with seven in Pooh. After a day of fasting the police authorities granted the prisoners permission to protest China’s



occupation of Tibet on their way from the police station to the SDM office. Irony spread its wings the following day as the United Nations marked “World Refugee Day” and the Tibetan refugees simultaneously took to the streets shouting slogans while pleading with authorities to allow them their right of a safe passage to a homeland long left behind.

Confirmation of the date of arrival of the Olympic torch in Tibet had long been kept secret. It finally passed through Lhasa on Saturday June 21st. News of the event spread fast and more than a thousand exiled Tibetans from several refugee camps across India came together with over 350 marchers from the March to Tibet to engage in a massive protest at Gandhi Park, Dehradun. Shri Vinod Chamoli, Mayor of Uttarakhand, addressed the protestors and expressed his sincere support of the Tibetan Freedom Movement. China’s insistence on carrying through with the torch relay in the sacred city of Lhasa is interpreted by all Tibetans along with their world-wide supporters as a spectacle that does nothing more but add insult to injury.

On June 24th and 25th twenty of the marchers who had been arrested along the Indo-Tibetan border were released on the condition of an accord of non-engagement in any future activities that would provoke the Indian government. The remaining 21 were then offered unrestricted releases. This brought an official end to the March to Tibet and the closing ceremonies were held on the morning of June 27th at the Tibetan refugee camp in Paonta Sahib. All in all the marchers had covered an outstanding 1400 kilometers!

TWA holds immense pride in acknowledging and reflecting on the role of the prominent members of TWA who not only participated in the March to Tibet from the very beginning but who also took on immense responsibilities in the planning stages of the march. Dr. B. Tsering, President (Co-orga-

nizing member), Mrs. Tsering Yangzom, General Secretary (Health and Welfare in-charge), Mrs. Tamdin Dolma, Joint Secretary (Chief Cashier), Samten Choedon, President of the RTWA Bylakuppe (Head Accountant) and Mrs. Tenzin Palkyi, Researcher and Editor (Media Coordinator) continue to proudly represent the female Tibetan population through their tireless work and whole-hearted commitments. These women, together with all the members and supporters of the Tibetan Women’s Association, would like to encourage their fellow sisters around the world to pay homage to the brave Tibetan women who created history on March 12th, 1959 by staging the first ever mass protest of women in Lhasa. May their memories be honored with our pledges to carry on their legacies through future proactive and peaceful activities.

The concluding ceremony at Ponta Sahib on 27th June marked the end of the march. This was not only a painful parting for the many marchers who had been together for four months but it was also a melancholy time for all Tibetans who continue to feel a deep sorrow and longing for their homeland. The significance of the march however, goes beyond the achievement of its stated goal of reaching Tibet on foot. It also represents a turning point in Tibet’s political history. The high profile events that unfolded during the 110 days of the march inarguably attracted much needed media attention and support from the international community. Cries for an end to China’s illegal occupation of Tibet sang out across the headlines of local and national newspapers around the globe. It will be remembered as a laudable, enthusiastic, non-violent and democratic effort carried out by normal people in the

face of a powerful despotic regime. Even more exceptional was the commendable collaboration seen between the five major Tibetan NGOs who all made concerted efforts to put aside their differing political opinions in order to create the unified partnership needed for the achievement of a common goal. The unwavering support the marchers received will inevitably encourage the Tibetan community in exile to further exercise their right to express their desire for a peaceful return to Tibet. Dr. B. Tsering, President of the Tibetan Women’s Association, who had been with the marchers from the very beginning, encouraged the participants to return to their respective settlements to begin recruiting friends and family for another push forward. She emphasized the potential for new and great plans to be organized to coincide with the Beijing Olympic Games: “We separate now only to plan, strategize and meet again more forcefully in August. When we meet at that time, we’ll meet in the thousands”.

Such passion will surely prompt further discussions about the desired direction of future political movements as Tibetans everywhere continue to renew their hope of slowly reaching the distant horizon of positive change. The march to Tibet embodies what we deem as ‘an amazing end to an incredible effort’.



Clenched fists calling for Victory for Tibet

Uprising in Tibet: A strong presence of Tibetan women martyrs

The US hearing on the Tibet Crisis, which took place earlier this year on Friday, 25th April 2008, noted that although China may be struggling to contain the Tibetan situation as an “internal affair”, the enormous amount of global interest and sympathy that has been generated towards Tibetan citizens and exiles, particularly during, and in part because of, the build up to the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, has catapulted it into an arena of international debate. Globally we have seen protests happening not only here in India and in Nepal, where it has been estimated that 560 Tibetan women were arrested by Nepalese police in the protests of 11th May, but also as far as the US, Japan and Great Britain, among others. A huge number of Tibetan exiles, including a great many women and nuns, have staged peaceful protests against China’s illegal occupation of Tibet and its gross human rights violations against the Tibetan people – not to mention the 100 marchers, who set off from Dharamsala on 10th March and for more than 100 days marched with staunch determination towards their home and towards greater autonomy for the Tibetan people.

