

The International Campaign for Tibet¹

SUBMISSION TO THE COMMITTEE AGAINST TORTURE

**During its consideration of the Fourth Periodic Report of the People's Republic of
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Introduction

Beginning on March 10, 2008, more than 100 overwhelmingly peaceful protests against the Chinese government swept across the Tibetan plateau. This has been met by a violent crackdown by the Chinese authorities, documented in this report. While incidents of torture and abuse have occurred in Tibetan areas prior to March 10, 2008, the purpose of this submission is to inform the Committee of those events that have taken place since March 10, 2008, given the significance of what has been termed the ‘spring uprising’.² As this submission will show, Tibetans have risked their lives and safety throughout the past six months to express their fundamental discontent with policies imposed by Beijing - with the clear message that their exiled leader the Dalai Lama represents their interests, and not the Chinese state.

While the People’s Republic of China (PRC) officially prohibits torture, it fails to live up to its own commitments in practice. Since March 2008, hundreds of Tibetans, including monks, nuns and schoolchildren who have either ‘disappeared’ or been detained, have faced extreme brutality while in custody. Unarmed peaceful protesters have been shot dead, while others have died following torture in prison or as a result of suicide due to despair over the crackdown or being made to denounce the Dalai Lama. New measures have been implemented to purge monasteries of monks and nuns and ban worship in the wake of the protests. These include measures created specifically to cause public humiliation or extreme mental anguish among the monastic community; revealing a systematic new attack on Tibetan Buddhism led by Chinese Party Secretary and President Hu Jintao that is reminiscent of the excesses of the Cultural Revolution.

Issues of torture and abuse in Tibet should be considered by the Committee to be systemic, a result of the PRC’s emphasis on ensuring “stability” within its national boundaries. This report describes how the crackdown has led to an intense climate of fear and despair, worsened by the heavy-handed implementation of policies against Tibetan culture and religion.

For the purposes of this report it is important to note that Tibet was traditionally comprised of three main regions: Amdo (northeastern Tibet), Kham (eastern Tibet) and U-Tsang (central and western Tibet). The Tibet Autonomous Region (Chinese: Xizang zizhiqu) was established by the Chinese government in 1965 and covers the area of Tibet west of the Yangtse River (Tibetan: Drichu), including part of Kham, although it is often referred to now as ‘central Tibet’ in English. The rest of Amdo and Kham have been incorporated into Chinese

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² For a more detailed account of the ‘spring uprising’ and the subsequent crackdown, see: ‘Tibet at a Turning Point’, ICT, August 5, 2008, www.savetibet.org

provinces, and where Tibetan communities were said to have ‘compact inhabitancy’ in these provinces, they were designated as Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures and Tibetan Autonomous Counties. As a result, most of Qinghai and parts of Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan Provinces are designated by the Chinese authorities as ‘Tibetan’. The term ‘Tibet’ in this submission is used to refer to all of these Tibetan areas designated by the PRC as ‘autonomous’.

Excessive use of force, treatment in detention and use of torture

According to our information, 100 Tibetans were killed in Lhasa and nearby areas during the crackdown from March 14 onwards, while at least 40 Tibetans were shot dead or died as a result of the repression of dissent in other Tibetan areas within the PRC.

The authorities use state force with impunity and justify their actions in shooting unarmed protestors by describing these individuals as a ‘threat to the state’. Not only are justified grievances expressed peacefully not taken into account but there are no inquiries into the deaths that result from protests. In addition, China has taken every measure to impose an information blackout on the plateau. In different areas of Tibet where protests have taken place, the authorities have confiscated cell phones and computers, turned off cellular transmission facilities or cut landlines, and interfered with internet access, according to various reports received by ICT. Reports have also reached ICT of Tibetan families who have received immediate visits from security personnel after taking phone calls from family or friends in exile. In one case, a young Tibetan woman was beaten so severely in an act of reprisal for taking a call from outside Tibet that she had to be hospitalized.

Since March, China has resorted to ever harsher measures to subdue and silence the Tibetan people, which are having a dramatic impact in terms of information reaching the outside world. On an official website, the Lhasa authorities have warned that there would be repercussions for Tibetans who “spread rumors, create disturbances and deceive the public,” as part of the political campaign against “separatists.”

Comprehensive details of Tibetans shot dead or tortured to death in the recent uprising on the Tibetan plateau are impossible to confirm due to China’s attempts to block information reaching the outside world, and the climate of fear imposed in Tibet. A partial, although not comprehensive, list of Tibetans who have been killed in the protests is provided in Appendix A.

ICT has documented over 125 protests – believed to be a cautious estimate – since March 10 , 2008, beginning with a march by Drepung monks to the center of Lhasa on that day, the anniversary of the 1959 national uprising that led to the Dalai Lama’s escape from Tibet. With the exception of March 14 in Lhasa, the protests have been overwhelmingly non-violent.

