

# ROOFTOP REVIEW

*The latest monthly news, commentaries and announcements  
from the Tibet Rights Collective*

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## **Tibet Rights Collective**



## **Meet Bodpa Warriors: A Twitter Handle That Shines Spotlight on Tibetan History**

Dharamshala: With its interesting set of posts about stories from Tibet with a focus on Tibetan history, Tibetan warriors and army, a twitter page is quickly gaining popularity among netizens. Calling themselves Bodpa (which means a Tibetan person in Tibetan) Warriors, this group has sought to highlight the contributions of Tibetan freedom fighters in the history of Tibetan resistance struggle.

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# COMMENTARIES

## The Chinese Communist Party's Long-Standing Attempt to Erase Tibetan Language and Why They Will Not Succeed

*By Emily Harris*

In 2017, His Holiness the Dalai Lama said that the Chinese government must respect Tibetan culture and language. Speaking with the Times of India, His Holiness described how narrow-minded Chinese officials were by deliberately attempting to erase Tibetan language – which in his shared view is impossible to do. He goes on to compare the fact that the Chinese and Tibetans both have an ancient culture, and for harmony and stability to succeed you must respect peoples' culture and language, otherwise it gets very difficult. It is wonderful that nearly 60 years on Tibetan people still display how much they love their own culture.

### **Going Back in Time and an Attempted Silencing of Tibetan Teachers**

Winding back to 2010, the BBC released a media report which stated that “at least 1,000 ethnic Tibetan students in China have protested against what they call the erosion of their culture and language.” The students were angered by changes to their education policy, limiting the use of Tibetan language, and were told that all textbooks and subjects will be in Mandarin Chinese, aside from Tibetan and English language classes. An unnamed former Tongren teacher was quoted saying: “The Chinese are enforcing reforms which remind me of the Cultural Revolution.”

Fast-forward to 2018 when Tibetan activist, Tashi Wangchuk, made the headlines when he was sentenced by the Chinese authorities to five years in prison for “inciting separatism” after appearing in a documentary by the New York Times.

The documentary highlighted Wangchuk's work on

protecting his culture and his concerns that Tibetan language education was being heavily repressed by the Chinese Communist Party.

In October 2021, Tibet Watch reported that Chinese-state police arrested three Tibetan children from their boarding school in Markham County under the pretext of needed psychological counselling.

The arrest of these children took place around the time of looming sadness amongst Tibetan students in response to the Chinese government's harsh language policies in Tibet, including the ruling out of classes in their mother-tongue. On 13 February 2022, headlines again appeared when a university student was arrested after teaching the Tibetan language to children in Yamda during the school holidays. With no prior criminal record, nor any wrongdoing being committed, the Chinese authorities in Riwoche County arrested Choedon (ཅོལ་དོན་ལྷོ་མོ།) and she has not been seen since.

A similar case occurred on 1 August 2021, when Tibetan teacher, Richen Kyi, was detained at her home. With no evidence of any wrongdoing, she was later charged with “inciting separatism”. Kyi's arrest followed the unexplained forced closure of the school where she taught, with students being instructed to enroll in other government-affiliated schools in the region.

Following a lengthy campaign, including international pressure from United Nations special experts, Rinchen Kyi was released and quietly returned to her home by police on Sunday 24 April 2022.

## Separation From Their Parents and When Will the Global Community Wake Up

A shocking report from Tibet Action Institute, “Separated From Their Families Hidden From the World: China’s Vast System of Colonial Boarding Schools Inside Tibet”, found that an estimated 800,000+ Tibetan students have been forcibly put into Chinese colonial boarding schools. In these schools, the instructed language is Mandarin, and children are politically indoctrinated.

An interference with education is a key part of Xi Jinping’s brutal campaign against Tibetans in order to attempt to replace their identity, further confirming that Chinese Communist Party policies are continuing to provide a grave risk towards the survival of the Tibetan language.

Speaking with a Tibetan about the CCP’s policies he described the fact that by aggressively pushing for Chinese language as the medium of instruction in all Tibetan schools in Tibet, whilst at the same time deliberately promoting Chinese language at a very young age, the Chinese government is directly attacking the root of the distinct linguistic and cultural

identity of Tibetans. He finished his thoughts by highlighting that the Chinese-state is showing a complete disregard and contempt to the Tibetan people’s basic rights to speak their mother-tongue as enshrined in the Chinese constitution and National Regional Autonomy Law.

After reflecting on my thoughts above and discussions I have had with people from the Tibetan community, I was left thinking how many more distressing cases do we need to read about people disappearing or 4-year-old-children being forcibly separated from their parents and sent to colonial boarding schools until the global community comes together and addresses the Chinese Communist Party’s longstanding threat towards Tibetans?