It seems as though word of this massive and widespread engagement with the Tibetan cause has reached Tibet, as there have been numerous reports regarding demonstrations and protests inside Tibet by those striving towards freedom and autonomy, many of which have been the actions of women and nuns protesting in solidarity against China’s illegal occupation of Tibet. The Chinese are still disallowing the presence of journalists and reporters into the country, and so a fuller picture of events from over the past few months has been difficult to obtain. Since March, however, we do know that there has been

a sweep of protests across Kardze County. According to the Free Tibet Campaign this follows the detention of two nuns from Gaden Choeling Nunnery, who on April 23rd staged peaceful protests



against the occupation of Tibet. Some three weeks later on May 12th ten nuns from the same nunnery protesting against their detention were also arrested.

A further series of arrests of nuns and women from all over Khardze County have been accumulating over the past several weeks. On May 11th Thubten Dolma and Sonam Lhamo of Dragkar Nunnery were arrested for the distribution of leaflets and shouting pro-Tibet slogans calling for a Free Tibet and the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Tibet. Later in the month three nuns from Teher Nyagay Nunnery and two from Dargay Hardu Nunnery were also arrested for their separate protests, and four nuns of Nyimo Gaysey Nunnery in Teher, Kardze, for shouting slogans and for the distribution of pamphlets.

On May 14th seventy-six nuns from the Pungrina nunnery in Kardze County staged a protest, reportedly gathering on the street linking Kardze monastery to the county police stations. Their protests resulted in the arrest of 52 nuns.

Three nuns of Dragkar Nunnery in Kardze County, “Tibet Autonomous Prefecture”, Sichuan province held their own protest on May 28th. Later that day, 21 year old female student, Rigden Lhamo of Tapontsang family from Lhakey Village, Thingka Township, Kardze County, again was said to be shouting pro-Tibet slogans at the County Government headquarters and unfurling the banned Tibetan national flag in a protest of her own. She is believed to have been seriously wounded by security forces trying to dispel the protestors, and perhaps even shot after gunfire was reportedly heard.

These protests have continued into June, as a nun from SamtenLing Nunnery in Drago County, Kardze, was arrested on June 9th after staging what the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) calls a ‘peaceful solo protest’ in Drango County. Later in the day more than 200 nuns, also from SamtenLing reportedly protested against this injustice, calling for her release. TCHRD reports that, according to sources, many have been detained and taken to the County Detention Centre and 10 were seriously injured.

A great many women and men have put themselves at great risk in order to make the plight of the Tibetan people heard. The persistence of these demonstrations of resistance, despite having been met with such violence and brutal opposition, is evidence of a renewed verve, energy and exigency towards affecting real social change to the lives of those Tibetans living in Tibet under Chinese rule, and also those living in exile, who, after almost fifty years, still hope that one day soon it will be possible to return. ■



TWA marks the 13th anniversary of the abduction of the 19 year-old 11th Panchen Lama of Tibet

As the second-highest spiritual leader of the Tibetan people, the Panchen Lama is held with great affection by Tibetans around the world. However, 17th May 2008 marks the 13th anniversary of the abduction of Gedun Choekyi Nyima, the then six year old boy from Nagchu District, Tibet, who on 25th January, 1995, was identified by H.H the Dalai Lama to be the 11th Panchen Lama of Tibet. Now nineteen years old, the safety and whereabouts of H.H the Panchen Lama have yet to be confirmed by the Chinese authorities, who continue to deny access to Him, despite repeated calls from UN bodies to allow independent fact-finding delegations to assess His health and general wellbeing. TWA continues to add its voice to those campaigning around the world for the safe release of an innocent child and his family, who have become pawns in the Chinese game for political control in Tibetan spiritual affairs. Despite the current concern for the safety of the 11th Panchen Lama, history has shown that the path of the Panchen Lama had often been a challenging one. The previous reincarnation, Lobsang Choekyi Gyaltsen, also faced a struggle against Chinese oppression and ultimately gave his life for the revival of Buddhism and welfare of the Tibetan people inside Tibet.

The 10th Panchen Lama

The 10th Panchen Lama, Lobsang Choekyi Gyaltsen, was born in Amdo, Eastern Tibet, in 1938. He was recognized as the reincarnation of 9th Panchen Lama by Flak Lakho Rinpoche, and in 1951 was confirmed by H.H the 14th Dalai Lama as the 10th Panchen Lama of Tibet. In 1952 he met H.H the Dalai Lama in Lhasa and then took up his seat in Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in Shigatse, Tibet.



Following the 14th Dalai Lama's escape to India in 1959, the 10th Panchen Lama became the most important political and religious leader in Tibet. Whilst maintaining good

relations with the Chinese, the Panchen Lama was skillful in promoting the welfare of the Tibetan people. Realising that the Communist Chinese were developing a strategy which would destroy Tibetan culture, denying their stated fundamental policies of no racial discrimination and the freedom to practice religion, he submitted a 70,000 character petition demanding that the Chinese Government investigate the policy.