In the following cases, security forces are alleged to have fired on, killed or wounded unarmed demonstrators: Lhasa (from March 14), Phenco in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) on March 10 or 15 (reports vary), and Ngaba (March 16). A Tibetan exile newspaper, the *Tibet Express*, reported that a 14-year old boy was shot dead and others injured during a protest at Jomda (Sibda) in the TAR on April 8.

Security forces also fired upon protestors at Drango (Chinese: Luhuo) county in Sichuan province on March 24, according to the Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD). According to the same source, a

monk called Kunga was killed. Security forces reportedly also opened fire on unarmed protestors at Tawu on April 5. A 25-year old nun called Tsering Dolkar reportedly died following a protest in Meldro Gungkar in the TAR.

In Machu (Gansu Province), it seems that troops did not fire upon protestors despite significant damage to property on March 16. But this could hardly be described as restraint; many individuals were beaten severely and several reports have reached ICT of individuals who participated in the Machu protest being tortured in custody. The same is true for the situation at Labrang.³

According to an eyewitness account from Lhasa published on the blog of noted Tibetan intellectual, Woeser:⁴ “I, together with many people, was frightened and we retreated back into Barkhor Street. But not very far from the entrance of North Barkhor Street, it was right there when a teenage girl picked up a stone and was about to throw it, the special police fired at her, and the bullet pierced through her throat. She fell on the ground right away. At that time I was over 10 or 20 meters away from her and I saw it very clearly. Many people saw that. It was really horrible. [...] I think she was only 17- or 18-years old. [...] that girl fell on the ground, twitching and bleeding. Very soon the car of the special police drove over, their car looked like a Toyota 4500 in a dark color. The car stopped right in front of the girl, then two special policemen jumped off the car, and threw the girl’s corpse into the car. The car again continued to drive forward a little, then turned back. It is very strange that after the car drove back and forth, there was no blood on the ground. There was not even a blood stain on the ground.”

The heightened crackdown has also brought about other sympathy protests, in most cases staged by monks or by students. These include prayer services held at Rabgya in Qinghai on March 16, and Chigdrol (Lungkar) in Qinghai on March 17, the marches in Sertha in Sichuan on March 17, and Drango in Sichuan on March 25, and Tibetan student sit-ins at Dalian in Liaoning on China’s eastern seaboard on March 21, and Chabcha in Qinghai on March 30.

Students staged a peaceful protest at the Southwestern Nationalities University in Chengdu on March 17, while students at the Central Nationalities University in Beijing silently demonstrated for six hours - the first known demonstration by Tibetans in China’s capital.

One eyewitness to the crackdown on a March 18 protest in Kardze county, Kardze prefecture, Sichuan province (Tibetan area of Kham) reported: “The protestors remained entirely peaceful, not even a stone was thrown. Police moved in on the remainder, beating them with clubs, and arrested at least 12 of them. They beat people savagely, aiming at the head, and it is possible that one or two may have been killed or mortally wounded on the spot, but no one knows exactly.”

Armed police were deployed and shot at the crowd in Kardze, killing at least eight Tibetans. Radio Free Asia’s Cantonese service was told by a source: “One monk has been killed, and seven Tibetans. Yesterday morning the police came to some Tibetan houses and asked them not to mourn those Tibetans who died in earlier clashes, and not to post the Dalai Lama’s pictures. Then they had a clash with the police. Many people have been beaten up and arrested.” (Radio Free Asia Tibetan service report, April 4.)

³ See: p. 85, ‘Tibet at a Turning Point’, ICT, August 5, 2008, www.savetibet.org

⁴ <http://woeser.middle-way.net/>

Highlighting the excessive response by authorities that facilitated cases of abuse, officials at a training session held on April 29 by the Ngaba prefecture justice bureau affirmed that “All legal personnel should prioritize ‘Facilitating the capacities of the legal administration and vigilantly serving the construction and maintenance for a harmonious Ngaba’, and diligently examine and set standards for the maintenance of social stability. They should profoundly recognize the strenuous nature, the turbulent nature and the long term nature of the present struggle. They should not retain any lack of clarity in their thinking, nor any hesitation in their actions. Their resolution should not waver. With clear outlook, unambiguous flag-waving and confidence in their ability to succeed, they should affirm a high degree of solidarity in thinking and motivation with the Party central leadership and provincial and prefectural Party organs, strengthening the attitude of personal responsibility for the struggle against Splittism with firm resolution, in defense of the political stability of Ngaba prefecture.” (Ngaba prefecture People’s Government website April 30, 2008.)

Tibetan witness accounts report on extreme levels of arbitrary brutality in the conduct of searches and arrests, including deliberate attempts to cripple detainees, break limbs and cause internal injuries. One source said: “[Many of] those released are facing serious physical injuries or mental disorders.” The same source said that several local Tibetan policemen in Lhasa who had complained of excessive torture and aggressive interrogation tactics had disappeared, although this could not be confirmed.

