

Behind Bars: Prison Conditions in Tibet (1998)

CONTENTS

- [Introduction](#)
- [Prisons and their Locations](#)
- [Chinese Legal System](#)
- [March 1997 letter from Drapchi Political Prisoners](#)
- [Confined Conditions](#)
- [Prison Diet](#)
- [Work and Activities](#)
- [Political Education](#)
- [A Male Prisoner's Daily Schedule at Drapchi Prison](#)
- [Interrogation, Torture and Beatings](#)
- [Medical Treatment](#)
- [Solitary Confinement](#)
- [Protests](#)
- [Visits](#)
- [Right to Practise Religion](#)
- [Treatment of Women Prisoners](#)
- [Brief Biographies of Interviewees](#)
- [Appendix - Questionnaire](#)
- [Bibliography](#)

INTRODUCTION

There are many ways in which the human rights of Tibetans are violated. Initially, they are not given the opportunity to invoke their rights to freedom of expression, assembly and association. When they are caught trying to exercise these rights they are detained and other rights are violated, such as their right not to be tortured and to be treated humanely, and restrictions are placed on their freedom to practise their religion.

The report has been collated primarily on the basis of 22 interviews that were conducted in the first half of 1998 in Dharamsala, India. All the interviewees are former Tibetan political prisoners who have been living in exile for periods ranging from 11 years to less than one year. They were chosen so as to provide accounts of a selection of prisons and time periods, although greater emphasis is given to Drapchi Prison and Gutsa Detention Centre as the penal institutions in which most prisoners are held. Accounts from the last ten years are emphasised to make the report relevant to the present treatment of political prisoners. The report is limited in its scope to the treatment received by political prisoners, as they are the only sample of prisoners readily available for interviews. While the information has been compiled solely on the basis of interviews, it has been cross-checked to the extent possible.

The report is concerned with the conditions in Chinese penal institutions. The term "prisons" is sometimes used in the report to refer to institutions that the Chinese refer to as prisons, reform through labour centres, re-education through labour centres or detention centres. The reason for this is that the conditions in the different institutions are very similar and many prisoners and detainees themselves refer to them all as prisons. Also, despite the fact that the authorities may refer to a place as a detention centre, Tibetans are frequently detained there

for up to six months in conditions at least as harsh as in the prisons and so it is important to document their experiences.

Before the Chinese occupation of Tibet, there were two prisons in Lhasa, both of which were very small. One of the interviewees, Thupten Tsering, recalled that, prior to 1949, if there were as many as 15 prisoners in both Lhasa jails, everyone in Lhasa would talk about how dreadful it was to have so many criminals. In addition, some of the monasteries acted as unofficial penal institutions if there were criminals located near to them. In 1959, after the Chinese occupation of Tibet, unprecedented numbers of Tibetans were jailed for participating in the uprising against the occupation. The Panchen Lama stated when addressing the “TAR” Standing Committee Meeting of the National People’s Congress in March 1987 that:

In 1959 there were rebellions in Tibet. Forces were despatched to quell the disorder, which was a right decision and should not be gainsaid. However, a lot of innocent people were also persecuted. Many mistakes were made in the way the crack-down operations were mounted. The authorities did not make any distinction between those guilty and not guilty of participation in the disturbances. People were arrested and jailed indiscriminately. There were no interrogations. On sight Tibetans were taken to jail and beaten. Things like this are still commonplace in Tibet today.

Since 1959 the number of penal institutions in Tibet has multiplied. Official statistics from the PRC are limited as the Chinese government strictly controls the distribution of public information. However, it is clear that the number of prisons and detention centres has risen dramatically and that their capacity continues to expand to cope with the ever-growing number of prisoners, both criminal and political. In May 1998, Bai Zhao, president of the People’s High Court said that courts in the “TAR” tried 6,291 people in the past five years and found 0.73 per cent not guilty. More than half of the defendants were given sentences ranging from five years to death. He also said that a police crackdown on crime in 1996 netted 1,286 people. He did not say how many of the defendants were Tibetan. In May 1998 a Justice Bureau representative told the visiting EU Troika that in total there were approximately 1,800 offenders in various prisons in the “TAR” and that in 1997 there were, on average, approximately 1,300 people held in detention centres. These statements by “TAR” officials and the figures they contain do not appear to be consistent but there is no way of checking the actual total number of prisoners other than through information released by the Chinese. These figures only relate to judicially sentenced prisoners and not to those who have been “administratively sentenced” and who may be held for up to four years without trial.

While it is difficult to gauge the number of criminal prisoners imprisoned in Tibet, it is even more difficult to obtain an accurate number of the Tibetan political prisoners in Chinese jails. Not surprisingly, official Chinese statistics give a very different picture from that of other groups who closely monitor the situation. Official numbers of political prisoners are unavailable but, as of the end of 1997, the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) estimated that there were more than 1,200 political prisoners in Tibet, including 295 women and 39 prisoners below the age of 18. In contrast, in 1991 the Chinese government claimed that it had no political prisoners on the basis that all prisoners who had political motives had been convicted of criminal offences under Chinese Criminal Law. On September 1, 1997, the Director of the Bureau of Prison Administration of the “TAR”, Tsering Punsog (Tsering Phuntsog), said that approximately 155 prisoners in the “TAR” had been charged with endangering national security, accounting for 9 per cent of the total number of prisoners. In a 1995 study conducted by Tibet Information Network (TIN), an

independent monitoring service based in London, it was found that only 18 prisoners out of more than 1,000 cases described by Tibetans as political detentions were involved in acts of violence. Instead, out of 879 political prisoners, 65.3 per cent were arrested for demonstrating and 15.5 per cent for writing and distributing leaflets.

The information presented in this report relates substantially to the “TAR” and not to the whole of Tibet as it existed prior to the Chinese occupation. The Tibetan government-in-exile holds that prior to 1949 Tibet consisted of three provinces: U-Tsang, Amdo and Kham. Since the Chinese occupation, Tibet has been carved up into the “TAR” (which primarily consists of U-Tsang) and several other provinces, namely Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu and Yunnan. Almost all the interviewees whose accounts are included in this report were from the “TAR” and given the difficulties of compiling and confirming information relating to the other provinces that are part of Tibet, the scope of this report is largely limited to the “TAR”.

The international community has manifested a concern for the decent treatment of prisoners by, amongst other things, adopting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the UN’s Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (Convention Against Torture), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). These combine to give a basic minimum standard by which people everywhere, regardless of their nationality or political perspective, including prisoners, should be treated.

The PRC has assumed a number of international legal obligations. It has ratified, amongst others, the Convention Against Torture, the CRC and the CEDAW. It has not yet signed or ratified the ICCPR. On October 28, 1997, the PRC signed the ICESCR, which now awaits ratification.

In its White Paper entitled “New Progress in Human Rights in China’s Tibet Autonomous Region” released on February 20, 1998, the PRC stated its view that:

Strictly in accordance with the Constitution and laws, the judicial departments of the Tibet Autonomous Region protect the basic rights and freedoms, and other legal rights and interests of the citizens of all ethnic groups in Tibet. They also protect public property and the lawful private property of the citizens, punish those lawbreakers who endanger society, and maintain social order according to law. Both the crime and imprisonment rates of the Tibet Autonomous Region are lower than the nation’s average. The legal rights of criminals are protected by law, and those who belong to ethnic minorities or religious sects are not discriminated against, but due consideration is given to their lifestyles and customs... Each prison has a clinic, and the number of prison doctors is higher than the national average. Criminals enjoy rest days, holidays and traditional ethnic festivals, in accordance with the state’s unified regulations. Prisoners may see visitors every month, may win a reduction of penalty or be released on parole, and may be given various awards according to law.

Unfortunately this claim is not substantiated by the interviewees’ accounts, or by information available from various human rights groups such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, TIN and TCHRD.

In recent years a number of delegations have visited Tibet at the invitation of the Chinese government and under strictly enforced conditions. Such delegations have occasionally been

allowed access to prisons in Tibet, such as the EU Troika visit in May 1998. Generally, the ensuing reports indicate that such delegations encounter substantial difficulties assessing the real situation in the prisons as they are not able to speak to prisoners freely. For instance, the EU Troika visited Drapchi on May 4, three days after one protest and the day of another protest following which 11 prisoners are reported to have died. The delegation was unaware of either protest. TCHRD believes that the most effective means of compiling information on the prisons is through long-term systematic monitoring, such as that performed by the human rights groups referred to above.

Despite clear international obligations defining appropriate treatment for prisoners, the interviewees' testimonies raise serious questions as to the level of commitment of the Chinese government to human rights for prisoners and detainees. Article 6 of the UDHR provides that "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment" yet the former political prisoners' accounts are littered with descriptions of such treatment.