*(Emily is a Parliamentary Assistant in the House of Commons and focuses the rest of her personal time on raising awareness of human rights violations taking place across China, Myanmar, and Afghanistan. She founded Tories for Tibet in 2021.)*

# The Luminescence of The Moon Captured by Beijing, The Panchen Lama Conundrum

*By Tenzing Dhamdul*

## Key Words

- **Panchen Lama:** The second highest lama in Tibet especially in the Gelugpa tradition.
- **Gelugpa:** One of the major sects in Tibetan Buddhism with its founder Jhe Tsongkhapa being the teacher of the 1st Dalai Lama.
- **Tashilhunpo Monastery:** The Buddhist monastery located in Shigatse and is the official seat of the Panchen Lama from where the upbringing and teachings a Panchen Lama takes place. This monastery was incidentally founded by the 1st Dalai Gedhun Drupa.
- **Struggle/Denouncing Session:** A popular practice during the Cultural Revolution in China and its occupied area where individuals were condemned in public and had to accept their mistakes with people among the crowd slurring and insulting them. This was known as Thamzing in Tibetan.



Tibetans are a community that has and continues to be very deeply associated with religion - this particular religion happens to be Buddhism. Many have used this as a tool of criticism against the Tibetan community, calling it a theocracy and a feudal state. Yet, since the turn of the millennial, this small community, its Buddhist philosophy and its traditions have captured the world by awe with many calling them as peace loving people.

At the very epicenter of all this stand the great lamas who have not only been a figure of reverence but individuals whom the Tibetans (that have gone through traumatic experience since becoming refugees after the forceful annexation of their homeland by Beijing) could lean upon.

These spiritual figures in our community have had to serve the dual role by fulfilling their spiritual role of helping and uplifting all sentient beings, and also taking care, empowering and being the voice of the many Tibetans who have suffered and still continue to suffer under the duress of the Chinese communist government. The recent arbitrary detention of Tibetan scholars, the known 3 self-immolations victims in Tibet this year and continual destruction of Buddhist edicts in Drago County, Kham indicates to us how the life for a Tibetan is in the mainland, further pressing upon the need of such charismatic Tibetan figures - be it in the manifestation of Lamas.

This role was filled by the late 10th Panchen Lama in Tibet from 1960s onwards till his untimely demise. He was an ardent supporter of Tibetans living in Tibet and gave his life towards the well-being of the Tibetan people even though it got him imprisoned, tortured (both physically and mentally) and vilified by the communist government time and time again.

### **The Sun and Moon of Tibet**

For us Tibetans, we use a particular metaphor to describe the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama as the “Sun and Moon”, with each being an important figure in maintaining the balance in Tibet, be it spiritually and politically.

The “Sun and Moon” as we all know are the harbingers of life with the moon taking the mantle of the sun in the night and bringing life to the nocturnal beings. The Tibetans knowing this constantly revere this metaphor and is still embedded in their life today as the relationship between these two behemoth figures continues to be symbolized by this concept.

The Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama both are the prominent heads of the Gelugpa sect (one of the major sects in Tibetan Buddhism) respectively and they have adopted the role of a teacher and a disciple with each other, thus validating their reincarnations as well. The first Dalai Lama, Gedhun Drupa founded Tashi Lhunpo monastery, which is and continues to be the monastic seat of the Panchen Lama.

His Holiness the 10th Panchen Lama Lobsang Trinley Lhundrup Choekyi Gyalsten even stated how he not only sees the Dalai Lama as his spiritual friend but also how both of them have the role of recognizing tulkus (reincarnation of high lamas) in Tibet.

Beijing, who has had knowledge of this, used it to their benefit and have tried their best in subjugating, creating divide and bringing discord between the two high lamas of Tibet. Their effort in controlling the 10th Panchen Lama backfired on them and the “Sun and Moon” became the beacon of light ushering peace, balance and tranquility in Tibet once again.

The Dalai Lama who was in exile as a refugee garnered international support and made the people of the world aware of what atrocious acts were happening in Chinese occupied Tibet (during that time any information about China was hard to come by to the international media).

Simultaneously, the Panchen Lama who was holding out in Tibet, would engage with Tibetans and listen to their narratives and problems. It culminated in him writing the 70,000-word petition submitted to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).



Prior to this submission even his teacher advised and begged the Panchen Lama to hold back and not go forth with this petition as it would generate great distrust from the CCP and bring more harm than good. The Panchen Lama, who knew these ramifications, kept it aside as he believed he needed to raise the voice of the Tibetans and did not hold back.

The aftermath of this was him being condemned and ostracized by Beijing and sent to prison. The image of the Panchen Lama (the Moon for us Tibetans) being pointed at with fingers in public and having to undergo the struggle/denouncing (Thamzing) session because he raised the plight of Tibetans in Tibet, impacted the image of the late Panchen Lama, whom unfortunately earlier in life was associated with Beijing and many saw him being under their control. The Sun which Beijing could not control was shining brightly than ever but the Moon subjugated, controlled, tortured and now imprisoned was waning. His luminescence which was saving the soul of many Tibetans in Tibet was snatched by Beijing. Even after his release and the eventual end of the Cultural Revolution, with China itself undergoing change with the passing away of Mao Zedong, the Panchen Lama stood firm and fought for the cause of the Tibetan people day in and day out.