Detention and torture

ICT has received consistent reports of conditions under which Tibetans are detained across the plateau – cramped cells, inadequate food and water, and the denial of necessary medical attention. After the initial March protests, the main detention facilities in Lhasa were filled to capacity and extra detention centers were improvised in Toelung Dechen county (Chinese: Duiling Deqing) in Lhasa Municipality, and in a warehouse near the new railway station. All reports received speak of appalling conditions, overcrowding, no provision of water or food, denial of medical treatment to the wounded, and torture during interrogation. According to these reliable and consistent accounts, hospitals in Lhasa and other areas refused to treat the wounded, or people were too frightened of detention to go to hospital, and so an unknown number of deaths resulted from injuries. Security forces took possession of the bodies of those who were killed, seemingly in order to destroy evidence of the manner of death. ICT has received several reports that large numbers of such corpses were disposed of in the new crematorium behind Yabda township in the Toelung valley. In one reliable account, a Tibetan spoke of witnessing bodies piled together in the back of an army truck on the road leaving Lhasa. The side of the truck was covered with dried blood. The source estimated there were more than 15 bodies in the truck.

According to a Tibetan woman who was eyewitness to events in Lhasa in March, and who spoke to other witnesses: “I have heard that all major prisons in Lhasa area - Gutsa [Detention Center], Sangyib, Nyithang, Tsalgunthang, and Toelung – were filled to maximum capacity, so other detained Tibetans were kept in the garage of the military station (Chinese: Jun Chu) on South Lingkor road in Lhasa.

“Detainees were subjected to harsh beating and their major body joints – hands and legs – were [often] dislocated as soon as they were brought into custody. Then they were forced into kneeling position for days, as blood dripped from their body. They were questioned everyday [from] the first day [onwards]. During the interrogation, they were forced to kneel and lower their heads. Beatings, including stamping on their entire body, and electrocution by electric prods. [Sometimes] when detainees fell unconscious, they were woken up by

cold water being splashed upon them. Furthermore, detainees were beaten with sacks over their head. [...] Detainees, regardless of whether they have committed any crime or not, were treated in such brutal and inhumane ways. Those who have been charged were in for a more brutal torture, including inserting bamboo through their nails and fingers tied tight and beaten.

"Detainees were fed one small and dry steamed bun [Tibetan: *Tingmo*] and a small mug of water once a day. The lack of sufficient food to eat and water to drink forced them to drink their own urine, even though some were urinating blood [after this treatment]. I heard these accounts from a few people who have been released. They say they were not fed and were beaten severely. They were ordered not to tell anybody anything or face arrest. Those released were fined 2000 yuan (US \$293)."

According to the same source: "[Detainees] who were released would emerge in a grave condition. Psychologically they were so fearful that I heard some would hide under a table or something similar. Some were physically so weak that they died within few days of release. I do not know how many."

A demonstration near Kirti monastery in Ngaba Prefecture, Sichuan Province on March 16 left 10 to 20 demonstrators dead and about 30 monks from Kirti monastery missing. Local people assumed that they had either been killed or secretly detained. According to a later report by monks living in exile at Kirti monastery in India, "More than 30 people were crammed into small rooms no larger than one pillar (approximately 2 meters square) in size. They had no room to sit and had to stand day and night. They were given one bowl of rice soup each per day. And were obliged to urinate and defecate where they stood. Educated and prominent individuals were singled out for especially harsh beatings. Relatives of the detainees waited outside the gate with food and provisions, but were not allowed to deliver them. Those who could not be crammed into the prison were detained in other places like private houses, so their relatives could not even discover their whereabouts. Although most were held for only a few days, none were in good health when they returned home."

The detainees were threatened that they had to denounce the Dalai Lama and accept whatever the Chinese government said. In particular, there was a determined investigation to uncover the leaders of the uprising and those who had sent pictures of dead bodies out of Tibet.

Some of those Tibetans who were detained were removed from Lhasa, with around 300 prisoners arriving at the train station in Xining, Qinghai, in early April, according to Tibetan sources, who told ICT: "Every prisoner seemed to be hurt badly and some had blood on their faces. There was an old lady in the group with heavy shackles on her feet, and no shoes. She was being beaten by the police."

ICT has also received several other reliable reports of Tibetans being taken from Lhasa to detention facilities in Sichuan and Qinghai, either by train or by road. A young monk who was detained in Lhasa for having no identity card was taken to a local detention center and beaten severely every day over a period of several days, according to one report. "Four men beat him at the same time, each time," ICT's source reported. "During the torture, he had no comprehension of night and day. With one arm up over behind the neck and the other under and behind the back, they tied his wrists together behind his back. The food at the prison consisted of one small bread roll per person and about 20 ounces of water that was shared between four to five people. People were sleeping in the area where they went to the toilet and they were not allowed to wear shoes." The source said that he was later taken to Mianyang Prison in Sichuan, and was released later due to fears that he might die if he

remained without medical attention. He can now hardly walk or talk and his breathing is laboured. The same source said that there were many Tibetans from Lhasa in the same prison.