[\(Contents\)](#)

PRISONS AND THEIR LOCATIONS

During the visit to Tibet by EU Troika Ambassadors in May 1998, a Justice Bureau representative informed them that there were three prisons in Tibet: Drapchi, Lhasa Municipal Prison (which probably refers to Outridu) and Pomi in Linzhi Prefecture (or Powo Tramo, in Kongpo, Nyingtri). The EU Troika was informed that approximately 1,800 offenders were held in the prisons. Only prisoners who have received sentences imposed by a court are kept in these prisons. Drapchi is officially only for judicially sentenced prisoners who are serving sentences of more than five years, although the reality is that prisoners with lesser sentences are also held there. Drapchi Prison used to be the only officially acknowledged prison in the "TAR" but in 1994 the National People's Congress promulgated a "Prison Law" which replaced the term "Laogai" with "Prison". Thus former laogai (reform though labour camps), such as Powo Tramo, are now referred to as prisons although the conditions have not changed in the institutions. The official PRC government publication commented:

Henceforth, '*Laogai*' as a word will no longer appear, but the function, character and tasks of our prison administration will remain unaltered.

Prisoners who are held in prisons must adhere to the regulations of the Prison Management Committee of the "TAR" which is also responsible for managing the prison offices and employees.

In addition, there are also a number of administrative detention centres, known as laojiao, or re-education through labour centres. People held in these centres are sentenced without trial by quasi-judicial government committees and kept here for up to three years without any form of legal proceeding or right of appeal. This term is extendible to four years. There are three such places of confinement in the Lhasa municipality, known as Yitridu, Outridu, and Trisam. Yitridu and Outridu are both part of the Sangyip complex. There are also six prefectural administrative centres outside the municipality of Lhasa which serve as laojiao.

According to information given to the EU Troika in May 1998, there was one re-education institution in Lhasa with about 100 inmates, another in Ngari prefecture and the authorities intended to build a third in Chamdo Prefecture. The EU Troika were told that re-education though labour involved a much freer regime: doors were not locked and the inmates performed labour without supervision.

When people are first taken into custody for interrogation, they are held at detention centres. The length of detention varies, but it is commonly up to six months during which detainees can only communicate with other cellmates, if they have any, and their interrogators. The principal detention centres are Gutsa, which is the detention centre for the Lhasa prefecture, and Seitru, which is the detention centre for the "TAR" and is located within the Sangyip complex. In addition, there are a number of county-level jails where local protesters are held before being handed over to the prefectural or Lhasa authorities. Tibetan dissidents have been held in county jails in Meldrogongkar, Taktse, Toelung, Lhatse (where the prison is reported to be located at the back of the military camp), Phenpo Lhundrup, Tingri, Nyalam and Lhokha Gongkar. Many Tibetans who are caught trying to flee Tibet illegally or returning to Tibet from India or Nepal are taken to either Tingri or Nyalam Detention Centres before being sent on to Shigatse Prison. In addition, a number of Tibetans are held at local police stations for some time before they are transferred to another detention centre. The EU Troika were told that each Prefecture and a number of counties had a local detention centre and that in 1997 the average number of people held in such centres was 1,300.

The following table shows the major prisons and penal institutions in the "TAR".

Tibetan Name	Official name	Location	Type
Drapchi	TAR No. 1 Prison	Lhasa	Prison
Powo Tramo	TAR No. 2 Prison	500 km. east of Lhasa	Prison
Sangyip / Yitridu	Unit No. 5/Lhasa Lhasa Muncipal Prison	Lhasa	Prison / Laojiao
Seitru	Unit No. 1	Lhasa	Laojiao / Forced job Placement
Gutsa	No. 4 Branch	Lhasa	TAR Detention (Observation) Centre
Trisam	Unknown	10 km. west of Lhasa	Detention Centre
Tibetan Military Prison	Unknown	1 km. east of Lhasa	Laojhiao
Chamdo Sethog Thang	Unknown	Chamdo County "TAR"	Military prison
Shigatse Nyari	Unknown	7 km. northwest of Shigatse	Detention Centre
Tsethang	Unknown	Lhoka Nyadong County	Detention Centre

Throughout this report the term “arrest” is used in the same sense as detention, to describe the taking of a person into custody by the police or another security force. In official Chinese documents the term “arrest” is used only to describe the formal laying of charges against a detainee, a procedure which may take place months after the person is first detained, if at all.

The prison plans that are shown below were provided by former political prisoners who were detained in those institutions.

[Drapchi Prison](#)

Drapchi Prison (in Chinese, Di Yi Jianyu - No. 1 Prison) is sometimes referred to as the “TAR” Automobile Factory. It is believed to have been constructed in 1960 and is located in the north-east outskirts of Lhasa City. Due to overcrowding, the southern gate of Drapchi Prison was reportedly demolished and expansion work commenced at the prison in April 1998.

In December 1989, Drapchi was divided into five divisions, and for the first time there was a different section for the male political prisoners. Since 1993 Drapchi has expanded and been divided into seven divisions - the first, second, fourth, sixth and seventh for male criminal prisoners, the third for female prisoners, both political and criminal, and the fifth division for male political prisoners. The fifth division has been further divided into two sub-divisions. Each cell in the fifth division is designed to hold 12 prisoners and there are 12 cells in each sub-division. The seven divisions are currently housed in eight cellblocks. Prisoners who have been sentenced to life imprisonment or execution after two years imprisonment are held in the first division.

On October 30, 1997, the BBC Summary of World Broadcasts reported that Xinhua had reported on October 24, 1997 that Drapchi Prison had 968 inmates, including about 200 women, with 75 per cent of them being ethnic Tibetans (726). Warden Luosang Gelie [Lobsang Geleg] said “The inmates work no more than six hours per day, five days a week, and each inmate attends at least seven study sessions per week. The prison also invites renowned personages, experts and scholars to give lectures on laws and Tibet’s history, development and changes.” He added that the per capita living expenses of the prison had reached 2,500 yuan (\$312.50) annually, the highest among all Chinese prisons.

In January 1998, TCHRD reported that Drapchi held some 350 known political prisoners. Chinese officials recently said that it held approximately 800 prisoners of whom 75 per cent are Tibetan, 20 per cent are Han Chinese and the remaining 5 per cent are from other minorities. They added that there were “over 90” prisoners held at Drapchi for crimes against state security, i.e. political prisoners. According to a letter received from Tibetan political prisoners held in Drapchi in March 1997, at that time there were 520 political prisoners in Drapchi Prison of whom 250 were female and 270 were male.

Only judicially sentenced prisoners are sent to Drapchi. Chinese authorities have told visitors that the men detained there are those with sentences of five years or more. However, many male Drapchi prisoners are in fact serving lighter sentences. It appears that all women who have been judicially sentenced in political cases are now sent to Drapchi regardless of the length of their sentences. In May 1998 Chinese authorities claimed that all religious prisoners (i.e., monks and nuns) were held at Drapchi. There may be one or more labour camps attached to Drapchi.

There is a small basketball court that is used for meetings of prisoners and visiting delegations. Foreign delegations are believed to be briefed in or near the administration offices and then taken to the cellblocks in which the criminals are kept. They are not believed to be shown the political prisoners cellblocks. See the plan of Drapchi Prison for details of the prison layout.

[Sangyip Prison](#)

Sangyip is officially known as the People's Armed Police ("PAP") No.1 Branch. It is a military and prison complex located in the north-eastern suburbs of Lhasa. It is believed to have opened in March 1964 and includes:

- Sangyip (or Yitridu) Prison (in Chinese, Di yi zhidui - Unit No. 1) which is either a "re-education through labour centre" (laojiao), otherwise known as an administrative detention centre, or a "forced job placement centre", a semi-custodial centre where some prisoners have to work after release, in this case repairing motor vehicles. It is probably situated within the compound officially named the "People's Armed Police Automobile Team" or within the group of compounds named officially as the People's Armed Police (PAP) No.1 Branch. Prior to 1970 it was used as a detention centre.
- Tibetan political prisoners have been held here throughout the history of this prison. Since 1987, Yitridu has been used primarily as a military camp for the placement of Chinese army personnel. However, political prisoners still seem to be taken here at times when other prisoners in Lhasa fill up or when extra solitary confinement cells are needed. For instance, political prisoners were detained here following the large protest in March 1989 when other prisons and detention centres in Lhasa were full. It is now comprised of six different blocks that can accommodate 600-700 (who are primarily military personnel). TCHRD records indicated that there were six political prisoners detained here as of January 1998.

[Photo No. 3: Sangyip Prison](#)

- Seitru, or No.4 Branch, (in Chinese, Di si chu), (in Tibetan, Dasungkhang Shipa) is the TAR Detention (Observation) Centre and is situated in the north of Lhasa City. It is believed to have been constructed in 1983 and prisoners have been held here since 1984. It is a regional interrogation and detention centre for holding prisoners who have not been "arrested", i.e. not charged. Those suspected of more serious political crimes, such as organising protests or collecting politically sensitive information, are believed to be held here for interrogation, possibly under the supervision of the State Security Bureau. Seitru has the capacity to hold approximately 70 inmates in its three cellblocks. Each of the cellblocks has 12 cells. See the plan of Seitru for details of its layout. TCHRD had records indicating that six political prisoners were held here as of January 1998.
- Outridu, or Authiti, (in Chinese, Di wu zhidui or Unit No. 5) was formerly a reform through labour centre (laogai) but is now a re-education through labour centre (laojiao) and may be the institution that Chinese authorities recently described to the EU Troika as Lhasa Municipal Prison. It is almost empty of political prisoners today as most were moved from here to Trisam in mid-1992, perhaps because of a brief pro-

independence protest by the Sangyip prisoners on May 20, 1991. Confinement cells used to punish prisoners measure six feet by three feet and do not have windows. Chinese authorities are reportedly expanding the capacity of Outridu by building several new blocks of cells. There are currently four cellblocks. There are reported to be approximately 500 criminal prisoners currently held in Outridu.

