

TENZIN DELEK: INNOCENT TIBETAN MONK SENTENCED TO LIFE

On April 7th 2002, the Chinese authorities in Lihang, eastern Tibet, (Chinese: Sichuan Province) arrested **Tenzin Delek Rinpoche**, a highly respected Tibetan Buddhist leader, and his relative **Lobsang Dhondup**, a former monk. Both men were accused of involvement in bombings and explosions. On December 2nd, 2002, Lobsang Dhondup was sentenced to immediate death, and Tenzin Delek Rinpoche was sentenced to death with a suspension of two years.

The only evidence produced by the authorities against Rinpoche was a confession extracted from his co-accused, Lobsang Dhondup. Lobsang later retracted this confession, alleging he had been tortured. During his trial, Rinpoche alleged that he too had been tortured and shouted out his support for the Dalai Lama.

At least twelve other Tibetans were either arrested or disappeared in connection to the case; at least four remain imprisoned, detained, or missing. Human Rights Watch reported in February 2004 that over 60 people were taken into custody by the Chinese authorities. It is believed that they were targeted because of their connection to Tenzin Delek Rinpoche.

Rinpoche is known for his work to promote and preserve Tibetan culture, religion and identity in Tibet. An open supporter of the Dalai Lama, he advocated nonviolence and respect for the environment. The Chinese authorities view him as a threat to their control of the region. His current situation is the culmination of numerous attempts over more than a decade by Chinese authorities to arrest and imprison Rinpoche because of his influence and standing in both the Tibetan and Chinese communities in Lihang.



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The Chinese government did not present credible evidence against Tenzin Delek Rinpoche or any of the Tibetans detained. They were denied access to independent lawyers and did not receive a fair trial.

Because of the international outcry over the case, the Chinese authorities gave assurances that Tenzin Delek Rinpoche and Lobsang Dhondup would receive a thorough retrial in China's Supreme Court. However, on January 26, 2003, after a secret retrial, Lobsang Dhondup was executed, in the first known execution of a Tibetan for political crimes in 20 years, and the Sichuan Higher People's Court upheld Rinpoche's 2-year suspended death sentence.

After an intense international campaign by Tibetans and their supporters to stop his execution, Tenzin Delek's sentence was commuted to life in prison on January 26, 2005.

Tenzin Delek is an innocent man, and should not be forced to suffer in prison for the rest of his life.

Act now to free Tenzin!

1. Send a Fax to the Chinese Minister of Foreign Affairs calling for Tenzin Delek's immediate release. Visit SFT's urgent action website: www.freetenzin.org

2. Write your Foreign Minister/Secretary of State If you live in the US, send letters to Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice (secretary@state.gov). If you live in Canada, send letters to Peter MacKay (Mackay.P@parl.gc.ca), Minister of Foreign Affairs. If you live outside of North America, you can find names and contact information for your Foreign Affairs Minister at: www.studentsforafreetibet.org/freetenzin

3. Educate others about Tenzin Delek's plight! Plan an awareness-raising event. Set up an information table, organize a talk, or hold a protest/vigil to attract attention and ask people to sign petitions and pre-printed letters. Download the image of Tenzin Delek's face and ask people to display it in their home/office/shop/car window: www.studentsforafreetibet.org/downloads/TDR-face.pdf

4. Write to your political representatives asking your MP or Congressional Representatives to speak up for Tenzin Delek. Sample letters available at: www.studentsforafreetibet.org/freetenzin

5. Contact your local SFT chapter to get involved in the campaign to free Tenzin Delek. Visit: www.studentsforafreetibet.org