A young Tibetan man sent some details to a friend in exile of his brief period in detention after a house-to-house search on March 18. The Tibetan, whose name is not known to ICT, said that on March 18, armed soldiers broke down the doors to his family's home, ransacked the property, and beat members of his family, who appear to have been suspected of involvement in the protests. The Tibetan's account is consistent with other accounts of detention following the protests obtained by ICT. He said: "I was arrested and they took me with them, tied my thumbs behind my back, very tightly, so that this whole area has been numb for the last two or three months [all of his left thumb]. At first I thought that they were going to kill me, they hit my head a lot, and heads are easy to break, it's not like the rest of the body. They took me to prison, for four days they didn't ask me anything, they just threw us here. They gave us half a steamed bun a day, that's very small. They didn't provide any water. Everyone was very thirsty and a lot of people drank their urine. We had no clothes, no blankets, nothing to lie down on, nothing – just cement floors – and it was very cold. For four days nobody spoke to us, they just left us there.

"We heard a lot of things. Many people had arms or legs broken or gunshot wounds but they weren't taken to hospital. They were there with us. It was really terrible. I can't believe that we are in the 21st century. For instance, one boy who was shot three times, one from here to there [the bullet entered from the left side of his back and exited from the left side of his chest, near his heart], and one here [a horizontal wound on his upper right arm]. Some people had their ribs broken. One man was punched in his [right] eye, and it was all swollen and black and blue, very bad. People had their teeth broken, these are just examples. A lot of terrible things were done.

"One of the problems is that people have no food, they are very hungry, they are just falling over [collapsing]. One boy fell into the toilet, all in the same room, and he was cut right across his face [under his chin along the jaw]. A lot of people have psychological problems, and they're the first to collapse. A boy from [a town in Tibet], he has a problem of the 'heart', a psychological problem, and he was very thin. At first he fell two or three times every day but they didn't care. [...] Some monks had sacks put over their heads and they were taken away and didn't come back, so maybe they were killed.

"I met an old man, 65 years old, who had ribs broken and he was all bent over and he couldn't stand up straight, he was dying, so the police took him to People's Hospital, where one of two people die every day. The people who are taken to hospital are usually people who have been shot or beaten, and they usually die there.

"There are a lot of high school students from [a town in Tibet]. A 17-year-old who had not participated in the event of the 14th [of March], all his clothes were taken away, they tied his hands and they pushed a wagon at him until he fell, there are all kinds of torture methods. This kid was very young and he didn't even do anything. Afterwards he said that he'd done all kinds of things, that happens to a lot of people, they pressure people to admit things they never did. I met a monk from [a monastery in Tibet] before I was released [in April]. I am very worried about the monks. The soldiers regard the monks as something very different, because a monk from [a county in Tibet], his finger was bent over [shows a completely bent finger] and he'd been blinded in one eye, he couldn't see out of it at all, he was beaten more than us but luckily. [...] Really I can't understand why they do terrible things to monks, very, very painful."

On March 19, a further 30 truckloads of soldiers were sent to the area. Four to five truckloads of police and soldiers were sent to each township to begin arresting those involved in the protests. Hundreds were arrested through early April, and reportedly severely beaten, with several taken to the hospital suffering permanent disabilities. A number of deaths were reported. There were also reports of serious food shortages and compulsory blood donations in detention.

Mental and psychological cruelty

Once the height of the uprising through the second half of March had passed, the response of the PRC authorities was to step up ‘patriotic education’ campaigns throughout Tibet, especially in affected areas. These campaigns have been ongoing, and deeply resented, in many parts of Tibet since at least 1996, and indeed one of the first protests in the 2008 uprising – at Ditsa monastery in Qinghai – on March 10 seems to have begun in response to such a campaign.

In addition to being targeted for detention for participating in demonstrations, monks and nuns are routinely harassed and subjected to severe mental anguish by being forced to publically denounce the exiled Tibetan Dalai Lama, the central figure to Tibetan Buddhism and pre-eminent representative of the Tibetan people.

The intensification of these political campaigns in the aftermath of serious protest was accompanied by punitive searches of monasteries by security forces (including those hitherto uninvolved in protest), arrests of monks and others for possession of photos of the Dalai Lama (hitherto permitted in Tibetan areas outside the TAR), imposition of demands such as that individuals sign statements confessing involvement in the uprising, and that heads of monastic communities guarantee that no further demonstrations take place and agree to fly the PRC flag from the monastery roof. In many cases, the campaigns also began to target laypeople, who were exempt prior to the protests in some areas, with demands that they denounce the Dalai Lama and pledge loyalty to the Chinese Communist Party.