His speeches invigorated the sense of how important it is to be a Tibetan and gave the Tibetans a sense of pride that was lost and needed to be rekindled since Beijing occupied Tibet. His harsh criticism to many actions of Beijing still continued with him famously taking the mickey out of the founders of the Tibetology Institute in Tibet. Here he questioned how they were doing research with the negligence of Tibet's vast history not taken into context. He said, "It is impossible to do Tibetology research if you do not have knowledge of Buddhism. If you do not have knowledge of Marxism-Leninism, you cannot do research on the communist system". His final words are a taped statement on the recognition of Tulkus at Tashi Lhunpo monastery in Shigatse, on 24th January, 1989 just days before his mysterious death on 28th January of that year.

This in many ways seemed to not only hint about his reincarnation -which meant his demise was around the corner - but also gave all of us warnings of the manipulation that would occur over his next reincarnation - the 11th Panchen Lama. Until his death, the late 10th Panchen Lama gave his life for the Tibetan people and was a key figure and pioneer in bringing a re-renaissance in Tibet after the inhumane destruction the Cultural Revolution by the occupiers had brought into Tibet.

### **Legacy And The 11th Panchen Lama, Incognito and Puppet?**

After the passing away of the 10th Panchen Lama, the search of his reincarnation begun. Many interest groups came to the fore with Beijing being a forerunner here. What is very ironical here is that the very establishment that does not recognize the Dalai Lama, who is the pinnacle and epitome of such recognition, wanted to take part in this process. This action illustrates very clearly how Beijing does not walk the talk and shows their opportunistic and cunning side.

More than 6 years after the passing away of His Holiness Lobsang Trinley Lhundrup Choekyi Gyaltsen, the Dalai Lama and his search party (in Tibet) narrowed down the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama and finally on 14th May, 1995, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, a 6-year-old boy born in Lhari County, Tibet was recognized as the 11th Panchen Lama.

This selected reincarnation was even agreed upon by Chadrel Rinpoche, who was not only a close disciple of the late 10th Panchen Lama but was also the Khenpo (abbot) of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery (the monastic seat of the Panchen Lama) and who was simultaneously instructed to lead the Chinese efforts to search and locate the 11th Panchen Lama. However, things took a turn for the worse here as the 6-year-old boy and his family were kidnapped 3 days later on 17th May. From then till now there has been no picture and image of the 6-year-old boy and his family that has been made public.

The Tibetans worldwide, including the diasporic community and several other people, see him as the youngest political prisoner and it was only after nearly 20 years since his kidnapping that the Chinese officials gave word to the world that Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his family are doing well.

What conclusion one can draw from this was how this 6-year-old boy, who had the whole world awaiting in front of him, was stripped of his basic human rights and kidnapped. Did he personally do anything wrong here? Is the right of an individual not being trampled upon here? What sort of precedent it sets of being a Tibetan in Tibet when even the reincarnation of such a high lama which the Tibetans view as their Moon can be kidnapped in broad daylight and kept in incognito just like that? Would these implications not apply to all the Tibetans and all those people living in China? Well, Beijing has really gone gung-ho here as since the Panchen Lama going AWOL, many prominent Chinese and other individuals governed by the CCP have also suffered a similar fate - Jack Ma and Peng Shuai to name a few (the latter who was fortunate to be seen to public, though most likely was under State control, was arranged so due to the huge international uproar the incident created).

The Panchen Lama conundrum does not stop here as Beijing went to stoop so low that they even went to the length to appoint their own Panchen Lama so that they could manipulate the selection of the reincarnation of the next Dalai Lama. Gyaltsen Norbu, Beijing's appointed Panchen Lama has held and continues to hold various important posts in Tibet and from my view is following their orders under duress, thereby showcasing how they are yet again controlling a Tibetan and not respecting his human rights. Yet, the fact remains that Tibetans in large never keep Gyaltsen Norbu's photo in their shrine/altar and do not revere him like the 10th Panchen Lama or even Gedhun Choekyi Nyima (the kidnapped Panchen Lama). As an individual, I personally feel sorry for Gyaltsen Norbu who has to live under such chains and burden. The 11th Panchen Lama, though two in number, which is possible according to the Dalai Lama, is being hindered with one being left

incognito and the other though alive, fit and present, is merely a puppet figure to Tibetans everywhere. The latter just being a name is now gradually being ignored by the higher echelons of power in Beijing as the recent incident when president Xi Jinping visited Lhasa (the capital of Tibet) for the first time but did not meet their own appointed Panchen Lama tells its own tale.

## Conclusion

The luminescent moon, the Panchen Lama has been captured, blocked and canceled by the Chinese authorities. When will we as Tibetans ever be able to experience its iridescence in full glow? The legacy of the 10th Panchen Lama remains strongly in the hearts of Tibetans through his many works especially the 70,000-word petition which Mao Zedong ignominiously called a "Poison Arrow". He not only details the harm done by the communist party in Tibet prior to the cultural revolution but also brought forth means through which harmony and authentic development of Tibet could be achieved.