The Communist Chinese Government immediately accused the Panchen Lama of being anti-Chinese and participating in counter-revolutionary activities. In 1964, at a public meeting in Lhasa, he was removed from all public positions of authority. He was openly criticised and humiliated, and forcibly taken to China. In 1966, he was subjected to a series of 'struggle sessions' in the National Institute of Minorities in Beijing, and was imprisoned for nine years and eight months, being eventually released in 1975

In 1979, the Panchen Lama was appointed Deputy Chairman of the National People's Politics Consultative Committee and Deputy Chairman of the National People's Congress. He traveled widely in the Tibetan regions of Amdo and Kham, urging Tibetans to maintain good relations with the Chinese. He also strongly advised them to keep alive the spirit, to

"Be a Tibetan" and "Be for the Tibetan cause". In 1985, in the Monlam festival after the Tibetan New Year in Lhasa, the Panchen Lama said, "His Holiness the Dalai Lama and I are spiritual friends. There are no differences between His Holiness the Dalai Lama and me. Some people are trying to create discord between us. This will not succeed".

At Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, the Panchen Lama built a memorial stupa which he consecrated and inaugurated to replace the silver stupas of the past Panchen Lamas, which were destroyed during the Chinese Cultural Revolution in the 1960s. Shortly after the ceremony at Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, on 28th January 1989, the 10th Panchen Lama passed away unexpectedly after delivering an historic anti-Chinese government speech. He was just 51 years old. For his great efforts to promote the Tibetan struggle the 10th Panchen Lama is still remembered with immense fondness, almost 20 years after his death.

The 11th Panchen Lama

The 11th Panchen Lama, Gedun Choekyi Nyima, son of Kunchok Phuntsok and Dechen Choedon, was born on April 25, 1989 (the nineteenth day of the third Tibetan month in the Tibetan Earth-Snake year) at Lhari, Nagchu District, in Tibet.

On 17 May 1995, Gedun Choekyi Nyima, the six-year-old boy identified by His Holiness the Dalai Lama as the 11th Panchen Lama, disappeared. Suspicions that he had been kidnapped were confirmed in May 1996 when the Chinese leadership admitted to holding him and his family in "protective custody". He became the world's youngest political prisoner. Despite repeated attempts to gain access

to the boy, no international agencies or human rights organisations have been allowed to visit Gedun Choekyi Nyima or his family, and their condition continues to remain uncertain.

The Chinese government deemed the Dalai Lama's actions in selecting Gedun Choekyi Nyima as the reincarnated Panchen Lama to be "illegal and ineffective", particularly as the Central Government had not confirmed the so-called "reincarnated soul boy". In an attempt to establish their own authority over all internal affairs of China (political or otherwise) the Chinese authorities nominated their own 11th Panchen Lama in November 1995. Their selection, a six-year-old boy named Gyaltzen Norbu, is another young victim in China's plan to undermine and control the Tibetan people, their religion, and their nation. The majority of Tibetans does not recognise Gyaltzen Norbu as the true Panchen Lama but instead regard him as a puppet of the Chinese government. There are strong concerns, however, that in future China's politicians intend to influence the selection of the next Dalai Lama when H.H the 14th Dalai Lama passes away.

According to a publicity statement from Tashi Lhunpo monastery released on the Panchen Lama's 19th birthday, Lithang Rungye Adrag made an appeal for his release on the 1st August, 2007. In order to keep the plight of the Panchen Lama in the spotlight, Tashi Lhunpo monastery continues to offer a reward (currently US\$33,290) for information leading to outside contact with Panchen Lama.

TWA's role in seeking His release

Since the abduction of the 11th Panchen Lama in 1995, TWA has kept a constant vigil and conducted continuous awareness campaigns demanding his release from the



hands of the Chinese government. TWA regards his confinement as unacceptable and in breach of numerous ethical and legal codes.

The association is concerned for the welfare of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his parents, Kunchok Phuntsok and Dechen Choedon, and is conscious that this has become a human rights issue requiring global attention and support. We have been and continue to demand quality monastic and spiritual education for Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and we fear that there is an intentional effort on the part of the Chinese authorities to mar His moral values and tarnish His spiritual essence

In an attempt to appeal to international organisations whose pressure may hold some sway with his captors, TWA frequently writes to the United Nations Commissioner on the Rights of the Child, the United Nations Commissioner on Human Rights and the President of China, Hu Jintao. The crux of the political activities were concentrated on the case of the Panchen Lama and a number of awareness campaigns were organized solely by TWA, including a Peace March, in March 2005 and a "Free the Panchen Lama Concert" organised on the occasions of the 16th and 18th birthdays of 11th Panchen Lama. The concerts were held as renewed calls for his immediate release, with artists and singers coming together to spread the message through music.

International Year of the Panchen Lama

The year 2005 was declared as the International Year of the Panchen Lama, marking a decade since the abduction of

His Holiness. TWA was particularly active in 2005, with a number of campaigns using printed material and most significantly by having a representative at the United Nations Commission for the Rights of the Child (CRC) meeting in Geneva in September 2005. TWA, in conjunction with International Tibet Support Group and International Campaign for Tibet, organized the Global Candle Vigil on 17th May 2005 and drafted a petition addressed to the UN Commissioner for Human Rights, demanding international pressure on China for the release of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima. TWA also organized a Poetry and Painting competition amongst the Tibetan schools in India and Nepal to highlight the creative compatibility among the school children and significantly to address and press the issue of the Panchen Lama.