Reports have been received from various monasteries of distress due to pictures of the Dalai Lama being trampled by armed police or work teams, for instance at Shi-Tsang Gatsel monastery in Luchu county in Kaniho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu province. According to the Tibetan Government in Exile, armed police raided the monastery and detained around 28 monks in the early morning hours of April 16. The Tibetan Government in Exile reported that on April 14 armed forces also trampled on images of the Dalai Lama at Choephel Tashi Chokor-Ling monastery in Chone (Chinese: Zhuoni) county in Kaniho TAP, where a number of monks had also been detained.

In a similar case, on April 3, troops fired upon protestors from Tongkor (Chinese: Donggu) monastery 60 kilometers from Kardze town, killing at least 14 people.⁵ The protests appeared to have been sparked by the arrival of an official work team to carry out ‘patriotic education’ in the monastery. After the shooting, about 20 seriously injured people were taken to a local hospital under armed guard. This hospital was surrounded by troops and no visitors were permitted.

According to the Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD), based in Dharamsala, India, before protesting on May 14, over 55 nuns from Pang-ri nunnery in Kardze county, Kardze prefecture, Sichuan

⁵ See also: ‘Eight Tibetans killed in Kardze: new phase in protests in Tibet,’ ICT, April 4, 2008, www.savetibet.org

province held a meeting and vowed not to take part in any ‘patriotic education’ campaigns and said: “It is better to die than to denounce, criticize and attack the Dalai Lama, to sign official documents denouncing the Dalai Lama, if there is no place for us to worship and live, let us go somewhere else or die, if the Chinese authorities kill us, let us be killed, we have no regrets.”⁶

Similarly, when monks at Wara monastery in Jomda, TAR, were faced with increased patriotic education, the monks told work team officials on April 3 that they would never defame the Dalai Lama “even at the cost of our lives.”⁷

In an edict reminiscent of the Cultural Revolution, “Measures for dealing strictly with rebellious monasteries and individual monks and nuns (An order from the People’s Government of Kandze TAP no.2)”, states that the rooms of monks and nuns who refuse to be registered or who do not conform to the demands of political education will be demolished, and the monks and nuns expelled: “Monks and nuns returning to the monastery who cannot give a clear reason for having gone outside, who cannot make a clear stand with respect to the unification of the Motherland and rejection of the separation of nationalities will be expelled, and their cells demolished.”

The new measures issued by the prefectural government describe how monasteries with “10% - 30% of monks or nuns participating in disturbances” will be systematically “sealed off, searched, suspect persons detained according to law and any banned items they have hidden shall be confiscated. All religious activities will be suspended, inmates will be prohibited from leaving the premises, and they will be cleaned up and rectified in the proper manner.”

The Kardze document also places a strong emphasis on the public ‘rectification’ of senior lamas and religious figures, and states that those “who fail to make their attitude clear or take a two-faced stance will not only be strictly warned, but will have to give a detailed examination of their behaviour in front of a general assembly of the monastic community, and a written guarantee, and the giving of this examination and written guarantee will be shown repeatedly in newspapers and on television.”

The new official measures also state that reincarnate lamas (tulkus) can be “stripped of the right to hold the incarnation lineage” and will be “severely punished by the law” if they attempt to communicate information about what is happening in their monastery outside, or participate in protests or “tolerate them.”

Suicide due to implementation of anti-Dalai Lama policies and crackdown

Heavy-handed measures such as the above that have been implemented as a result of the demonstrations that have occurred throughout Tibet since March have contributed to further unrest in the region. The psychological distress brought about by these measures has sparked further protests and at times the mental anguish and humiliation has lead to a sense of despair that has caused some to commit suicide.

⁶ ‘China arrests 55 nuns of Pang-ri Nunnery for protesting,’ TCHRD, May 17, 2008, www.tchrd.org

⁷ ‘China launches renewed “Patriotic Education” Campaign across all sections in Tibet,’ TCHRD, April 24, 2008, www.tchrd.org

Some Tibetans who committed suicide following the protests were said to have done so because they could not bear to witness the oppression. A Tibetan called Lapo in his fifties, from a nomadic area in Luchu county in Gansu, committed suicide because “he was unable to bear Chinese oppression on fellow Tibetans”, according to a report ICT has received based on information from Tibet. A 31-year old nun, Losang Tsomo, from Lholung nunnery, was so traumatized by what she had witnessed during the crackdown on protests in Meldro Gungkar on April 12 that she committed suicide later that day.

A number of suicides have been linked to the patriotic education campaign and intensified clampdown. A doctor in his forties, Talho, from Pashoe county in Chamdo in the TAR, committed suicide on April 10; according to a report received by ICT, “because he was forced to denounce His Holiness the Dalai Lama, which he couldn’t tolerate.”

Following a demonstration in Tongkor township in Kardze county, many of the protestors fled into the mountains to evade arrest, and the troops responded by vandalizing and closing down the monastery, and issuing ultimata for protestors to give themselves up. According to one Tibetan source, in the days to follow, three monks from one local monastery, Dugu Gona, committed suicide in an act that may have been in protest against the crackdown and subsequent pressure to denounce the Dalai Lama.