This prison, built in the early sixties, is one of the largest prisons under the ambit of the “TAR’s” Prison Management Committee. From the 1960s to the early 1990s, many political prisoners were held in Outridu. It has expanded significantly since 1990. After separate divisions were made for political prisoners in Drapchi Prison in 1991, all the political prisoners in Outridu were transferred to other prisons, including Drapchi. However, political prisoners are occasionally still sent to Outridu Prison to be placed in solitary confinement when such cells in other prisons are full. In March 1992 three female political prisoners, Chungdak, Phuntsok Palmoe and Dawa Dolma, were transferred from Drapchi Prison to Outridu and were kept there in solitary confinement for 15 days. In May 1998, some political prisoners from Drapchi may have been sent to Outridu following a protest in Drapchi Prison.

Photo No. 4: Outridu Prison

Both Outridu and Drapchi Prisons are under the control of the “TAR’s” Prison Management Committee and therefore the rules and uniform are substantially similar in both prisons.

- A new modern prison has been built in the northern outskirts of Lhasa which may be intended as a higher security facility or a city or prefectural level Public Security Bureau Detention Centre. It has two cellblocks and possibly a third with 12-14 cells each. It is located about 100 metres southwest of Outridu prison and it seems likely to be part of the Sangyip complex. Its name is unknown.

Sangyip Prison and Seitru are the only sections of Sangyip known to be holding political prisoners but, due to the difficulty in obtaining information, the reality may be quite different.

Gutsa Detention Centre

Gutsa Detention Centre (in Chinese, Si ke - No. 4 Unit) is the detention centre for the prefecture of Lhasa. It is located three kilometres east of Lhasa near the Kyichu river. Gutsa’s main section holds prisoners who are “under investigation” or waiting sentences. Most of its inmates have not been “arrested” (i.e. charged) or given administrative sentences. It is also believed to include a re-education through labour centre and a shelter-and-investigation unit for holding vagrants. Many prisoners are reportedly forced to do manual labour such as breaking rocks. There may also be a separate women’s section named “Chinyugoa”, located right behind Gutsa, although other reports say that women are kept within Gutsa itself. See the plan of Gutsa Detention Centre for details of its layout.

As of January 1998, TCHRD knew of 64 political prisoners who were under detention at Gutsa. Many of the political detainees held at Gutsa were transferred to Trisam in 1992.

The age of criminal responsibility in the PRC is 14 years old yet in Tibet prisoners are sometimes held and sentenced below this age. Juvenile prisoners appear to be generally kept at Gutsa Detention Centre. Under the CRC and the ICCPR, as well as under Chinese law, children must be held separately from adults but the reality appears to be very different in

Tibet. There were reports in 1990 that Gutsa had separate sections for each but later reports indicated that efforts to keep the different sections separate were abandoned around 1992 and that juvenile prisoners are now kept with older ones. None of the juvenile prisoners who were interviewed reported being segregated from the adult prisoners or treated differently from them. They were subjected to interrogations and beatings and made to work just as the adults were.

While Gutsa is predominantly for prisoners who are awaiting sentencing, approximately 1 per cent of prisoners are believed to be held here after sentencing, generally for periods of up to one year.

Trisam Prison

Trisam is a *laojiao* (or re-education through labour centre) and is probably intended for the Lhasa municipality. Its official name is unknown. It is sometimes referred to as Toelung Dechen or Toelung Bridge and is located in Toelung County, 10 kilometres west of Lhasa. The prison building used to be a school for peasants and nomads. Trisam was opened in or around February 1992 and has since received many of the political prisoners from Sangyip, Outridu and Gutsa.

Trisam has three units: the first for male political prisoners, the second for male criminals and the third for women prisoners, both political and criminal. The prisoners are held in three cellblocks and there are three cells in each cellblock. Male political prisoners are held in the first division, male criminals in the second division and female prisoners in the third division. It seems to specialise in political prisoners and it has been suggested that it may have been built in 1992 in response to the increase in numbers of political prisoners around that time. See the plan of Trisam for details of its layout.

Inmates are known to perform hard labour at Trisam, including looking after pigs and agricultural work. At least eight cells at Trisam are reported to be used for solitary confinement for prisoners who have refused to answer questions during interrogation or for those who express dissent; each of these cells is approximately two square metres in area with no windows. Prisoners kept inside these small rooms are fettered on their wrists and ankles.

Sherab Ngawang, who was 12 years old when she was arrested, died three months after her release from Trisam Prison in February 1995. She was sentenced to three years imprisonment in 1992 and detained first at Gutsa and then transferred to Trisam. Her death was apparently due to being beaten at Trisam for pulling a face at prison guards, or to lack of political treatment, according to unofficial reports from Tibet.

As of January 1998, TCHRD knew of 11 political prisoners detained at Trisam. TIN believes that at least 50 inmates at Trisam are political prisoners, some of whom have reportedly been held for up to four and a half years under administrative detention. A former political prisoner who was released from Trisam in January 1997 reported that there were approximately 300 prisoners held at Trisam.

Powo Tramo Prison

Powo Tramo is the name of the village nearest to the prison. Its official name is unknown but it is also commonly referred to as TAR No. 2 Prison (Ch.: Bo’o). The Chinese government has acknowledged the existence of a “Reform Labour Detachment” in or near the town of Tramo in Powo County, 500 kilometres east of Lhasa, near Nyingtri (Ch.: Linzhi). It is believed to have opened in March 1962. It has a number of sub-sections in the neighbouring area, of which Powo Zhungar is believed to be one. Powo Tramo, formerly referred to as a laogai, but now called a prison by the Chinese authorities, is run by the regional authorities for prisoners who have been sentenced to ten years or more.

There are believed to be 30 cells here together with an additional six cells designed especially for solitary confinement. At its height, the complex and surrounding units are believed to have held over 10,000 prisoners. As of January 1998, TCHRD’s records showed that 11 political prisoners were held there.

Tibetan Military Prison

This military prison, which is administered by the PLA, has existed since 1959. In 1992 or 1993 it moved to Tsalgungthang, about 11 km. east of Lhasa. Some political prisoners are known to have been held here in 1989 but, due to the expansion programmes undertaken in other prisons since then, it is not known whether any more have subsequently been brought here. It now holds military prisoners.

Prefectural Detention Centres and Laojiao

There are prisons in the administrative seat of each prefecture. There are six regions in the “TAR” besides Lhasa Municipality. The table below shows the administrative seat for each such region:

<i>Tibetan</i>	<i>Chinese</i>	<i>Administrative</i>
Shigatse	Rigaze	Shigatse
Nagchu	Naqu	Nagchu
Ngari	Ali	Ngari
Lhoka	Shannan	Tsethang
Kongpo - Nyingttri	Linzhi	Nyingtri or Bayi
Chamdo	Qamdo	Chamdo

These prisons are probably *laojiao* (administrative detention centres) and *kanshuo suo* (detention centres for prisoners who have not yet been sentenced). In addition, there are prisons at the county level which are generally for prisoners who have not yet been sentenced. Chinese authorities reported to the visiting EU Delegation in May 1998 that each region and a number of counties also had a local detention centre.

Shigatse Nyari Detention Centre

This prison is located about 7 km. north-west of Shigatse in the Nyari valley, in Shigatse County. It was constructed in 1960. Both political and criminal prisoners are held here. Most people who are arrested in any of Shigatse’s 18 counties are held here although some are held

in their respective county detention centre. Many of the political prisoners are Tibetans who have visited India and are detained for several months on their return to Tibet, accused of bringing political documents or tapes from India or Nepal. TCHRD believes that as of late 1997 there were approximately 160 prisoners held at Nyari, of whom approximately seven were political prisoners. Ngawang Choephel, who was sentenced to 18 years imprisonment, and several assistants of Chadrel Rinpoche (the head of the search party for the Panchen Lama) are reportedly held there, together with three monks from Tashilhunpo Monastery who have been there for more than three years.

In 1997, Nyari Detention Centre consisted of five cellblocks, each of which held a different category of prisoner and had 10 cells. Tibetans caught trying to flee to India were held in the first block, sentenced prisoners in the second block, female prisoners in the third block, prisoners under interrogation in the fourth block, and prisoners accused of petty crimes who were only held temporarily in the fifth block. Prisoners are assigned to work in vegetable fields and to perform general farm labour. There are approximately 30 mu of fields and in addition there is a fruit farm on which the prisoners are made to work.