Yellow Ribbon Campaign - 2005

In 2005, TWA launched a campaign to tie yellow ribbons on one of the trees in front of the Tsuglakhang (Main Temple) in Dharamsala every Friday, calling for the expeditious release of the Panchen Lama and for his long life. This campaign will continue until the Panchen Lama is released from incarceration. TWA also designed a yellow and green wrist band, signifying the colours of Panchen Lama and the Dalai Lama. The woven hand wear signifies the inseparable bond between the two most important religious figures in Tibetan Buddhism.

CRC meeting, Geneva - 2005

TWA's representation at the 36th session of the United Nations Commission for the Rights of the Child on 20th September, 2005 was an historic event and represented the last opportunity for Tibetan NGOs to raise the issue of the Panchen Lama as a child prisoner to an



international audience. At that time, questions regarding the current health of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima solicited the usual response from the Chinese delegate - that he was just an ordinary boy who was attending secondary school and scoring good grades.

The delegate added that “Gedhun Choekyi Nyima is nothing but a normal child who is receiving a good education.” When raising his questions on the Panchen Lama’s fate, Prof. Doek, the Chairperson of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), opened his remarks by identifying Gedhun Choekyi Nyima as “what is usually known as the Panchen Lama”. He described the case as a “thorny issue because that particular boy has been taken against his and his parent’s will from Tibet to China.” The delegate then repeated the normal stand of China that

the boy and his parents did not wish to be disturbed due to security reasons. Prof. Jacob asked the Chinese authorities to receive an independent body to verify the current status of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the 11th Panchen Lama of Tibet. However, the head of the Chinese delegation to that session of the CRC responded only by stating that he would pass on the request to higher authorities in Beijing. This request has still not been met, more than three years later.

Current activities - 2008

TWA in association with The Central Association for H.H the Panchen Lama, organized a day-long campaign on 25th April to observe the 19th birthday of the 11th Panchen Lama’s plight. A signature campaign in the morning saw the mass distribution of yellow headband carrying

slogans such as: Missing for 13 Years, Tibet’s Stolen Child, Talk about the Panchen Lama. The evening saw a formal function at Tsuglakhang which replicated the seat of the Panchen Lama (Tashi Lhunpo Monastery) with walls adorned with excerpts from the famous speeches of the 10th Panchen Lama. The prime-minister Samdhong Rinpoche and chairman of ADPT graced the occasion and called for the release of the Panchen Lama. TWA contributed a statement for the day which was read in public both in Tibetan and in English.

TWA calls on the Chinese government to know that we’ll never give up searching for the 11th Panchen Lama. Our goal is to ensure His safe return to Tashi Lhunpo monastery and to see Him being restored to His religious and political rights. ■

Statement: TWA marks the 19th Birthday of Tibet’s Panchen Lama.

Today the 25th of April, 2008, is a day of great joy as the Tibetans all the over the world mark and celebrate the 19th Birthday of H.H the 11th Panchen Lama. At the same time it is a sad day for us as this precious golden boy of Tibet at the age of six, was abducted by the Chinese government. This hostile gesture intervenes in the religious reverence of the Tibetan people and it is an intrusive way of maligning basic human rights. The Panchen Lama is a prisoner of conscience and 13 years is a far too harsh and inhumane punishment for an individual who committed no crime. This is a malicious attempt to destroy the spiritual sanctity and religious tradition that Tibet embodies and it also sheds ample light on the current social, political and religious repression in Tibet today.

PRC officials claimed they were holding the boy at the request of his parents as he was at the risk of being kidnapped by separatists and his security was threatened. Today, with Gendun Choekyi Nyima now entering adulthood, he is no longer a child and hence he is mature enough to fend, protect and speak for Himself without China’s alleged security.

It is the divine wish of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the six million Tibetans to have the 11th Panchen Lama amidst us. We express our deep concern about the Panchen Lama’s family who has since May 17, 1995 disappeared along with their son. Hence His release and His presence is necessary for strengthening the faith of the Tibetan people and for completing the structural mechanism to ensure the continuity of religious authority and leadership in Tibetan Buddhism. We call on the moral conscience of the world and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in particular, to respond to our 13 years of earnest appeal to release the Panchen Lama We beseech the Chinese government to immediately release Panchen Lama and to come to the understanding that the Chinese state interference in the religious affairs of Tibet threatens the very survival of a religious tradition that has flourished for over 2000 years.

The recent peaceful uprising in Tibet reflects on the unhappiness and the deep resentment of the Tibetan people in Tibet. The essence of Tibet should necessarily thrive according to the genuine aspirations and sentiments of the Tibetan people. With the continued imprisonment of the Panchen Lama and the recent military reprisal in Tibet, China is committing the gravest form of Human rights violations. The abduction of the Panchen Lama is a blatant rejection by the PRC of the religious rights of the Tibetan people.