The question now remains as to what role will the 11th Panchen Lama play? Gyaltsen Norbu, Beijing's appointed Panchen Lama is being paraded by the communist party but will he ever receive true love and be seen as the moon by the Tibetan masses with support even waning from the CCP? And what is the status of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima (Dalai Lama's recognized Panchen Lama) who has been incognito for the past 2 decades and will be 33 years old on 25th April, 2022? Will we ever see a live picture of him? Is he even alive? What are his whereabouts? The Panchen Lama conundrum is big and looms around the lips of every Tibetans and Chinese authorities especially with it traditionally having a strong say and role in the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama, who continues to grow wiser but also older with each passing day.

***(A Tibetan Refugee in India privileged to receive education. Studied at Hindu College, Delhi University and School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University. Recipient of the Sikyong Scholarship in the year 2015. Enjoys playing tennis and cycling. Views are personal.)***



# The Return & The Rise of Self-Immolations: China's Failed Policies & Propaganda in Tibet

*By Tenzin Samphel*

***"Someone who was a poster boy of assimilating with the Chinese system took his life in this overtly political protest. This makes Norbu's self-immolation even more powerful."***

***- An Article on the Self-Immolation of Tsewang Norbu for Vice***

The year 2022 has been rocked by 3 reported self-immolations by Tibetans inside China Occupied Tibet, signaling a return to the self-immolations as a tool of protest. A man identified by Radio Free Asia as Tsering Samdup, set himself on fire near a monastery in Qinghai, making it the most recent case after the self-immolation by singer Tsewang Norbu and 81-year-old Taphun.

As the world grapples with rising geopolitical rivalries and global unrest marred by the Russia-Ukraine crisis and economic recovery in a post-pandemic world, the rise of a revisionist China has been a cause of global concern, especially since 2020. Xi Jinping's policies aimed at the rejuvenation of the Chinese Dream has led the Communist Party of China (CCP) to walk down a path that is characterized by a special interest in building a 'homogenous identity' for the citizens of China based on its atheist outlook and communist principles.

The fact that there is a gap of 3 years between the latest spate of self-immolations and the last one reported before it (it was reported in 2019) exposes the double whammy of Beijing's policies in Tibet - the rising wave of brutal Sinicization tactics as the root cause of self-immolations and the propaganda and narrative building tools along with surveillance and information blockage tactics that China uses to curb the access to information on Tibet.

## **Tibetan Angst Against Xi's Policies**

Before he came to power as the President of People's Republic of China (PRC) in 2013, Xi Jinping spoke in Lhasa while marking 60 years of the communist takeover of Tibet.

His statement that China "should thoroughly fight against separatist activities by the Dalai clique by firmly relying on all ethnic groups... and completely smash any plot to destroy stability in Tibet and jeopardise national unity" was telling of what was in store for Tibet in the years to come.

Over the years, especially under Xi Jinping, China has undertaken brutal tactics that are aimed at the Sinicization of Tibetan Buddhism and building what Beijing claims to be a 'modern, socialist and culturally advanced Tibet'. The end result of such tactics has been that Tibetans have been at the receiving end of gross human rights violations that are taking Tibetans' culture, language, identity, traditions and religion.

As these gross human rights violations continue and in fact, keep rising with every day passing, it would not be an understatement to say that Tibetans are hurting. Any sort of free speech or expression is prohibited in Occupied Tibet, Tibetans cannot hold a peaceful protest, you will land in jail for hanging a picture of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, you will 'vanish' if you share any incriminating post against China or its actions in Tibet and your children will be sent to special Chinese Boarding Schools that will make sure that they learn Chinese language, sing Chinese nationalistic songs and take part in brutal military drills under the People's Liberation Army (PLA) at a tender age of 6. And not to forget, Tibetan nomads are being displaced for illegal mining purposes and the Tibetan Plateau's precious water tower is being overtaken by Beijing in a hegemonic manner. And lastly, Xi securitizing Tibet by deploying heavy military and bringing into effect new Border Laws, is putting the final nail in the coffin for Tibetans.



As the angst grows at such haranguing, Tibetans are yet again turning to self-immolations as a tool of protest. What is more painful to realize is the fact that China blames His Holiness the Dalai Lama for them in what only reveals his anxiety and desperation to control Tibet. It further reveals the 'absolute angst' that the Tibetans feel while maintaining their resilience in the face of such brutal treatment by the Chinese.

But every human has a breaking point. For Tibetans, it is self-immolation. Xi's policies have pushed certain Tibetans to such a point that they feel that there is no other option left but self-immolation. Horrifying as it is to imagine, it would certainly be a crime if we blame Tibetans for taking it up. The only blame that should lie is on China and Xi Jinping.

While Beijing harps on the poverty alleviation programs that it has undertaken in Tibet and claims to have 'liberated' Tibet, the sudden return and the rise in self-immolations only tells one truth - that Xi's policies have failed the Tibetans. The only motive of such policies by China is to build a 'homogenous identity' amongst its people, even if it comes at the cost of a 'cultural genocide' in Tibet.

