

## **TIBETAN DEMOCRACY DAY**

Hon. David Kilgour  
(former co-chair, Canadian Parliamentary Friends of Tibet)  
Parliament Hill  
Ottawa  
2 September 2012

---

Friends of Tibet,

On Tibetan Democracy Day, I must sadly begin by noting that Tibet is one of the worst instances of the rule by terror operating across China since 1949.

His Holiness, The Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibetans, a much-loved honorary Canadian citizen, and highly-respected world leader, is the best hope for a peaceful resolution of the Tibet issue. Advocating Tibetan autonomy under Chinese rule, he disavows violence, does not favour secession and has this year turned over the political role to democratically-elected men and women. His Holiness spoke to an audience of about 7000 in Ottawa earlier this year. He indicated that he felt the Chinese people generally would accept a degree of autonomy for Tibet if aware that this is all that is being sought. He also highlighted the tragic loss of Tibetan lives to self-immolation.

We friends of Tibet in Canada and beyond are deeply concerned about the current situation. Over 59 mostly young Tibetans have now made the ultimate sacrifice of their lives through self-immolation since 2009.

There are also hundreds locked away for seeking elemental justice for Tibet. Tibetan parliamentarians-in exile headed by Speaker Penpa Tsering recently presented a letter to various embassies in New Delhi seeking concrete action from their governments to end Beijing's policies that are pushing an increasing number of Tibetans to set themselves on fire. His letter reads in part:

... (I)n January this year, the number of Tibetans driven to self-immolation in Tibet was 17 and now it has reached 51, out of which 41 have succumbed to their injuries...9 people have been shot and killed and some others were beaten to death besides numerous arbitrary and extrajudicial detentions, forced disappearances and long prison terms without due process of law... In some cases only the ashes of the cremated bodies were handed over to the family.

Instead of looking into the real causes of such drastic acts, all that the Chinese authorities have come up with is fire extinguishers and iron hooks to add to the machine guns and electric batons that the security personnel carry...(T)hey have always tried... to demean the motivation of those who lost their lives by insinuating madness (etc) as the causes of their action...(They) heap lie upon lie, to justify their intransigent position. (They) blame His Holiness the Dalai Lama or the Western forces or the

separatist forces for the mess they have created...(They) reinterpret Buddhism to suit their needs and mislead the ordinary Chinese and the international community by branding it as an act of terrorism.

The reasons for Tibetans being driven to self immolations are... China's policy of assimilation, thereby destroying the very identity of the Tibetan people- the unique and ancient Tibetan language, religion and culture which has the potential to promote peace and harmony in the world...This month alone 5 Tibetans have resorted to such drastic acts. Yet the Chinese authorities remain mute to the calls of the Tibetans asking for the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, freedom for the Tibetan people and the protection of their unique identity...

...Watching the trend, it seems highly unlikely that self-immolations will stop in the immediate future and every time the phone rings, we are left wondering, who next?... It is still not too late to help!

Sincerely,

Penpa Tsering

Speaker

Tibetan Parliament in Exile

### **Yonten Gyatso**

Tibetan human rights defender Yonten Gyatso was sentenced to seven years imprisonment in June for circulating information relating to a self-immolation and attempting to share details of the human rights situation in Tibet with overseas organisations. He is a monk based in Sichuan Province. The sentence came after he was accused of circulating photographs of a nun, Ms Tenzin Wangmo, as she tragically self-immolated on 17 October 2011. According to the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD), the charges brought against him also included "sharing information since 2008 about political events in Tibet by attempting to contact international human rights organisations" and "human rights mechanisms of the UN".

### **Oppression of Buddhism**

Rule by terror in China today means in Tibet that religious practitioners are not only forced to denounce His Holiness the Dalai Lama during 'patriotic education' sessions, but also must adhere to regulations from authorities and monastic management committees filled with party militants. Tibetans are forced to pay

their respects to party leaders, whose photos are forcibly placed alongside Buddhist images in the monasteries. Efforts are even being made to set up party branches in monasteries and nunneries. Most dangerously and absurdly of all, the atheist party wants to be responsible for the selection of reincarnated high lamas to meet its political ends, including that of His Holiness, the Dalai Lama.

### **Environmental Destruction**

Since 1949, destruction of the fragile natural environment of Tibet has caused major damage that affects not only Tibet, but neighbouring countries. Extraction of natural resources without any consideration for the environment will further exacerbate problems. The party-state is confiscating nomadic lands; herders are being placed on the outskirts of cities. Without dung manure, severe degradation and desertification of the grasslands results. The centuries old wisdom of Tibetan nomads on environmental stewardship is badly needed.

### **Conclusion**

Those of us here today are requesting the U.N. to look into these and related issues, for the Canadian government to give support to Tibetans in raising the issue at the U.N., and to bring up the issues bilaterally with China.

A signature campaign is also being done along with the Torch Relay to appeal to Ban Ki Moon, the Secretary General of the UN, with the following requests:

1. The U.N. must discuss the issue of Tibet based on the resolution that it passed in 1959, 1961, and 1965 and continuously make efforts to fulfill the substance of these resolutions,
2. An independent international fact-finding delegations must immediately be sent to investigate the ongoing crisis in Tibet, and
3. The U.N. must take special responsibility to ensure that the basic aspirations of Tibetans inside Tibet are fulfilled.

Thank you.