TWA along with Central Association for H.H the Panchen Lama organizes a candle vigil to signify the undying flame in the Tibetans calling for the safe, immediate and unconditional release of the Panchen Lama and to see him being restored to His religious, political and social rights. On September 20, 2005, Dr. B.Tsering, the president of TWA attended the 36th session of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) that called upon the Chinese authorities to allow an independent body to verify the fate of Gedun Choekyi Nyima, the Panchen Lama of Tibet. The CRC asked the Chinese authorities to “allow an independent expert to visit and confirm the well-being of Gedun Choekyi Nyima while respecting his right to privacy, and that of his parents.” But the request is still pending for three years. We earnestly appeal and request the United Nations and the International Community to address this grave issue and to help us in this crucial period in our history, before it becomes irrevocable with disastrous consequences for the survival of the Tibetan culture.

The dire need of the Tibetan people inside and outside Tibet to see the Panchen Lama at His Tashi Lhunpo monastery is growing from strength to strength. With deep prayers for a peaceful Tibet, may all the divine wishes of His Holiness the Dalai Lama be accomplished.



TALKING BACK: Tibetan Women Writing Workshop, June 2008

Four weeks of reading, meditating, thinking, discussing and writing took place during the month of June. TWA is in a genuine bid to empower Tibetan Women on the literary front. Encompassing the Tibetan society in exile with a breed of intellectual Tibetan Women is in our strongest vision. Hard work! uff...but worthwhile we all thought. Four young Tibetan women (in the picture) met weekly with Cristina Bonnet, a graduate student from Stanford University and Vali, an experienced

photographer from France, in order to write... To write? What? Yes, to write, to speak and to talk back. The sessions started



with a group reading (well, if we don't count the giggles and teasing of the first few minutes). The reading was followed by a reflective meditation on the topic that gave rise to interesting and insightful group discussions. We concluded by choosing a topic for our week and this topic resulted in an original piece of writing from each participant handed in the following session.

The last few decades have seen a social and academic movement to retrieve and hear the voices of women from around the world. Since the official histories (histories should we say?) have often effaced and erased the lives of women, we have had to recur to alternative ways of expression in order to share our lives, our

stories and our current struggles. Recently, a book came out of a gender workshop in the Tibetan Autonomous Region titled: *Heavy Earth, Golden Sky: Tibetan Women Speak About Their Lives*. This collection filled an important gap in letting the world know about the lives of rural Tibetan women who struggle to receive an education and to expand their opportunities. However, nothing parallel exists from the numerous Tibetan female refugees in Indian exile... So we set out to work.

In week one we discussed autobiographic writing and gathered inspiration from a story by a young Tibetan woman published in *Heavy Earth: Golden Sky*, the abovementioned book. The participants were moved, almost to tears, by reading the stories of their Tibetan sisters who live inside Tibet, a land most participants think of as their country, but which none has yet met. We thought about our own stories... growing up in the Tibetan Children Village (TCV), being a girl, and growing up in the Tibetan settlements... the memories crystallized in beautiful stories that will speak about the young Tibetan generation growing up in India.

The second week gathered inspiration from writings by the African-American author bell hooks on "self-recovery". This was a tough one as we struggled with abstract and complex theorizing of being a black woman in the USA trying to recover herself. But we were also inspired and thought of what does it mean, this "self" that we are to recover... and how is the self transformed in our different environments. How does race, class, caste, religion, nationality, citizenship (or a lack of it for that matter!) produces or interacts with this self? And most

interestingly... How do Tibetans negotiate the "self" of compassion and emptiness that they learn about through Buddhism with their modern and personal self... All these questions took beautiful shapes in the writings.

Week three moved along with excerpts from *Orientalism* by Edward Said. How does the West think of Tibetans? And what do Tibetans think about that? What are the pros and cons of the mystical and Shangri-la images about Tibetans? We could not finish this week's discussion without exploring the contestations of such images by other Tibetan women. So we read some pages of Rhinchen Lhamos's, *We Tibetans*, in which she contests the Western images of Tibet prevailing in India in 1926. Then it was our turn to talk back, to speak about the current image and its effects on Tibetan women's lives.

Week four had high expectations. We read an article by Toni Huber in *Imagining Tibet* to continue discussing Western representations of Tibetans coming from the academic hub. So it seems as if Tibetans are putting up a show for the Westerners in order to gather strategic



support... or at least this is what some scholars, who probably have not spent much time here in Dharamsala, are saying. We refused to be convinced that what we



believe is just a show, but we had to find the right words to express this. So we spoke some more about our “selves” and our “speeches”. Rhetoric about the environment, gender, and peacefulness interact daily with most of us Tibetans. And what do Tibetan women think about this? Let us see what comes up from it.

We ended our discussion with some poems by Tsundue in *Kora* about life in exile. What is it to not have a citizenship and to not have met our country? What is it to learn what a refugee is and that we fit that

description? What is it to have people from rich countries working on us, meaning, studying us, and to have no citizenship rights to respond? And yet, we responded.

This workshop was inspiring and intellectually enriching for both the participants, and perhaps especially for the conveyers who gather inspiration from the rich ideas and perspectives of Tibetan women.