If one were to look closely at the three reported self-immolations in 2022 - a well-known Tibetan singer who had assimilated the Chinese system, a well-educated man, and an 81-year-old - it would be safe to say that something harrowing must be happening in Tibet for people like them to undertake such drastic measures to protest. Oh, the fact that they are not allowed to protest is the starting point of the massive problem in Tibet, thus pointing to the root cause - the failure of China and Xi's policies in Tibet.

### **Manufacturing Narratives**

Controlling the outflow from and inflow of information to China has been one of the top priorities of Beijing under Xi Jinping. In 2020, the US Department of Defense (DoD) submitted a report to the Congress titled 'Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China'.

Identifying Chinese influence and information warfare under it, the report stated that "the CCP seeks to condition domestic, foreign and multilateral political establishments and public opinion to accept Beijing's narratives".

Such tactics hold special relevance when it comes to China and its occupation of Tibet. In fact, Tibet can be identified as the origin story of PRC's influence and information warfare tactics - post Tibet's invasion by PRC in 1959, Beijing has been doing everything it can to control the narratives around Tibet. And Beijing has undertaken a two-pronged approach to pursue this in the case of self-immolations - attack HH and shift the blame; control information outflow and inflow; and disguise Sinicization plans as development programs.

Firstly, Beijing has attacked the very institution of His Holiness the Dalai Lama by branding him as a 'splittist' and 'separatist' since his escape from Lhasa in 1959 in a bid to shift and escape the blame for the self-immolations by Tibetans. While he continues to seek dialogue with the Chinese through the 'Middle Way Approach', Beijing has continued to tarnish HH's image - so much so that China identifies His Holiness the Dalai Lama as the key motivator for self-immolations, a man highly revered for his teachings on non-violence and peace across the world. While a case can be made against self-immolations for being 'violent', blaming it on either HH or the Tibetans will only lead to the world absolving China and Xi Jinping of their crimes against humanity in Tibet.

Secondly, China has undertaken online influence and information operations aimed at controlling the narratives around self-immolations. This can be evidenced from the fact that it deleted hundreds of posts on Tsewang Norbu, the Tibetan singer who self-immolated recently.

Additionally, China has gone ahead and time and again stated that those undertaking self-immolations are 'mentally ill' people, especially since 2012 when Xi Jinping was set to overtake as the President of PRC.

Simultaneously, China's heavy surveillance and information blockage tactics in Tibet makes sure that no information about any such happenings and Beijing's policies comes out in the open.

Curiously, there is also evidence of Beijing undertaking 'offensive cyber operations' against pro-Tibet groups and individuals across the world, especially the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) and the Tibetan diaspora with the capability to steal their personal information.

Lastly, in the context of Tibet, one has to understand that China's policies are aimed at what China claims to be the 'unification of China' with a 'homogenous identity' for its citizens, eventually leading to 'national rejuvenation'. Every tactic it undertakes to control and manufacture the narratives, not just around Tibet, but also Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, etc., also focus on highlighting the positives of Beijing's policies in these regions.

From its so-called poverty alleviation programs to tackling climate change to securitisation, the only thing that China is implementing in Tibet is actually its policy of 'Sinicization'.

One look at the Chinese state-controlled media outlets and state-backed social media handles is enough to reveal this reality to any layman. Their aim, one might ask? Deceive and distract the domestic and foreign audience from the real issues that plague Tibet.

As China under Xi Jinping continues to sell itself as a 'superpower', one must not forget the resilience and sacrifice of Tibetans in their peaceful fight against Beijing. A telling tale of this is the title of a 2017 essay by Kevin Carrico for the Foreign Policy magazine - The Cult of Stability Is Killing Tibetans.

*(Tenzin Samphel is currently serving as a Consultant with Tibet Rights Collective)*

# TOP LATEST NEWS

## • Tibetan Spokesperson's Twitter Handle Remains Suspended Despite Multiple Appeals

Dharamshala: The official Twitter handle of Tenzin Lekshay, the spokesperson and additional secretary, Department of Information and International Relations for the Central Tibetan Administration [CTA] had mysteriously disappeared on January 17, 2022 and it still remains suspended.

"Despite repeated appealing to @TwitterSupport for months, @Twitter is silent & could not resolve to unsuspend my twitter account @tlekshay which was running for more than 10 years. Need an immediate action & justification from twitter", tweeted the spokesperson yesterday.

In a statement to Republic TV, Tibetan spokesperson Lekshay had revealed earlier that he was contacted by an anonymous media figure

linked to the Chinese state-affiliated media on another communication platform with a request to access a mysterious link that traced back to the People's Republic of China. As he attempted to access the link, his Twitter handle was compromised.

Similar hacking and censorship instances have been reported among Tibetan social media profiles, which actively speak up against China's policies in Tibet, which it had unlawfully invaded in 1959. The account of a prominent Tibetan activist based in Dharmshala, Himachal Pradesh, Yeshi Dawa, widely engaged in activities related to awareness about various social and environmental issues in the Tibetan region was also compromised earlier. Concerns have been raised regarding censorship on Twitter related to tweets and social media posts, which China perceives as anti-China.