As is the case with most other detention centres, the prison guards are all PSB officials and the PAP guard the prison walls and the surrounding area. A former prisoner who was held in Nyari Prison in 1997 reported that he was only fed twice a day and that there is no medical clinic or services in the prison.

Lhoka Nyadong County/Tsethang Detention Centre

This prison, which was constructed in 1960 and is now one of the largest county prisons in the “TAR”, is located in Lhoka Nyadong County in Lhoka Region. It holds more prisoners than any other county prison in the “TAR”. Both political and criminal prisoners are held here. Many political prisoners are detained here for around one year while they are interrogated and their case is investigated.

Chamdo Sethog Thang Detention Centre

This prison is located in Chamdo County, “TAR”. It was constructed in 1960 and is believed to be one of the largest in the “TAR”. It is believed to have the capacity to hold approximately 1,500 prisoners. Recently the prison has been expanded and the number of criminal prisoners held here has increased.

Prisons in Tibet Outside the “TAR”

There are numerous prisons in Tibet that are located outside the “TAR”. Because of the number of Chinese in Tibetan areas outside the “TAR”, Tibetans do not form a majority in these penal institutions. Former political prisoners who were arrested in Amdo and Kham (the Tibetan Provinces outside “TAR”) report that Tibetan political prisoners are generally held with the other prisoners and that they are not divided into different divisions to distinguish the political and criminal prisoners. This may be because Tibetans are a minority in these areas and so to date there have not been sufficient numbers of Tibetan political prisoners, when compared to the prison population as a whole, to warrant separating them. It appears that most Tibetan political prisoners who are arrested in Amdo and Kham are kept in the prison nearest to them rather than transferring them to a particular penal institution where all such prisoners are held.

One former prisoner, Lukar Jam, recalled that he was held in two prisons in the Tibetan Province of Amdo (Ch.: Qinghai): Pinang, which is close to Siling (Ch.: Xining) City and Terlengkha (Ch.: Delingha) Detention Centre, which is west of Tso Ngonpo (Ch.: Qinghai) Lake and East of Wulan County. In Pinang Prison, where he was held during part of 1994, he was the only political prisoner out of approximately 60 to 70 other inmates, although he knew of others who had been held there earlier. In Terlengkha Detention Centre, where he was also held in 1994, he was one of four Tibetan political prisoners out of approximately 90 prisoners.

In the *Laogai Handbook*, the Laogai Research Foundation identified and listed over 1,000 laogai throughout China. Of these, 13 are located in the “TAR”, 32 are in Qinghai Province and six are located in Sichuan Province (which encompasses parts of both Kham and Amdo Provinces). This list is not exhaustive and does not include all laogai in China or any detention centres. In addition, a former Tibetan political prisoner reported that, including himself, seven political prisoners were held in Kanlho Prison in Kanlho Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Gansu Province in 1997.

Some Tibetan political prisoners are held in Chinese prisons that are not even in Tibet. For instance, Chadrel Rinpoche, the former abbot of Tashilhunpo Monastery in Shigatse and head of the official search team for the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama, is held in Chuandong No. 3 Prison in Dazu County, Sichuan Province.

[\(Contents\)](#)

CHINESE LEGAL SYSTEM

The Chinese legal system is very different to that of many other countries. Well-known concepts such as “innocent until proven guilty” and the right to legal representation are unknown in the PRC. In their place are Chinese concepts such as “verdict first, trial second,” “leniency for those who confess, severity for those who resist” and “reform or re-education through labour”. Tibetans are routinely arrested, held and interrogated for months without any contact with the outside world. They are not entitled to see their families, let alone a lawyer, until the procurator puts a case to the court with a suggested verdict that the court rubber stamps. It is only relatively recently that political prisoners report that they have had a trial at all.

Despite modifications to the PRC’s Criminal Procedure Law (CPL) which were put into effect in 1997, arbitrary arrest without warrant or charge, prolonged detention without trial and denial of access to legal counsel are still commonplace for Tibetan prisoners. Many prisoners report being tortured during interrogation to confess to their crimes. Closed trials involving “state secrets” are still permitted under the revised law. Torture and ill-treatment of detainees and prisoners held in detention centres, prisons or labour camps remains widespread, sometimes resulting in death. According to official sources, between January and July 1997, between 300 and 400 cases of torture and ill-treatment were investigated by the procuracies throughout China. The real incidence of torture is believed to be much higher

as illustrated by the fact that all interviewees were subjected to some form of torture and none of them reported being able to make any complaint, let alone to instigate an investigation.

As recently as 1991, the Chinese government claimed to have no political prisoners:

In China, ideas alone, in the absence of action which violates the criminal law, do not constitute a crime; nobody will be sentenced to punishment merely because he holds dissenting political views. So-called political prisoners do not exist in China. In Chinese Criminal Law “counter-revolutionary crime” refers to crime which endangers state security, i.e., criminal acts which are not only committed with the purpose of overthrowing state power and the socialist system, but which are also listed in Articles 91-102 of the Criminal Law as criminal acts, such as those carried out in conspiring to overthrow the government or splitting the country, those carried out in gathering a crowd in armed rebellion, and espionage activities. These kinds of criminal acts that endanger state security are punishable in any country.

Such acts may indeed be punished in most countries, but a different interpretation is used to determine what constitutes such acts. All of the interviewees were political prisoners, most of whom were arrested for taking part in peaceful protests where they called out “Free Tibet” or “Chinese leave Tibet” and sometimes handed out pamphlets with the same message. These kinds of acts are not punishable in most countries as “crimes”, whereas in the PRC they carry imprisonment of up to six years.

A 1995 study conducted by TIN of 879 political detainees found that the largest categories of offences were demonstrating (65.3 per cent) and writing and distributing leaflets (15.5 per cent). The study also found that only 18 prisoners out of more than 1,000 cases described by Tibetans as political detentions had been involved in violent acts.

Until recently, detentions of Tibetan political prisoners were made pursuant to the PRC’s CPL prohibition on “crimes of counter-revolution” which was broadly defined in Article 90 as “all acts endangering the PRC committed with the goal of overthrowing the political power of the dictatorship and the proletariat and the socialist system.” In 1994, Asia Watch calculated that, while the overall rate in the PRC of those sentenced for “counterrevolutionary” crimes was 0.3 per cent of the total convicted prisoner population, the rate in Tibet was 6.5 per cent. The group also pointed out that in Tibet, whose population accounts for only around 0.2 per cent of the total population of China, there were more known political and religious prisoners reported to be in jail than in the rest of the country combined. It is clear that Tibetan political prisoners are vastly over-represented in the PRC’s prisons.

In May 1998 the Chinese authorities reported that there were 200 prisoners who were held for what are now called “crimes against state security” (formerly known as “counter-revolutionary” crimes before legislative changes in 1997). In contrast, TCHRD estimates the current number of political prisoners detained in Tibet at approximately 1,200.

Considering China’s criminal law, the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention held in 1995 that “municipal legislation that considers such activities as ‘counterrevolutionary propaganda and agitation,’ ...is liable to be considered inconsistent” with the UDHR and the ICCPR. New legislation was passed into law effective from October 1, 1997 that eliminated crimes of counterrevolution from the criminal code but replaced them with a very similar offence of “endangering state security”. By incorporating a concept recognised in

international instruments, the PRC seems to be attempting to deflect domestic and international criticism of the harsh and arbitrary nature of its criminal charges. However, the new offence is at least as broad as the prior “counterrevolutionary” offence. It now appears that almost any expression of political opinion in Tibet can amount to endangering China’s state security. For example, in its 1998 White Paper entitled “New Progress in Human Rights in China’s Tibet Autonomous Region”, China justified its repression of free speech under a broad interpretation of “state security”.

Pre-Trial Detention

A suspect is generally held completely incommunicado during the investigation period. Revised provisions requiring police to notify a suspect’s family within 24 hours of placing him or her in detention may be dispensed with if it would “hinder the investigation” or if there is “no way to notify them”. Similarly, the right to counsel may be denied in cases involving “state secrets” - a term expansively used in the PRC and particularly invoked in cases of political activism.

The internationally recognised right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty has not been incorporated into Chinese criminal provisions. The right to remain silent is also absent. Since the guilt of a suspect is generally predetermined, refusal to confess is seen simply as a sign of obstinacy and disobedience. Officials threaten detained suspects with: “Lenience for those who confess, severity for those who resist” (tanbai congkang, kangju songyan).

Methods of extracting a “confession” from a suspect include intensive interrogation and torture sessions. Suspects, already severed from the outside world, are worn down by hours or days of repetitive questioning; weakened by food, water and sleep deprivation; and broken by physical and mental abuse. Their so-called “confession” is later used against them in sentencing.