A Tibetan source who witnessed the protest in Kardze on March 18 told the Tibetan newspaper in exile *Bod Kyi Bang Chen*: “It could be that they [the protestors, particularly referring to the monk] could not take oppression any more. The fact that they Chinese are forcing Tibetans to denounce His Holiness the Dalai Lama everyday makes Tibetans put their lives on the line and protest.” The same source reported that a nun in the area left behind a letter with her relative before joining a protest in Kardze, saying: “I cannot bear any longer the constant denunciation campaign against His Holiness the Dalai Lama. I cannot even concentrate on my prayers. I have 500 yuan [US \$72] - give away 50 to others and keep the rest for prayer after I die.”

Lektsok, a 74-year old Gomang monk from Keshi in upper Ngaba, committed suicide in early April. It is reliably reported that when the Chinese military came to Gomang monastery on March 30, Lektsok was on his way to perform religious rituals for a local household, accompanied by two younger monks. The Chinese armed police met them on the road, beat them severely, detained them for a few days, and then sent them back to the monastery. Lektsok repeatedly told his companions “This is unbearable”. He carefully counted out deposits of money to be given to his students and relatives, sent one of his monk pupils to deliver them, and once the pupil had left, he took his own life.

Authorities have also made public displays of detainees in order to create a sense of fear and intimidation in Tibet – a common means of intimidation during the Cultural Revolution. On March 16, four trucks in convoy made a slow progress through the streets of Lhasa, with about 40 people, mostly young Tibetan men and women, standing with their wrists handcuffed behind their backs, witnesses said (reported in *The London Times* on March 17). “A soldier stood behind each prisoner, hands on the back of their necks to ensure their heads were bowed,” reported Jane Macartney, the *Times* correspondent in Beijing. “Loudspeakers on the trucks broadcast calls to anyone who had taken part in the violent riots on Friday, in which Han Chinese and Hui Muslims were stabbed and beaten and shops and business set on fire, to turn themselves in. Those who gave themselves up might be treated with leniency, the rest would face severe punishment, the broadcasts said.”

Denial of access to medical care

ICT has received reports indicating that Tibetans have died due to lack of access to medical treatment. In some cases, individuals with medical knowledge provided emergency first aid and tended to the wounded but it was generally not regarded as safe to go to government-run hospitals.

All reports received by ICT concerning Tibetans in detention speak of appalling conditions, overcrowding, no provision of water or food, denial of medical treatment to the wounded, and torture during interrogation. According to these reliable and consistent accounts, hospitals in Lhasa and other areas refused to treat the wounded, or people were too frightened of detention to go to hospital, and so an unknown number of deaths resulted from injuries.

An unnamed Tibetan caller told the Tibetan language service of Radio Free Asia on April 14: “In the beginning, many injured Tibetan protestors were taken to Chinese hospitals, where they were treated. Later, when injured Tibetans were taken to hospitals, they were detained instead of receiving medical attention. In fact, on the second day of the protests, even Tibetans who had bruises were treated as suspects and detained. So Tibetans who were injured had no choice but to wait for death.”

Nechung, a 38-year old woman who was among those who tore down the signboard on a Ngaba (Chinese: Aba), Sichuan, police station entrance on March 16, was denied medical care. She was detained two days later, and when she was released on March 26, she could not speak, or eat without vomiting. Her relatives tried to admit her to hospital but did not get permission. She died on April 17, and monks were not allowed to perform death rites for her. Her husband has fled to the mountains, and she is survived by four children under 18. Two of her sons were subsequently arrested, and the eldest had both his legs broken by security personnel, apparently as a reprisal for his mother’s actions.

Reprisals & enforced Disappearance

A significant feature in the crackdown that has followed the March protests has been the number of ‘disappearances’ – when Tibetans are taken from their homes or monasteries/nunneries, most commonly in the middle of the night. This has happened on a mass scale across the plateau since March 14 and has not been known to this degree since the Cultural Revolution or earlier, according to our best information. It is continuing today despite notification procedures required under China’s Criminal Procedure Law.

Someone disappeared from almost every Tibetan household in Lhasa in the weeks since March 14, according to one Tibetan source, while another described the situation as a “second Cultural Revolution.”

Impunity & denial of access to legal representation

ICT has been able to identify over 900 people who have been detained since protests began on March 10. This information has been obtained from first hand accounts provided by ICT sources, family members, monks, nuns and laypeople now in exile, and reports by the Congressional-Executive Commission on China,⁸ the Tibetan

⁸ The CECC political prisoner database, the most reliable source of data on detainees in Tibet, is available at www.cecc.gov

Government in Exile, the Tibetan exile media, official sources, Radio Free Asia, Voice of Tibet, Voice of America, Tibetan non-governmental organizations including Gu Chu Sum and the Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy.