China had recently stepped up its censorship on communication in and outside Tibet as it restricted online communications between Tibetans and their family members and friends staying abroad.

- **Yak Meat and Drinking Water Carried to Pandemic-Hit Shanghai from Tibet; China Calls It Tibet's 'Donation'**

Lhasa: According to Chinese media reports, “anti-epidemic supplies” including 100 tonnes of dried yak meat and 3,000 tonnes of drinking water were transported from Tibet to pandemic-hit Shanghai on 10th April, as per decision by “TAR Party Committee and Government”. Additionally, 5,000 tonnes of drinking water were transferred to China’s Jilin province.

“To show its support for the eastern metropolis and the north eastern province battling a COVID-19 resurgence” Tibet was “donating” the supplies, claimed CGTN news outlet.

Tibetan Review had noted in an article that sending such a donation in the name of an intensely Buddhist religious people who would refrain from such a large-scale killing of animals was meant to be a deliberate affront to them, given its ongoing Sinicization drive. Earlier, donations of Tibetan herbal medicine were sent to affected areas in China during the first wave of COVID19.

Authorities in Shanghai had imposed draconian lockdown measures since March 2022 that significantly impeded people's access to health care, food, and other life necessities. An unknown number of people have reportedly died after being denied medical treatment for their non-Covid related illnesses. In a video that went viral on social media, residents of Shanghai could be heard screaming from their balconies and windows.

- **Meet Bodpa Warriors: A Twitter Handle That Shines Spotlight on Tibetan History**

Dharamshala: With its interesting set of posts about stories from Tibet with a focus on Tibetan history, Tibetan warriors and army, a twitter page is quickly gaining popularity among netizens.

Calling themselves Bodpa (which means a Tibetan person in Tibetan) Warriors, this group has sought to highlight the contributions of Tibetan freedom fighters in the history of Tibetan resistance struggle.

Since its inception in February 2022, the twitter page has shared rare pictures, some sourced from inside Tibet, of Tibetan warriors, especially Khampa warriors. Since the very start, the Khampa warriors have been an integral part of Tibetan Army and have been protecting His Holiness Dalai Lama even at the cost of their lives. For a Khampa, “life is always dedicated to his land and he is expected to fight till the last drop of his blood”.

Some of the most popular posts include those about Drapchi Regiment which was sent to welcome the U.S. army officials, Captain Brooke Dolan and Major Ilya Tolstoy, when they arrived in Lhasa, Simpa regiment, known as the “Exterior and Interior Guards of the Dalai Lama's Palace” and Yasö Generals who were the commanders of an ancient Tibetan Militia whose elaborate dress could be so heavy that they could not stand up.

China is attempting to Sinicize the culture, history, language and tradition of Tibet, which it unlawfully invaded in 1959. 159 Tibetans have self-immolated themselves so far, as a protest against Chinese policies in their homeland. Under such circumstances, team Bodpa Warriors is doing a commendable work in helping spread awareness about the history of Tibet before Chinese intrusion among the global audience. This will prove helpful to de-legitimate Chinese claims that Tibet was a part of China throughout the course of history.

- **Twitter Users Greet Elon Musk with A Demand for Tibetan Flag Emoji**

The demand for a Tibetan flag emoji in social media has gathered momentum after Elon Musk’s announcement of Twitter takeover. “@elonmusk, could we have Tibet-flag emoji on @Twitter please?”, tweeted twitter user Tenam.



A group of Tibetan activists had launched an #InsertTibetanFlagEmoji Campaign in 2018 to make the Tibetan flag emoji a reality. They had petitioned the Unicode Consortium, the standards committee that decides which emoji become real digital icons.

However, Unicode has neither accepted nor rejected the Tibetan flag emoji proposal. Instead, they placed the responsibility on their member tech companies - including Apple, Google, Facebook and Twitter - to decide the fate of the Tibetan flag emoji. Unicode, in a statement released in March 2022 mentioned that it won't be adding more flag emojis anytime soon. It said "the inclusion of new flags will always continue to emphasise the exclusion of others" and is therefore, a cause for trouble. Flags are "by far" the least-used emoji, added the consortium.

Tibet Rights Collective had also launched a Tibetan Flag Emoji Campaign to ensure that in the digital age, Tibetan culture & identity are not forgotten, which was well received by the followers.

Tibetan flag, also known as the "snow lion flag", has a magnificent snow-clad mountain at the centre, which represents "the great nation of Tibet, widely known as the Land Surrounded by Snow Mountains" and six red bands that stand for the original ancestors of the Tibetan people. The sun represents the equal enjoyment of freedom, spiritual and material happiness and prosperity by all beings in the land of Tibet, the snow lions represent the country's victorious accomplishment of a unified spiritual and secular life and the yellow border symbolizes the teachings of the Buddha.