Of the five forms of pre-trial criminal detention, the only one subject to any review by a non-police organ is arrest and numerous loopholes in the original and the revised criminal provisions allow for almost indefinite custody. The original CPL provided that suspects could be held for a maximum of three months during the investigation stage, the revised CPL permits detention for up to seven months. Administrative detention has been the most commonly applied measure as it is subject to virtually no outside checks and holding limits may be ignored. Under administrative detention, people may be held for three years without trial and this term is sometimes extended to four years. If no case can be made then a subject may be released without ever being charged.

In its 1996 report on the Revised CPL, the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights stated: “The core deficiency in the Chinese system is the enormous power that the police have to detain suspected criminals.” It later added that: “The most glaring deficiency of the revised CPL is the discretion it grants to the police to use ‘state secrets’ as a justification for denying suspects access to a lawyer during the investigation phase.” Both these matters involve infractions of international conventions and result in regular violations of the human rights of Tibetans.

Prisoners are generally held in detention for three to six months, although it is sometimes longer, before they are either released without charge, sentenced without trial to a lao jiao (re-education through labour centre) or “arrested,” i.e. charged with an offence and sent for trial.

The ability to issue a formal arrest warrant and arrest a prisoner lies with the PSB and the Procuracy.

"Trial" and Sentencing

A common Chinese maxim sums up China's criminal procedure: xian pan hou shen – "verdict first, trial second". The guilt of the accused is generally decided during pre-trial investigation by committees made up of Public Security Bureau or Party representatives. Amdo Sangye, a former judge of the Qinghai High Court in Xining who was interviewed by the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) recalled that virtually all of the judgments were based on reports of the police investigation and that judges did not possess the power to acquit based on the examination in court. He said "If a Judge's conclusion is different from that of a police report, he will have to confer with the police and the procuratorate and they will have to come to a mutual decision." The Judge informed the ICJ that, although defendants were provided with lawyers, in actual practice the lawyer could not defend the accused. He also said that in the great majority of cases that came before him defendants had been beaten by the police and subsequently signed confessions.

On June 11, 1998, the Tibet Daily reported that Chinese courts in Tibet acquitted less than one per cent of defendants between 1992 and 1997. Bai Zhao, president of the People's High Court was quoted as saying that courts in the "TAR" tried 6,291 people in the past five years and found 0.73 per cent not guilty. More than half of the defendants were given sentences ranging from five years to death, Bai said. He did not give a breakdown as the number of death sentences meted out by Chinese courts is not released by the PRC. He also did not say how many of the defendants were Tibetans.

Many of the interviewees had no trial at all although it now appears that most prisoners are tried. Some of the interviewees were kept for up to one year and nine months in detention and then were released without any trial or explanation. Yeshi Damdul, imprisoned in 1989, was told at his trial that it was the first trial for political prisoners since 1959, although Bagdro was also put on trial in Lhasa in January 1989 together with five other political prisoners. None of the interviewees who had a trial had any legal representation. Some of them were offered the chance to be represented by a lawyer but no one took the opportunity as none of them believed that it would make any difference. The interviewees were extremely cynical about the Chinese legal system.

[Damchoe Palmo](#) recalled: "The first time that I was arrested there was no trial. The second time we had a trial but we did not have any legal representation. We had the right to legal representation but we never availed of it as there was actually no one to represent us as it would place his or her job at risk. Also, we knew that our sentence had already been decided and so there was no use. The second time that I was arrested...there was the trial and then a few days later the sentence was read out at the prison. We were not asked anything, there was no proper questioning - they just read out the charges against us and asked us whether we had anything to say but nothing that we said could change anything as it was all already decided."

[Yeshi Damdul](#) stated of his experience in 1989: "I had two trials. The first time they mainly declared my sentence and then said that they would give us one week to consider the sentence declared by the court and that we would then be called in a weeks' time for the final sentencing...The first trial was held in the public court of Tsethang - I don't remember the real name of that court. For the second court session we were taken to the public cinema hall

where the public was gathered, including our parents and families and friends, and our sentence was declared. Six of us, including me, were tried together for our involvement in distributing leaflets. Four others were tried at the same time for their involvement in demonstrations in Lhasa. After we were told our sentence we were taken away from the hall and back to Tsethang Prison. Once we reached there, the prison authorities told us that we could appeal to the People's Court in Lhasa if we were not satisfied. They also told us that because we were political activists it was almost impossible to win a case if we wanted to appeal. They told us that our case was totally different from that of criminal prisoners.

I didn't have an opportunity to be represented by a lawyer. We didn't even know when we would be taken to court until we were actually taken away... During the first court session the three PSB officers from our village were in the court to act as eyewitnesses to what we had done. The procurators questioned them. We had put up wall posters twice but were only caught the second time. Although we weren't arrested the first time, at the trial the PSB officers said that they had seen us. We denied that we'd done it the first time and questioned the police officers. We were allowed to say that it wasn't true and that we had only put up posters once.

I was found guilty of being a 'counter-revolutionary propaganda activist'. This is considered to be a very serious crime. Our participation in the demonstration was not considered so serious as we were following others but when we started making wall posters they said that we were poisoning the public. Fortunately most of us were below 20 (I was 19) so because of our age we were given more 'lenient' sentences. I was sentenced to five years imprisonment. They said that if we were older we would be given a longer sentence."

[Gyaltzen Choetso](#) said: "The second time that I was arrested I was taken to court twice with three other nuns. There was a judge there who declared what my crimes were. The name of the court was the People's Intermediate Court. When I was at Gutsa I was first asked questions by the local PAP then some procurators came and then some interrogators from the court came for two or three weeks. The worst interrogators were the PAP and the procurators as they beat us when they visited but the court officials didn't beat us. While I was in court the police declared my crime and the judge asked whether I needed anyone to explain things to me. I said that I didn't want anyone to explain things on my behalf as I could talk for myself. The court declared that we had demonstrated in the Barkhor and detailed what we had done and we said that what they had said was correct. After the court session we were taken back to Gutsa... I was never sentenced although I was taken to the court twice with the other nuns."

[Lhundup Monlam](#), who was arrested in 1990, stated: "I was taken to court and the trial was in both Tibetan and Chinese. The court was the Gyangtse County Public Court. I could understand a little Chinese although most of the proceedings were in Tibetan. The decision was made by the Chinese. I was told that I could have a lawyer but I said that I didn't want one... On July 24, 1990, I was sentenced to four years and six months. They told me that my sentence would have been four years but as I had taken so long to confess they had extended it by six months."

Ngawang Choezom described her "trial": "After 15 days I was made to stand in line with some other prisoners and one by one the officials read out our sentences. We were videoed. They read out what we were accused of doing and then our sentences."

***Laojiao* — “re-education through labour”**

In March 1996, the Administrative Punishments Law (APL) was passed into law in the PRC. While the CPL is the statute governing punishment under the criminal law, the APL governs “administrative sanction”. Administrative sanctions are frequently used against Tibetan suspects and the system of *laojiao* – “re-education through labour” has been retained under the new law.

While “re-education through labour” theoretically applies principally to those who commit minor offences falling short of crimes, it has been widely used against political dissidents and Tibetan nationalists. Such a sentence is determined by a Re-education through Labour Management Committee made up primarily of PSB representatives. There is no right to counsel or to a hearing and individuals may be detained for up to three years, with a one-year possibility of extension for “failure to reform”.

Prisons and *Laogai* — “reform through labour”

The Chinese criminal system has traditionally had a strong emphasis on *laogai* – “reform through labour”. However, on December 9, 1994, the National People’s Congress of the PRC promulgated a Prison Law that officially replaced the term “*Laogai*” with the term “Prison”. The only effect of this change is that the institutions that were previously classified as *laogai* appear to have simply been relabelled as prisons. The basic aim of the *laogai* system was not simply punishment but also “reform and change for the better”. Inmates of both prisons and labour camps (which are now both classified as prisons), are subjected to intensive labour requirements which are considered effective both in diminishing individual political zeal and in creating production profits. They are also required to undergo intensive ideological training. This includes admitting their “criminal” past and promising to “reform” themselves in accordance with communist doctrine.

Precisely how the Chinese authorities determine which political prisoners to send to prisons and which to administrative detention centres is somewhat unclear. Prisoners can only be held in administrative detention centres for an initial period of three years but it is sometimes unclear why certain prisoners are judicially sentenced while others are administratively detained. Sometimes the more “sensitive” long-term political prisoners are sent to prisons where they can be held in isolation. All political prisoners who have been judicially sentenced are sent to prison and all prisoners who receive administrative sentences are supposed to be sent to separate “re-education through labour” camps but it is objectively difficult to determine who the authorities send for administrative detention and who for trial.

Ultimately, there is little difference between the placements as prisoners in prisons must also work, often in on-site factories or hot houses. Labour camp prisoners may be involved in heavy farming, mining or construction work, sometimes in desolate, inhospitable areas of Tibet. “Reform” labour is mandatory for up to ten hours a day, with one day off every fortnight. In certain seasons prisoners are expected to work 12 hours a day or even more if a particular timetable must be met. Those administratively sentenced to re-education through labour are purportedly paid for their work, but the minimal payment rarely covers more than their food and electricity charges.