We are convinced about continuing with a series of similar workshops for young

Tibetan women and this is a unique opportunity for you to hone your literary prowess and also share and grow intellectually. Your autobiographical account and your wisdom of words will be finally compiled into a book that will be published. This is a good opportunity for Tibetan women to contribute to the Tibetan cause by letting the world know about your life in exile. If you are willing to spare only 10 hours (2 hours per Sunday) for one month, then please write to tibwomen@gmail.com. ■

TWA holds one-day women's empowerment workshop on Leadership Skills in conjunction with IMTD, USA

On 28th June 2008 the TWA hosted a one-day event in Dharamsala to teach 22 young Tibetan women invaluable leadership skills, and techniques for dealing with traumatic events in their lives. The 22 participants benefited from the considerable experience of 3 members of the Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy, an academic institution based in the USA, who combined group exercises, leaflets and a video to illustrate their methods. Ambassador John



McDonald, Dr. Eileen Boris and Elizabeth Murray impressed the group by relating their experiences of dealing with challenging political situations - this inspired some of the ladies to share their stories too.

The day began with introductions as each woman explained her reason for attending and what she hoped to learn. Many planned to use their newfound skills in their professional lives as NGO workers, and some hoped to impart their knowledge to others in order to perpetuate the important sharing of skills to other Tibetan women. With the introductions complete, Dr. Boris

began with a tale describing a powerful leader. Once divided into small groups, the women had the task of analysing the tale and gathering their opinions on what skills make a good leader. The ladies were proud to hear that their collective ideas had impressed Ambassador John and that they had succeeded in providing a more comprehensive list of desirable leadership skills (such as compassion, patience, a sense of humour) than some business students in top-class US universities had done when carrying out the same task!

Dr. Boris continued with handouts detailing the importance of emotional

intelligence, (recognising and regulating your emotional behaviour), and how this precious skill was something that men and women should seek to develop. Ambassador John then took charge of proceedings by describing the theory behind Multi-Track Diplomacy, explaining that in order to achieve peaceful outcomes to political problems, it is vital to have the co-operation and co-existence of such organisations as the government, NGOs, businesses

and private citizens.

The women were then asked to consider an experience in their lives where they felt they had demonstrated good leadership skills. It soon became clear that every woman already possessed some natural leadership skills so Dr. Boris encouraged the group to consider areas of leadership behaviour that they needed to strengthen and develop - this gave the women a useful insight into how they could become better leaders in future.

After a delicious buffet lunch the group reconvened to begin the second part of



the workshop, focusing on the psychology behind trauma healing. This began with an hour-long video about the Rwandan genocide and the efforts being made there on the parts of victims and perpetrators to move on from their traumatic experiences and bring peace to their hearts

and minds through forgiveness. Dr. Borris explained that she felt it was important for the Tibetan communities to draw on their own deep-rooted cultural beliefs and practices to aid the healing process, rather than use imported Western techniques that might not be relevant. She cited His

Holiness the Dalai Lama as an excellent source of support and the assembled ladies agreed that their faith always provided great comfort and strength. The TWA wishes to thank the representatives of the IMTD and the ladies present for an enjoyable and positive workshop. ■

Tibetan Women's Association celebrates International Mother's Day

The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. It is a mother who strives, seeks and never yields. Mother's Day is celebrated on various days in many places around the world. Different countries celebrate Mother's Day on various days of the year because the day has a number of different origins. But a host of countries including India and the United States celebrate it on the second Sunday of the month of May. The origin of Mother's day traces back to 1870's when Social activist Julia Ward Howe after the American Civil War intended to observe the day as a call to unite women against war. In 1870, she wrote the Mother's Day Proclamation as a call for peace and disarmament. Hence Mother's day signifies a day of peace.

For fifty years, Tibetan women have carried a significant role in the history of Tibet. Besides the role of a mother, they have forged immense courage and shouldered huge responsibility in wielding an important role in the non-violent struggle. 12th march 1959 marked history as thousands of Tibetan women came forward to protest the illegal Chinese occupation of Tibet and hundreds sacrificed their lives.

Since then, the role of Tibetan women has been commendable and significant. Ever since TWA was reinstated on the 10th September 1984, Tibetan women have donned a pivotal role in carrying our struggle

to the forefront. Therefore let us all honor the brave Tibetan mothers who is not only the heart of the family and the scion to generate another life, but is also the bastion of our Tibetan freedom struggle and significantly the crusader of Humanity at large.

Suiting the occasion of International Mother's day, TWA arranged for a screening of the Documentary film **Women of Tibet: 'A Quiet Revolution'** produced and directed by **Rosemary Rawcliffe** and presented by **Frame of Mind Films**. The film tells the story of one of the great

to transmit their cultural legacy.

For the first time on film, three generations of Tibet's most dynamic and articulate women share the wisdom and compassion that bridge their ancient and contemporary worlds. They have lost everything, survived a perilous escape across the Himalayas and decades in prison, yet they have transformed the brutality of invasion into a community of compassion and non-violence amidst the complexities of the modern world. From their principal refuge in Dharamsala, India, to small settlements scattered across the globe, these women have become the architects and builders of the new Tibet in exile. Their goal is singular—to impart to Tibetan children the strength and knowledge of their cultural heritage and spiritual wisdom.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama expresses his deep admiration and gratitude for his countrywomen in their fight for Tibet's freedom and speaks candidly about their powerful significance in rebuilding their community and offering outstanding examples of

spiritual and peaceful leadership to the world.