The flag symbolizes the collective aspirations of the Tibetan community and the absence of the flag emoji is denying a population the chance to express themselves online.

- **Chinese Officials in Rural Areas of Tibet Are Forcing Village Leaders to Speak in Chinese: Report**

Lhasa: Radio Free Asia has reported that the Chinese authorities have launched workshops and

have ordered local administrators to conduct business only in Chinese, telling them they must support language policies mandated by Beijing and lead the Tibetan public "by example," according to a source living in Tibet.

"A 10-day workshop was held for local leaders in Kongpo in central-eastern Tibet to promote Chinese, both written and spoken, as their main language of communication," RFA reported, quoting a source.

Six workshops have now already been held in Kongpo's Gyamda (in Chinese, Gongbujiangda) county, with others conducted in many other regions of Tibet. Tibetan village employees are being required to always speak and communicate in Chinese, the report said.

A new program supported by China's 5G network has meanwhile been launched to "improve" education in Tibet using Mandarin Chinese in online teaching, research, and communications between schools, according to a Chinese state media report. This move is to be seen as a further push by China to weaken the Tibetan people's ties to their national culture and identity.

Earlier, the authorities had asked schools to teach in Mandarin instead of Tibetan to Sinicize Tibetan language, traditions, and culture.

- **China Will Not Allow Dalai Lama Supporters to Attend University**

Lhasa: In a further blow to Tibetans in China-controlled Tibet, Beijing released "The Tibet Autonomous Region's 2022 Regular College Admissions Regulations" that bars students from university admissions if they are found to be involved in any "anti-national activities".

Section 7 lays down the need for electronic files of all Tibetan applicants to these Universities, under which they are bound to disclose their "ideological and political morality assessments". Such a clause exposes China's discrimination against Tibetan students and barring them from higher studies due to their political affiliations.

Section 13 of the regulations further elaborates the components of these assessments, wherein it mentions that Tibetan candidates will be disqualified in case they are found in defiance of China's Constitution or "participating in Cults" or using "words and deeds that endanger the unity of the motherland".

It needs to be noted here that China has often branded His Holiness the Dalai Lama as a "cultish figure", which opens up the possibility of China barring students holding a positive view of the Dalai Lama from getting admitted in universities.

Moreover, the overall focus on "anti-nationalistic activities" in the entire text of the regulations exposes China's severe crackdown on Tibetans and their political affiliations, which is sure to ultimately result in violation of basic human rights of the Tibetans to receive education.

- **Fears Of Removal of Tibetan Nomads as China Plans More National Parks in Tibet**

Lhasa: An announcement that China has made to mark Earth Day 2022 has raised concerns of more forceful removal and resettlement of Tibetans, especially nomads, from their own lands. This year, China will set up several new national parks in areas with "critical ecological locations and good ecological functions, including the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, Yellow River, and Yangtze River basins", reported China state-affiliated media.

Under China's National Parks Scheme, "vast areas of Tibet are to be turned into "national parks" - contingent upon the removal of Tibetans from their ancestral lands. Accordingly, huge watersheds on the plateau are declared national parks in an effort to mitigate climate change and offset its reputation as a major world polluter.

Tibetan nomads are forcefully removed from their own lands, often with low compensations, and resettled in concrete settlements in remote urban areas where they are subjected to propaganda lessons and Chinese language classes. President Xi Jinping announced China's first batch of five national parks in October 2021 as he emphasized

Beijing's biodiversity commitments at the COP15 summit. Tibetan nomads are forcefully removed from their own lands, often with low compensations, and resettled in concrete settlements in remote urban areas where they are subjected to propaganda lessons and Chinese language classes. President Xi Jinping announced China's first batch of five national parks in October 2021 as he emphasized Beijing's biodiversity commitments at the COP15 summit.

Tibetan nomads have staged various protests against China's attempts to evict them from their lands; a scuffle broke out between the Tibetan families and Chinese authorities on 10 November 2021 at the park construction site in Domda village, resulting in threats against the Tibetan villagers.

This act of driving away nomads from their lands involuntarily in the name of preservation and conservation of nature is ironic given that these nomads have been the traditional land managers for thousands of years. As China gears up to create more national parks in Tibet, more such large-scale land grab with threats and unpaid compensation might follow.

- **China's Plans to Tap Wind Potential in Tibet for 'Clean Energy' Raise Concerns**

Lhasa: China has identified enough wind energy potential in Tibet to power the U.K., Germany and France combined, and plans to further develop the region to help meet its ambitious climate targets, noted a Bloomberg Quint report.

The report quoted China's National Climate Center report that said, "Tibet has enough sites with strong, steady wind to install 600 gigawatts of turbines, with another 420 gigawatts possible in parts of the plateau in neighboring regions including Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan, Yunnan and Xinjiang".

The National Energy Administration followed up shortly after with a guidance to accelerate construction of clean energy bases in Tibet, it mentioned.

Reports have suggested that to implement China's earlier plans to build water and wind turbines in Tibet and to build the infrastructure, the authorities forced people off their land and coerced them into accepting inadequate compensation for lost land and income. Those who protested were subject to detention and even criminal prosecution.