In some cases, Tibetan political prisoners are made to continue working even after completing their term. This may occur where the prisoner cannot show he or she has anything

to return to, or where it is deemed that the prisoner has “failed to reform”. These workers are still kept largely as prisoners and they are only occasionally permitted to leave to visit their families.

After release

When eventually released, former political prisoners are discriminated against regarding employment opportunities and the availability of social services. If they are monks or nuns, they are forbidden from rejoining any monastery or nunnery. Former political prisoners generally experience a lot of difficulty finding employment, often forcing them to rely economically on other family members. Once released, prisoners who had been judicially sentenced are required to return to their respective home towns to be allocated ration cards and to register with the town or county office. If a prisoner's release papers contain remarks concerning the prisoner having failed to mentally reform he or she is kept under surveillance during the term of his or her deprivation of political rights and often afterwards too. Such prisoners are watched or followed and their families may also be targeted for suspicion or discrimination. Long and brutal detentions have left physical and mental scars; they are haunted by nightmares of the past; some are crippled; some suffer chronic depression; many are alone. Many ex-political prisoners are re-arrested.

Release Paper from Drapchi Prison

English Translation:

Name: Yeshe Damdul. Sex: Male. Current age: 28 years old. Place: Lhoka Gongkar County. Charged with counter-revolutionary propaganda activity. Arrested on 1989/10/19. Sentenced by Lhoka People's Intermediate Court to five years imprisonment and five years deprivation of political rights from 1994/3/16 to 1997/3/15. Having completed his prison term, he is being released. Issued by TAR Prison on 1994/3/16.

Points to be noted:

- 1. Person issued with this document will have to go to Gongkar PSB office before 1994/4/10 to report.*
- 2. No one is to change anything in this report.*

Under such circumstances, many former political prisoners make the harrowing choice to leave their family and homeland and make a new life in exile. There are today approximately 500 former political prisoners struggling to live in exile. Trauma and confusion associated with adjusting to an unfamiliar environment, language, culture and way of life is inevitable.

[\(Contents\)](#)

MARCH 1997 LETTER FROM DRAPCHI POLITICAL PRISONERS

Excerpts from the English translation of the letter follow...

The subject of human rights has been widely recognised by the well-informed people of this world since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Countries have drafted articles to

protect and promote the values of human rights yet some countries continue to disrespect these basic human values...

We want to single out the fact that the Chinese have pretended to respect human rights in China and Tibet before international representatives. Being signatories to this declaration, China continues to violate the basic and fundamental freedoms of the Tibetan people. They greedily entered through our eastern border in 1949 and finally occupied Tibet by force in 1959...

According to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and on behalf of the six million Tibetans, His Holiness the Dalai Lama described the critical condition of the Tibetan people before the United Nations and to many other nations including the United States and requested urgent action. In 1987 in particular His Holiness the Dalai Lama proposed a five-point peace plan with the hope of beginning peaceful negotiations with China. The Chinese government rejected this proposal and condemned His Holiness. This is unbearable to us and we are unable to remain silent.

Since 1959 and the brutal occupation and colonisation of the Chinese regime, the Tibetan people have been roused to call for their freedom and demonstrate against the brutal Chinese suppression. This resulted in the death of 1.2 million Tibetans and the ongoing imprisonment of Tibetans still today. However the truth will last forever.

From 27 September 1987, Tibetan people once again staged a peaceful demonstration against China. Led by monks and nuns, hundreds of Tibetans joined the uprising to demonstrate their opposition to Chinese rule in Tibet. In the clampdown of successive demonstrations, the Chinese army opened fire, killing and critically wounding many on the spot and imprisoning thousands of unarmed demonstrators. The Chinese authorities forced the detainees to confess under harsh interrogation.

In Tibet torture is the only method of interrogating. In prison, cruel and degrading methods of torture are inflicted to extract confessions. These include: deprivation of food, water, and air; confinement in a freeze room; setting guard dogs onto prisoners and the use of electric cattle prods.

In some cases prisoners are charged as 'criminals' and administrative detention is imposed by local authorities without supervision by an independent judiciary. The legal procedure established by the Chinese authorities is regarded as the highest authority, thus the Tibetan people have no right to appeal before the court.

After imprisonment, political prisoners are detained incommunicado. They are kept under strict vigilance by special guards sent by the Chinese authorities and there are limits placed on their visitation rights. Only a single member of a political prisoner's family is allowed to visit once a month, while the other prisoners have no limit on their visitation rights. Political prisoners are frequently prohibited from receiving rations provided by their relatives, while other prisoners have no restrictions on such rations.

Political prisoners have no bed, instead they must use rubbish cloths as their bed. Political prisoners are forced to eat rotten and contaminated food and no one has the right to appeal for their good health.

On political grounds prisoners are required to denounce from their heart His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Tibetan freedom, and to pledge their love for the Communist Party. At the same time, prisoners must accept the Chinese laws and regulations upon prisoners, renounce what they have done in the past and agree to accept the laws in the future.

If the prisoners refuse to accept these principles, they are subjected to cruel and inhuman treatment using all torture instruments: beating with iron rods, sticks, iron padlocks and cuffing of hands and feet for many days without any food. This resulted in the death of Sangay Tenphel.

The Chinese do not take any responsibility upon themselves for sick prisoners. Even if sick inmates are taken for consultation, only outdated medicines and equipment are used. It was as a result of this that Lhakpa Tsering and Kelsang Thutop died in prison.

Political prisoners are regularly subjected to forced blood extraction and intensive exercises. Political prisoners are also compelled to praise whatever the jailer or prison guards say. Even when the guard makes a false statement we are forced to praise the communist values and ideologies. Nonetheless we are united and never listen to these statements. That is why we are severely beaten and deprived of food, water and sleep.

It is very hard to write the whole story in detail. If we complain about the maltreatment in the prison to the relevant offices, they not only ignore the complaint but also our prison sentences are greatly extended. We are kept under strict surveillance and brutal suppression. In this way the prison guards are promoted and rewards are presented to them by the higher authorities.

In the "Tibet Daily" newspaper it was stated that, during an official meeting, the Public Security Bureau and the Judicial Office of the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) decided to award those guards who had worked hard in disciplining the political prisoners with the extra facilities.

Now we have 253 political prisoners in Drapchi Prison, ranging in age from 15 to 70 and with prison terms ranging from 1 year to 19 years. The present condition in Tibet is critical and more restrictions are being imposed. We are especially susceptible to the above mentioned atrocities which are directly inflicted upon us. Therefore we appeal to people of the world who love and support truth, peace, democracy and human rights.

*From all political prisoners of Drapchi Prison.
10th March 1997*

[\(Contents\)](#)

CONFINED CONDITIONS

General

The interviewees reported that they were kept in very poor conditions. Many former prisoners said that their cells were very dirty, that they had to go to the toilet in a container in the room,

often in front of many others, and that they had very little opportunity to wash themselves. Some prisoners stated that there was excrement on the floor of their cell when they were first placed there. Many prisoners had to sleep on the floor without any mattress or blankets, generally until either their families sent them such items or, after some time, the prison provided them.

Some prisoners reported having to lie side by side with their 20 cell mates, so tightly squeezed together that they were like sardines in a can, with no room to move. Others said that there was enough room in the cells but that each cell was just an empty concrete room, with no beds or anything else except a tin container in the corner to use as a toilet. Some prisoners had bunk beds in their cells while others slept on wooden planks above the ground. There appears to be very little consistency between prisons in the level of facilities that prisoners were entitled to.

Interviewees' accounts of the frequency with which they could wash varied considerably. It appears to be up to the guards as to when prisoners are allowed to wash or, if the times are set, they are extremely infrequent and vary considerably between penitentiary institutions. One prisoner was not able to wash more than twice in five years while others reported that they could wash about once every two weeks. The one occasion on which most prisoners said that they were able to wash was before they were hospitalised.

While the prisoners' accounts all differ, it is clear that none of them were kept as envisaged by the UN's Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. These provide that:

10. All accommodation provided for the use of prisoners and in particular all sleeping accommodation shall meet all requirements of health, due regard being paid to climatic conditions and particularly to cubic content of air, minimum floor space, lighting, heating and ventilation...

12. The sanitary installations shall be adequate to enable every prisoner to comply with the needs of nature when necessary and in a clean and decent manner.

13. Adequate bathing and shower installations shall be provided so that every prisoner may be enabled and required to have a bath or shower, at a temperature suitable to the climate, as frequently as necessary for general hygiene according to season and geographical region...

14. Prisoners shall be required to keep their persons clean, and to this end they shall be provided with water and with such toilet articles as are necessary for health and cleanliness...

19. Every prisoner shall, in accordance with local or national standards, be provided with a separate bed, and with separate and sufficient bedding which shall be clean when issued, kept in good order and changed often enough to ensure its cleanliness.