Reports in the state media in March and April confirm the detention of 4434 people described as “rioters” who participated in protests in March and had been detained or surrendered by April 9.⁹ This figure apparently covered Lhasa in the TAR and Gannan (Chinese: Kanlho) TAP in Gansu province (Xinhua, April 9), as well as in Ngaba prefecture in Sichuan province (People’s Daily, March 25), but does not include every Tibetan area of the PRC. According to an analysis of state media by the CECC, including a June 21 China Daily article reporting on the release of “1157 people who expressed regret for conducting minor crimes” related to the Lhasa protests, “Chinese authorities released by June 21 a total of 3072 of the 4434 persons whom officials characterized as ‘rioters’ and who had surrendered or been detained by April 9.”¹⁰ The only official acknowledgement of arrests resulting from peaceful protests appeared in the official Tibet Daily, which reported 13 arrests stemming from a crowd yelling “reactionary slogans and [holding] a self-made banner of snow-mountain lions to gather a crowd and stir up trouble” – a reference to the detention of Sera monks outside the Jokhang on March 10.

The admission of such a high number of detentions by the authorities is in itself revealing. According to CECC analysis of official information given so far, the current status of more than 1200 alleged rioters remains unknown.

The first sentences relating to the protests were announced in April. Thirty sentences were handed down in connection with the riots in Lhasa on March 14, according to a Xinhua report, citing the Intermediate People’s Court of Lhasa. One monk was sentenced to life, and two others to 20 years.

One of the Tibetans sentenced to life was a monk, Pasang (Chinese: Basang), and the other was Sonam Tsiring, a driver with a Lhasa real estate company, according to Xinhua, the state news agency. According to the same report, Pasang, who is from the Toelung Dechen, Lhasa Municipality, led 10 people - including five monks - to destroy the local government office, smash or burn down 11 shops and rob their valuables, and attack policemen on duty, it said. Two of the monks were sentenced to 20 years and the other three to 15 years. None of the sentences involved accusations of manslaughter, indicating that the most severe sentences may still be forthcoming. A full account of the trial proceedings is currently unknown, given expediency and lack of transparency with which the government carried out the trials.

Human Rights Watch has challenged the legitimacy of the sentencing procedures carried out so far in Lhasa, stating that actual trial proceedings, in which evidence from the prosecution was introduced, had been conducted covertly on undisclosed dates earlier in April, and that the Tibetans were denied access to a meaningful defence with lawyers they had chosen.¹¹ In an image released by the state media of the trial, one of the prisoners is sitting on a chair, which some observers have noted could mean they were unable to stand following torture.

⁹ ‘Officials Report Release of More Than 3,000 of the More Than 4,400 Detained Tibetan “Rioters”, CECC, July 9, 2008, www.cecc.org

¹⁰ ibid

¹¹ ‘China: Tibetan Protesters Denied Fair Trial’, HRW, April 30, 2008, <http://www.hrw.org/english/docs/2008/04/30/china18684.htm>

Human Rights Watch pointed to a “consistent failure to establish a distinction between peaceful and violent protesters; statements by the Procuratorate (the Public Prosecution) at the time of the suspected protesters’ arrest that assumed their guilt rather than their innocence; and secret trial proceedings.” Human Rights Watch also point to a statement made by TAR Part Secretary Zhang Qingli on March 17, in which he called for “quick arrests, quick hearings, and quick sentencings” for those who participated in the Lhasa demonstrations, as “virtually a political directive to circumvent guarantees for a fair and impartial legal process.”¹²

One of 18 Chinese lawyers who signed an open letter offering their services as criminal defense lawyers to the accused in Tibet said that he didn’t know whether the Tibetans sentenced had received enough legal assistance (Washington Post, April 29). Another lawyer who signed the letter, Teng Biao, said the government had pressured them to withdraw their offer of assistance, telling them that the “Tibet issue is very sensitive”. Human Rights Watch added that the government’s decision to block the public offer of counsel by the group of lawyers for those Tibetans facing trial constitutes a “deliberate policy of secrecy and concealment.”¹³

News has also emerged of a life sentence and two other long sentences being imposed on three Tibetan men in their twenties from Lotah township in Ngaba TAP in Sichuan for charges of “beating, smashing and looting.” Twenty three-year old Kalbeh, was sentenced to life on around July 10, according to Tibetan exile sources from the area, while 27-year old Tsekho was sentenced to 13 years and Tirzoe, 25, sentenced to 15 years, all at the Ngaba TAP Intermediate People’s Court. The same Tibetan source told ICT that the three were denied adequate legal representation. The source said that around 17 other Tibetans from the area were in custody awaiting trial.

Serious concerns exist for juveniles who may have been sentenced in relation to the protests. According to information received by ICT, a 16-year old Tibetan boy in Machu has recently been sentenced to 12 years in prison. Although the charges cannot be confirmed, sources in the area indicate that his offence was ‘political’ and likely to be due to involvement in the Machu protest. Kunchok, who is believed to be an orphan, was reportedly detained on April 11 and asked to pay a large fine of up to 15,000 *yuan* (US \$2195), which he was unable to pay. According to the same account, even after some Tibetans found the money to pay his fine, he was not released, and was sentenced on June 15. The same Tibetan source said: “The sentencing occurred around the time of the Olympic torch relay in Lhasa and Xining – at this time, the number of security personnel was stepped up and people were speculating that it must be because of the Olympics.”