- **Tibetan Parents Being Forced to Attend Chinese Language Workshops: Tibet Watch**

Lhasa: According to research by Tibet Watch, from February to March this year, at least 16 compulsory workshops for parents were held in a secondary school in Golog Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, with local officials also required to attend. The Chinese government. In its campaign to push Mandarin Chinese as the main spoken and written language for Tibetans has started giving parents the responsibility for teaching their children.

Tibet Watch reported that a similar workshop was also held in Nyima County, in the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region. It quoted a news article published on 12 March on Nyima County WeChat Platform, managed by the local authorities, which said the county authorities held a meeting for its local officials, Party members and local Tibetans on "learning national common language workshop and test".

The report says that as well as language lessons those attending were told about Xi Jinping's vision

for China and that they were encouraged to spread everything that they had learned when they went back to their villages. Chinese authorities are pushing for Sinicization of Tibetan education and culture. Tibetan children are being sent to PLA camps and colonial boarding schools where they are subjected to propaganda lessons and military and language training.

- **81-Year-Old Tibetan Man TaPhun Self Immolates in Front of Police Station in Tibet's Ngaba County**

A Tibetan man self-immolated here on 27 March to protest Chinese government repression in Ngaba, Amdo, Tibet, reported Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy. According to reports, TaPhun was taken away by the Chinese police, moments after he set himself on fire and died later in police custody. Taphun was reportedly a resident of Meuruma nomadic village in Ngaba County.

The previous known self-immolation took place in Yushul (Yushu) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai, when a Tibetan man named Tsering Samdup self-immolated on Wednesday afternoon in front of a Chinese police station near a Buddhist monastery in Kyegudo. No further details have emerged about the incident yet. On February 25, 2022, popular contemporary singer Tsewang Norbu, 25, had shouted slogans and set himself on fire in a protest in front of the iconic Potala Palace in the Tibet regional capital Lhasa.



## MOVIE RECOMMENDATIONS

- **The Sun Behind the Clouds (2010)**

This film follows the Dalai Lama during the 2008 protests in Tibet, the Beijing Olympics, and the breakdown in talks with the Chinese government. Fifty years after the fall of his country, a rift between the Dalai Lama's efforts for peace and the growing impatience of younger Tibetans becomes clear.

Director: Ritu Sarin, Tenzing Sonam

Cast: The 14th Dalai Lama



- **Pawo (2016)**

Since 1950, Tibet has been occupied by China. Dorjee, a young Tibetan, grew up in peace 40 years later. After the death of his father, it all comes to a point, where he realizes that his wings are already cut. Inside Tibet and in exile, a last cry for freedom starts.

Director: Marvin Litwak

Cast: Shavo Dorjee, Tenzin Gyaltzen, Tenzin Jamyang

- **Kundun (1997)**

He films follows the leader Tenzin, Tibet's 14th Dalai Lama, from his confirmation as the resurrection of the Dalai Lama at age two up to his 24th year, when he was exiled from his homeland following the 1959 invasion of Tibet by Communist China.

Director: Martin Scorsese

Cast: Tenzin Thuthob Tsarong, Gyurme Tethong, Tulku Jamyang Kunga Tenzin



## UPCOMING EVENTS

- **Oslo Freedom Forum 2022 (May 23-25, 2022), Oslo, Norway**

The Oslo Freedom Forum is a global gathering of activists united in standing up to tyranny. The theme for the 2022 Oslo Freedom Forum, CHAMPION OF CHANGE, celebrates both activists, who are themselves champions, and their causes. This theme represents a strong, scalable call to action, inviting you to act and advocate on behalf of activists and in support of human rights.

[More details here.](#)

- **Book Launch: “We Measure the Earth with our Bodies” by Tsering Yangzom Lama (May 19, 2022)**

To celebrate the publication of Tibetan author Tsering Yangzom Lama's debut novel, the UBC Himalaya Program is hosting a book event where she will read an excerpt from her book, followed by Q&A with moderator Professor Tsering Shakya and discussant Professor Billy Ray Belcourt.

[More details here.](#)

- **Long Life Offering Ceremony in Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh, India (May 25, 2022)**

His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama will attend a Long Life Prayer offered to him by the Sakya Tibetan Buddhist Tradition in the morning at the Main Tibetan Temple.

[More details here.](#)

# CAMPAIGNS

- **Spare A Thought**

As Panchen Lama turned 33 on April 25, 2022, our campaign tried to remember & renew the call for the release of Panchen Lama, who was abducted at the age of 6 by Chinese authorities. We had invited our followers to share their thoughts on Panchen Lama with us and we received some moving entries.

- **Confucious Institutes**

A campaign that tried to create awareness about Confucious Institutes, Beijing's secret propaganda tools.



- **#TRCExplains UFWD**

A campaign that explored the role and functions of United Front Work Department (UFWD), an agency to coordinate the work of PRC state agencies and CCP units to carry out pro-China Communist propaganda and neutralize opposition.