At Drapchi, each cell has a cell leader and secretary who are in charge of ensuring that the cellmates work hard and keeping a record of any punishments that they are due. The two representatives from the cell meet regularly with prison officials to check each prisoner's behavioural record. In recent years this has taken the form of a system whereby prisoners are given and required to maintain 100 points; points are added for exceptionally good behaviour and deducted for bad behaviour. Prisoners can reportedly have their sentence lessened if they consistently maintain a score in excess of 100 points over several years.

Conditions at Drapchi Prison:

The EU Delegation visited Drapchi on May 4, 1998 and reported that:

Conditions there were relatively comfortable, with 12 prisoners to a room each with single bunks. Accommodation was bare and basic but not too much unlike a Chinese barracks or even a student dormitory...The delegation were told that those sentenced for crimes against state security were not treated differently from other prisoners. There were about 90 such people in the prison. They shared the same cellblocks as other prisoners, and there were no special detention blocks for them.

This is in direct contrast to reports from political prisoners. Certainly there are separate divisions at Drapchi for the political prisoners and it is incorrect to say that there are no special detention blocks for them. It is unclear which part of the prison that the EU Delegation was shown.

[Jampel Monlam](#) said: “Drapchi prison was divided into five divisions shortly after I arrived. I was in the fifth division that was for political prisoners. The political prisoners were kept together so that we could be more easily controlled. The number of political prisoners grew to about 500. I was placed in a cell that was about 15 feet by 12 feet. Twelve of us were kept together in this cell. There was one long bed that we all slept on, lying next to each other...There was a container in our cell for us to go to the toilet. You can imagine how this was when one of the cell mates had diarrhoea or stomach aches - the noise, the smell...Sometimes two of us had to go at the same time!

In five years I was able to wash twice. In 1991 bathrooms were built in expectation of a foreign delegation but, because there were no prison regulations governing their use, we were not taken to use them. Instead the officials used them. We couldn't get to them ourselves as the guards had to take us and they wouldn't do so as there were no regulations.

The prison officials took away all our civilian clothes and our personal possessions, including sacred threads and photos, and burned them in front of us. We were provided with a prison uniform that was made out of very coarse material. We were each provided with one quilt that was not really enough in the winter...In the summer the temperature was all right except when we had to work in the vegetable gardens which were covered with plastic and stiflingly hot. The weather was a problem in winter. We younger ones could manage the cold but it was very difficult for the older prisoners who were used to wearing clothes that were lined with fur in winter. They suffered a great deal.”

Damchoe, who was kept in division three in Drapchi, recalled: “There were 12 of us in the cell. It was a big room with bunk beds. There were mattresses and blankets in the room. The cell was open from the morning until the early evening so we could leave the cell to go to the toilet. We could wash but there was no hot water.”

Thupten Tsering stated: “In Drapchi Prison I was put in a cell with 12 other political prisoners. The room was quite big, about 15 feet by 30 feet - it was not crowded. There were six double bunks. We kept our belongings, such as our bowls, under the bunks. There was a toilet room that we were able to use. In Drapchi we were allowed to wash about once a month.”

Yeshe Damdul described the manner in which the prisoners were organised in their cells: “The prison authorities asked the prisoners of each cell to appoint a group leader and one who acted as a quasi-secretary. The job of the ‘secretary’ was to watch the behaviour of the other

prisoners. On the walls of each cell there was a list with all our names on it and we were all given 100 points to start with. We had points added or taken away depending on how hard we worked and whether or not we were considered a good prisoner. Sometimes a prisoner got 105 points and that meant that he was considered very good as he had worked hard and then he would be treated very well. Some prisoners who didn't co-operate with the prison authorities or didn't really work hard or failed to participate in the prison exercises had points deducted from their total and they had to suffer more. It didn't really matter whether you got a few more or less than 100 points.

Every month the prison officials called the group leader and the secretary for a meeting at their office. The cell representatives had to report how their group had worked during the month and any other incidents that had arisen...Criminals were lead to expect that if they worked very well for four years and got over 100 points regularly in that time their sentence term would be reduced. But political prisoners never expected this.”

Conditions at Gutsa Detention Centre:

Ngawang Choezom recalled: “In the inner part of the prison I was put in a small cell with another six women prisoners. The cell was about 12 feet by eight feet. When we were all lying down there was no room for anyone else - it was very crowded. Generally I was only held with political prisoners but sometimes criminal prisoners who were being transferred from one cell to another were put in my cell for a few days. Sometimes Chinese criminal prisoners were in the cell temporarily...The only thing in the room was the tin container that we had to use as a toilet. We were not allowed out to go to the toilet, we just had to use the tin container that was in the cell. There was nothing to lie on and nothing to cover ourselves with. We had to sleep on the cement floor.

Officially we were allowed to wash about once every two weeks but sometimes a kind prison guard would let us out for 15 minutes so we could wash more often than that...We weren't given any uniform. I wore my nuns' clothes...It was quite cold in winter as there was one small window and a hole in the door that the wind would rush through...The light was kept on all night.”

Dawa Kyizom said: “When I was transferred to Gutsa I was kept in a cell with four other nuns and one lay woman...The others had been sentenced to six years imprisonment. The men were kept in the same sized cell as us but there were 22 of them and they only had one toilet pot between them. The room was about 12 feet by 12 feet. In my cell there was room to sleep but where the men were kept they were very squashed and slept side by side at night with their bodies touching.

We had a pot in our cell for a toilet. We had to pass our urine through the small hole in the door that the guards used to pass us our food. We were given a mattress and a cotton quilt. Gutsa looked quite clean from the outside to trick the United Nation's organisations but from the inside it was filthy...The food and the clothes that we were given were dirty and never enough. We were often cold - our quilts were not warm enough.”

Rinzin Kunsang stated: “The women prisoners were held in one large building which had many separate cells. Each of the nuns that I was arrested with was held alone in one cell. My cell was about 12 feet by 6 feet. After one month I shared my cell with another woman prisoner who was a criminal. She had been arrested because she was a prostitute. She asked

me many questions about why I had been arrested and I thought she was a spy who would tell the guards if I said anything to her. This was the only person I had to talk to in the whole two months.

There was nothing in the cell. The floor was cement and it was stained with blood. Initially, I was not even given a mattress, blanket or quilt. After 10 days I was provided with a ragged mattress and a blanket. I was given one steel bucket to be used for a toilet. I could not even wash once in the whole two months I was kept in Gutsa. We were not even provided water to drink...There was one window that was quite large and covered with bars. It was quite light in the room. At sunset the guards would turn on the electric light which was kept on all night.”

Dorjee Namgyal recalled: “In Gutsa, the cell I was put in was a long dormitory. It was about 25 feet by nine feet. It was designed for 10 people but there were eight of us when I was there. I don’t know what the other cells were like as we had no opportunity to communicate with other prisoners. The beds were elevated planks of wood on which we all slept side by side. There was an iron door with a small window in it and next to the door was a window with bars on it. There was a toilet container in the corner that was made of plastic and was quite large. It was always smelly...In Gutsa I had no opportunity to wash in the four months I was held there.”

Gyaltzen Choetso recalled: “There was nothing in the cell except a tin container that we had to use to go to the toilet and a bowl for food. There was no mattress or blanket. We were never given anything from the prison authorities but after about 20 days we got something to wear from our families - I got a blanket, a thick quilt, a pillow and a sheet from home. After one month the prison authorities gave us a mattress... There was only one window with glass which was about six inches by one foot and one red electric bulb that was kept on all night.”

Conditions at Trisam Prison:

Ngawang Choedon said: “The Chinese government says that Trisam is not a prison but a detention centre but it is not really different from Gutsa prison. In Trisam prison we were made to exercise and had an opportunity to learn something but otherwise everything was the same. My cell at Trisam was big enough for 10 but only eight of us were put in it. It was quite a small room...There were upper and lower bunks. We were not provided with any mattress or blanket but we were allowed to get them from our homes. I got mine from friends after a few days. There was also a tin container in the cell to use as a toilet but the guards would let us out to go to the toilet whenever we asked them...We were not allowed to wear nuns clothes but were made to wear a chuba (Tibetan traditional dress for lay people).”

[Leusang](#) recalled: “At Trisam, twelve people were held in the same cell. The cell was not so clean. There were three big buildings, each with 13 cells containing 12 prisoners. About three hundred prisoners were held there. Each of the cells was about 15 feet by 10 feet large. There were upper and lower bunks. There was a small amount of room to move in. There was a cupboard at the end of the room but there were no chairs or tables. The prison didn’t give us anything - even the blankets we had were either what we had brought ourselves or were from our families...We were given pants and a shirt for a uniform.

It was cold in winter, but not too cold...There was one light. It was turned off at 11 o’clock. There was also one window so we had some natural light.”

Conditions at Sangyip Complex:

Sonam Dolkar was held alone in a cell for five months until another prisoner was put with her because she was too ill to move. She remembered: “My cell was six feet by eight feet. I was kept alone for about five months and then was put with a Chinese woman prisoner from Dechung. She was put in the cell because at that time I was so sick that I couldn’t even move to the door or collect my food or empty my toilet container... There was one bed, a table, a mattress, a quilt and a steel toilet container in the cell. It was quite clean. At least once a week they would come and search my room. If there was anything on the wall they would abuse me. When I was held at Gutsa for two days there was nothing at all in the cell... There was no opportunity to wash as I wasn’t let out of the cell. They did not provide me with anything to wear - when I was arrested I had grabbed some extra clothes from home.”