Part of a unique trilogy called **WOMEN OF TIBET; A Quiet Revolution** is an inspired journey into the spiritual power of peaceful resistance and a celebration of the human spirit. ■



12th March 1959; Tibetan Women's Uprising

movements of nonviolent resistance in modern history. In 1959, an estimated 15,000 unarmed Tibetan women took to the streets of Lhasa to oppose the violent Communist Chinese occupation of their country. The surviving exiled elders are the last generation of women left to tell the story of the Tibet Women's Uprising and



TWA seeks the release of the arrested Tibetan Leaders in Nepal

The Tibetan community in Nepal remained undeterred by the Nepali security force's heavy clampdown on their activities and they continued to stage peaceful protests on the Nepali soil against the repressive Chinese rule in Tibet. But the arbitrary arrests of the President of the Regional Tibetan Women's Association, Mrs. Ngawang Sangmo, the Vice-President of the Regional Tibetan Women's Association, Mrs. Tashi Dolma and the Director of the Tibetan Reception Center, Mr. Kelsang Chung on Thursday, 19 June 2008 and their sentence of 90 days in detention shocked the entire world.

Treating this as an extremely urgent and sensitive case, TWA embarked on a

global signature campaign seeking their immediate releases. All the 47 regional chapters of TWA across the globe plunged into a mass signature campaign and 3,500-signed petitions were dispatched to the Nepali Government via priority mail. RTWA Delhi initiated a peaceful

demonstration outside the Nepali embassy in New Delhi on 24th June and they handed over the appeal letter to the Nepali ambassador.

Our hard work finally paid off when the fax message received from RTWA Kathmandu brought the good news of their release. Following the hearing at Nepal's High Court on 7th July, the three key leaders were released on 8th July, since they cannot be detained without any charges. This is good news to all of us and we thank each and every individual for his or her sheer hard work and commendable efforts in making us achieve our goal. ■



To
The Office of the Prime Minister and Council of Ministers
Singh Durbar
P.O. Box: 23312
Kathmandu, Nepal

Subject: An Earnest and an Urgent appeal from Tibetan Women's Association.

Respected Sir,

We are making an earnest appeal to seek your intervention regarding an urgent crisis that befalls the Tibetans in exile. The recent arbitrary arrests of the President of the Regional Tibetan Women's Association, Mrs. Ngawang Sangmo, the Vice-President of the Regional Tibetan Women's Association, Mrs. Tashi Dolma and the Director of the Tibetan Reception Center, Mr. Kelsang Chung on Thursday, 19 June 2008 and their sentence of 90 days in detention is highly unacceptable. The unprecedented home apprehension and sentencing of the three community leaders without any trial makes the sentencing illegal. This is undoubtedly creating undue and extreme pain, agony and resentment for fellow Tibetans.

The Tibetans in Nepal, wearing their patriotic fervor, took to the streets to protest and voice their resentment over the brutal and violent Chinese clampdown on Tibetans in Tibet. They wish to show their solidarity with the Tibetans living under siege and suffering under the repressive Chinese regime. This is a genuine and peaceful way of showing support for our fellow brothers and sisters. This is closest gesture possible to being a fellow Tibetan. Nepal's Public Security arrested them on the grounds that they were responsible for the near-daily protests since March. They have been sentenced to 90 days of detention. We see this as an imprudent and crude act on part of the Nepal's public security. According to civilian security officer Jaya Mukunda Khandal, they have been arrested for damaging diplomatic relations between Nepal and China. We see this as the tragic beginning of a gross, grave and grievous abuse of human rights in Nepal and also as a serious violation of the principles of democracy proudly presented in the preamble of the Nepalese constitution.

We request that the Nepalese security forces refrain from reining in and thwarting the Tibetan people in Nepal for merely expressing their resentment and exercising their basic human rights; freedom of speech and expression. We request your esteemed self to please treat this situation as extremely crucial and intervene to help with the immediate release of the arrested Tibetan leaders. This harsh treatment of the peaceful Tibetan protestors could recoil the Tibetan freedom struggle and the recent arrests has the potential of retarding the growing Tibetan Nationalistic struggle. This could severely compromise centuries of socio-cultural harmonic relationship between Tibet and Nepal. We also make an earnest and an urgent appeal to the Human Rights advocates and the International body of Law and Justice to look into this crucial case and address our concerns to stop the debacle of International Human Rights Law in Nepal and significantly to avert the looming threat and danger that befalls Tibet and Tibetans. We are positive that our appeal in this regard will be the one that you will give your prime thought, importance and priority to. We are going through a very critical period in our history and we deem your support indispensable. Please help us in facing the darkest period of our history. □



H.H the Panchen Lama's birthday

On 25th of April, all the 47 regional chapters of TWA celebrated the 19th birthday of Panchen Lama and also marked 13th year of His abduction on 17th April. The birthday was observed with number of activities like candle vigil evening, peace protest, and hunger strike calling for the immediate release of Panchen Lama. RTWA Bylakuppe wrote a memorandum letter to United Nations. RTWA Dharamsala released 100 balloons calling for the liberation of Panchen Lama.