Amnesty International has also expressed severe concern about the number of Tibetan prisoners, stating that “many hundreds, possibly thousands, of Tibetans languish in prisons or detention centers without the government publicly acknowledging their whereabouts or formally charging them with a criminal offence.”¹⁴

There is evidence that officials believe the use of force across Tibet in response to largely peaceful protests is justified and in accordance with Chinese law. For instance, on March 16, 2008, Wu Shuangzhan, commander of the People’s Armed Police, said: “I can honestly tell you that none of the means we have adopted [in Tibet] have exceeded the constitutional rights of the armed forces or international law.[...] I can also very clearly assure you that not a single person has exceeded their mandate.¹⁵

¹² ‘China: Tibetan Protesters Denied Fair Trial’, HRW, April 30, 2008, <http://www.hrw.org/english/docs/2008/04/30/china18684.htm>

¹³ *ibid*

¹⁴ ‘People’s Republic of China: Tibet Autonomous Region: Access Denied’, Amnesty International, June 18, 2008, www.amnesty.org

¹⁵ Quoted by Reuters on March 16, 2008

Further inflammatory remarks were made by TAR Party Secretary Zhang Qingli at the height of the crackdown when the Olympic flame was brought to Lhasa in June 2008 amid an atmosphere of fear and intimidation, and was rebuked by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) for doing so. He said that the Chinese authorities could “bring more glory to the Olympic spirit” by “firmly smashing” the Dalai Lama’s plans to “ruin” the Games. Zhang was accused by the IOC of “politicising” the Games in a letter to the Beijing Olympic Games Organizing Committee (BOCOG).¹⁶

¹⁶ ‘International Olympic Committee sets precedent with reprimand for Tibet Party boss,’ ICT, June 28, 2008

APPENDIX A

- Tashi Tsing, from Bha in Xining in Qinghai, was a businessman in Lhasa who died in the Lhasa protests
- Dergam, age 40, and Lotse, age 24, were from Sori nomadic group in Ngaba TAP. They died on March 16, 2008 in the Lhasa protests
- Yesi, from Bha, Xining, was a businessman in Lhasa who died in the Lhasa protests
- Ngodup Phuntsok, from Kardze was killed at around 2:00 pm, on March 18, during protests in Kardze county
- Paltop, from Ngushu village in Ngaba, died in a protest (most likely in Ngaba)
- Ngoga (family: Chekha Tsang), around 40, and Pema Dechen (family: Tagu Dhe Tsang), both from Sichu village, Kardze, died on March 18
- Wangchen, in his forties, was the disciplinary Master at Kardze monastery. He died on March 18 in the Kardze protests
- Atisha, a 25-year old former monk at Ngaba Ngushul monastery, was killed on March 16, and his body left close to the police office
- Penpa, age 25, a monk at Drepung monastery was originally from Tsongdue township, Phenpo Lhundrup county in the TAR. He died on March 14 in the Lhasa protests
- Jinpa, age 28, from Dhakpa village, Sumkar township, Phenpo Lhundrup county in the TAR was a businessman in the area. He died from a gunshot wound in Phenpo Lhundrup county protests on March 15
- Tsering Dolkar, age 25, a nun in Meldro Gunkar in the TAR died in a protest likely to have been the Meldro Gungkar protest on April 12
- Tsewang Rigzin, age 38, disciplinary master, and Thupten Sangden, age 27, former chant master, from Thongkor monastery in Kardze, were killed during the suppression of protests at Thongkor in Sichuan on April 3
- The following Tibetans also died during or after the same protest: Lobsang Rinchen, age 25; Kunchok Sherab age 30; Khechok Pawo, age 20; Lhakgo, age 35; Tseyang Kyi (family: TsarNgo Tsang), age 23; Tsering Dhondup, (younger); Kalsang Choedon, age 35; Sonam Tsultrim, age 32; Drukmo Tso, age 34; Tenlam, age 32; Bubu Delek, age 30; and Tsering Dhondup (older), age 43

- Bhendhe Tsering, from Lukyel nomadic region, Ala township, Luchu county in Gansu died in the protests. Fifty-three year old Lapo from the same area committed suicide, reportedly in despair at the treatment of Tibetans in the region
- Talha, aged around 40, from Pashoe (Chinese: Basu) county in the TAR was a doctor who committed suicide on April 10 reportedly in despair at having been forced to denounce the Dalai Lama
- Dzati was detained and died after being beaten by police in Ngaba TAP in Sichuan. Instead of returning his body to family members, the authorities cremated his remains, supposedly to hide the evidence.