In solidarity with the uprising in Tibet

All the RTWAs in collaboration with The Solidarity Committee hosted mass prayers, candle light vigils, butter lamp offerings and hunger strike to show solidarity with the Tibetans who sacrificed their lives during the uprising in Tibet. Quite differently this time everyone accomplished a creative scheme to express solidarity that was, organizing various acts and road shows to demonstrate human rights violation in Tibet. RTWA Poanta held a press conference for Himalayan channel and gave an interview to Norway radio about the current situation in Tibet. RTWA Nainital along with Himalya parivar organized a Hunger strike. RTWA and RTYC Dharamsala organized 'Chain Hunger strike' which was very much appreciated by H.H the Dalai Lama and the Chairman of ATPD ended on its 112th day (7th July). Showing respect to our brave martyrs, many members of RTWA Hunsur, Rajpur and Delhi volunteered to shave their heads.

Political activities

The regional chapters of TWA in cooperation with regional RTYC organized mass prayers, candle light vigils, hunger strike, political campaign and peaceful protests in the aftermath the brutal crackdown in Tibet. On 20th June, RTWA Rajpur in association with RTWA Dickyiling organized a mass candle light vigil at Dehradun to oppose the carrying of

Olympic torch into Tibet, which was participated by more than 300 core marchers who were then stationed at Poanta sahib. The huge gathering was honored with a speech given by chief guest Mr. Vinod Chamoli (Mayor of Nagar Nigam) followed by speech by TWA president. RTWA Delhi is touched by a supportive statement made by Indian football icon Baichung Butia during one of the political gatherings at Jantar Mantar. RTWA Hunsur is also privileged by Rahul Gandhi's visit and brief discussion on current situation inside Tibet.

Maintaining Indo-Tibetan relationship, RTWA Bylakuppe extended heartfelt congratulations to Karnataka's newly elected Chief Minister. The president of RTWA Rajpur, Clementown, Dickyiling and Mundgod attended the 'All India Tibet Support Groups Convention' held in Chandigarh on June 28th and they made a presentation on the 'Role of TWA'. The chief guest of the meeting was MR. Yaswant Shinha (former union minister) and professor Samdhong Rinpoche, the prime minister of Tibetan Government in Exile. On 24th April RTWA Kollegal wrote an appeal letter to the UN secretary regarding human rights violations and cultural genocide taking place in Tibet. On 23rd May, RTWA Bylakuppe held a press conference on the same topic of discussion. RTWA Pokhara organized protest rally on 25th May to reassert their sheer determination to denounce the seventeen-point agreement. RTWA Nainital and Hunsur organized several fund raising events to support on the on-going TWA activities.

Religious activities

All the RTWA organized mass prayers, candle light vigils and sangsol offerings to pray for the people who sacrificed their lives in the recent uprising in Tibet and to also pray for the long life of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. In the month of April, RTWA Bylakuppe along with the representatives of Bylakuppe, set out with a strong conviction to eliminate the Dhogyal followers and received oath and signature

from all the monks, nuns and laymen above 18 years of age stating their clear stand on not worshipping the obstructive Dhogyal.

Education

From 15th June to 17th June, RTWA Rajpur organized a workshop on the topics; Health, Buddhist teaching and Human rights to 50 school students and 48 university students. RTWA Kollegal organized an educative workshop from 23rd to 25th June aiming to educate and empower Tibetan women to ensure their presence in a constructive society.

Environment

All the regional chapters of TWA marked World Environment Day on the 5th of June 2008 by cleaning their local environment and planting umpteen number of trees, thus contribution towards creating a greener society.

RTWA's support with the March to Tibet

All the 47 regional chapters across the globe raised funds for the March to Tibet. RTWA Bylakuppe organized a press conference to support the March. RTWA Nainital extended wonderful hospitality to the marchers when they stopped at Nainital for 4 days. In month of May and June members of RTWA Haridwar and Rajpur made frequent visits to meet the imprisoned Presidents and march co-coordinators detained at Haldwani Jail. RTWA Dickyiling visited the imprisoned marchers at Roshandabad. RTWA Poanta sahib gave an overwhelming reception and hospitality to the 300 plus marchers and the members of the organizing committee, where they remained stationed for two-weeks. RTWA Bylakuppe gave a warm welcome reception to the marchers returning back to Bylakuppe. All the regional chapters of TWA also organized solidarity marchers; candle light vigils and prayers in support of the march to Tibet. ■





RTWA Bir



RTWA Bylakuppe



RTWA Clementtown



RTWA Dharamsala



RTWA Delhi



RTWA Dickyiling



RTWA Gangtok



RTWA Hunsur



RTWA Manali



RTWA Mundgod



RTWA Rajpur, Clementtown, Dickyiling and Mundgod



RTWA Nainital



RTWA Orissa



RTWA Rajpur



RTWA Shimla



RTWA Dharamsala



RTWA Mussorie

Dear readers,
If you have any comments and queries about the manner and matter of our writing, please direct them to editor@tibetanwomen.org or dial 01892-221198 /221527 or fax them to 01892-221528