[Thupten Tsering](#) said: “I was kept alone in my cell in Seitru for eight or nine months. There was enough space for two beds in the cell. The conditions at Seitru were worse than at Drapchi... When I was held alone in Seitru, there was a small hole in the door where the officials would pass the food through to me. There was a mattress, an old sheet and a blanket. There was no toilet for me to use. I had to go to the toilet in a small pot in my room.”

[Yeshe Togden](#) stated: “In Outridu, there were 15 cells, each of which held 20 men. It was a large complex, including factories, a garage, a rock shaping area and many vegetable gardens. Many prisoners have been kept there since 1959. The cells were about 14 feet by 10 feet. There was not enough room for the 20 men to sleep there. Ten of us slept vertically and the others horizontally. We each only had about one foot of space to lie across. We all had to squeeze up together to sleep. We slept on a part of the cell that was raised in cement and then covered with wooden planks. On top of this was a layer of canvas and on top of us we had one quilt but it was falling apart. We were only allowed to sleep on the raised area of the cell. At first we couldn’t sleep on it but after a while we got used to it. It was freezing, especially as Tibet is very cold in March.

The toilet was filthy and full of flies. This was especially awful as there was no water and so everything in the toilet was just left there, rather than being washed away. The lack of water was to punish us as it left no marks, even though it affected our health. Sometimes we were allowed to go to the toilet but there was a specified time allowed which was seldom enough for all of us and so we would run to get there first when we were allowed out. Otherwise we had to use the container in our cell... When we arrived, there were water facilities but these were stopped shortly afterwards. Water was so scarce that I could not wash for almost four months. We were only given a small pot of about 400 grams to wash ourselves and four or five pieces of clothing.”

Conditions at Other Prisons:

[Adhe Tapontsang](#) recalled the prisons she was kept at in the late fifties and early sixties, some of which were outside the “TAR”: “In Karze prison when I was first arrested I was kept handcuffed for 20 days and placed in a cell with 10 other women. There was no light in the room. We were only allowed out of the room briefly at 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. to empty our toilet containers.

In Dhartsedo prison the room was completely empty and had no furniture. We all had to sleep side by side as it was so crowded. In the middle of the room there was a large steel container

for us to use for a toilet. We had to go to the toilet in front of everyone - it was very embarrassing. We were not supplied with anything - there were not even blankets. We only had blankets if we were given them by our families. The Chinese would look at us through a small window and check what we were doing.

In 1966 when I was transferred to Minyak Ra Nga Gang we were taken to one room with two officers then we were called one by one to have our hair cut. We were made to take off our chubas (Tibetan dresses) and forced to wear the Chinese blue uniform that had writing on it saying 'Prisoner'. We were told that from that moment we were not allowed to speak Tibetan as they thought we were sharing secrets. We were only allowed to speak Chinese. We had to try to speak to Chinese but it was very difficult. One old woman absolutely could not speak Chinese so she pretended to be dumb and never spoke at all."

[Palden Gyatso](#) said: "In 1959, my prison, which was called Norbukhungtse, was a monastery that had been transformed into a prison (a common occurrence in those times) since there had not previously been so many prisoners in Tibet before the 1959 uprising. Because of the lack of official facilities, lines were drawn on the monastery walls in chalk and we were each given just enough space to lie down. You had to bring your own bedding in 1959...We were given a prison uniform that was replaced once every two years."

[Dawa Kyizom](#) stated: "At Taktse military camp I was kept in a long house with six cells. I was alone in the cell and there was no one in the rest of the house - there were no other prisoners at that time. The room was about 15 feet by 15 feet. There was a large fence around the complex but, when I was there, there were no other prisoners. There was a window but it opened from the outside and I had no control over when it was opened - the guards would open or close it whenever they felt like it...In the 28 days that I was held at Taktse military camp I was never allowed to wash."

Lobsang Shakya recalled his experiences at Karkhang Military Camp: "I think that maybe the prison used to be an army camp. The cell I was put in was about 12 feet by eight feet. I was kept there alone. The roof was made from tin. The only things in the cell were a torn mattress and an old sheet that I was given after I had been there a while. For the first five days I had to use a toilet container but then I was allowed to go out of the cell to go to the toilet...I could only wash my face twice in the month that I was in prison. I could never wash my body. When I was ready to go to hospital they washed the blood off my face...It was very, very cold in the cell. Sometimes kind prison guards would lend me their shirts to wear but otherwise I had nothing and just had to freeze...There was no light in the cell but there was a large barred window."

Yeshe Damdul reported: "At Tsethang it was a very large prison. There were only two cell blocks. One was for criminal prisoners who had committed minor crimes and the other was for prisoners who had committed more serious crimes, like political prisoners. There were about 40 criminals there and 16 political prisoners. Everyone was kept in a separate cell. It was a big room - bigger than 15 feet by 10 feet. The cell was totally empty - there was nothing at all in it...no bed, no mattress, no blanket, nothing. When I was first arrested, it was March and it was extremely cold so I suffered a lot. For one week I was given nothing - it was really too cold - I could not even sleep at night because of the cold. Then after seven days I was given a sort of mattress made by blankets that I had to use as both a mattress and blanket. About one month later I was allowed to receive some blankets and a mattress from

my family. There was only a tin bucket that I could go to the toilet in... After staying in the cell for four months I had not even been able to wash my face.”

Lhundup Monlam stated: “At Gyangtse prison there were only four prisoners. It was the PSB who were in charge of the prison. At Nyari conditions were much better than at Gyangtse - there was a window in the room. There were four prisoners in my cell and the room was made to hold eight. We had to work in the vegetable fields. At Nyari there were four mattresses and one thermos and two other containers for us to use to wash in the cell...In Gyangtse prison it was very cold in winter and I was leg cuffed so I suffered a lot from a pain in my leg arising from the cold.”

Lukar Jam recalled: "In Terlengkha Detention Centre there were seven or eight prisoners in each cell. The cell was about 12 metres by 12 metres. We had wooden beds with mattresses but we had to bring our blankets from home. There was one small window with iron bars. In the winter it was very cold so we lit coal fires in the cell and the room filled with carbon monoxide."

[\(Contents\)](#)

PRISON DIET

General

Prisoners were simply not given the basic necessities to which all human beings are entitled. The meagre quantity and poor quality of prisoners’ diets was something that most interviewees complained of, second only to the physical abuse that they were subjected to. Almost all former prisoners complained that they were given an insufficient quantity of food. Many of them also said that the food was extremely dirty and strewn with dead insects and some even recounted that the food had faeces floating in it. A further disturbing element of the prisoners’ accounts is the frequency with which they were denied access to water. Food is a fundamental human need and should be supplied in sufficient quantity. Further, it should not be something that is distributed on a discriminatory basis, or as a punishment. At times lack of food was used to punish the prisoners, for instance, when prisoners were first arrested and interrogated and also when they were put into solitary confinement.

The former prisoners reported that they had a variety of diets, depending on the prison in which they were kept. Generally, prisoners were given a diet consisting of rice gruel (rice cooked in hot water, like a watery rice porridge), tingmo (steamed bun) and vegetables. There were many complaints that the vegetables, which generally just meant cabbage, or occasionally potatoes or carrots, were dirty. Prison food was reportedly generally cooked very simply with no attempt to make it palatable - many prisoners complained that the vegetables were merely boiled and not even cooked in oil. Tibetans are accustomed to a high protein and fat diet, consisting of a lot of meat and dairy products. The prison diet was therefore all the more difficult for them to adjust to.

Some former political prisoners stated that criminal prisoners were given preferential treatment in respect of food. Criminals were given rice whereas the political prisoners were

only given tingmo and criminals were reportedly allowed to eat first so that they received more vegetables while the political prisoners were merely given the leftovers.

Prisoners were generally able to supplement their diets with food brought by relatives from outside the prison and more recently prisoners at Drapchi Prison report that they were able to purchase extra food from a shop within the prison. It is alarming that prisoners must rely on food received from visitors or purchased separately in order to merely have a sufficient quantity of food to eat or to form any kind of balanced diet.

Prisoners are generally required to eat their food inside their cells although some prisons, including Trisam, have a separate dining room. Eating in the prison cells is inappropriate, particularly in light of the fact that many prisoners do not have a separate toilet but just a container in their room without any kind of separation from the “living area”. This is clearly an unhygienic and humiliating aspect of prison life.

Many prisoners reported health problems arising from the poor quality of the food and leading to diarrhoea and stomach-aches. Others who had suffered from torture-related internal injuries and kidney problems found it very difficult to digest the prison food but had no alternative.

The Information Office of the State Council of the PRC recently stated:

The government guarantees the provision of food, clothing, shelter and articles of daily use for prison inmates. Each prison in Tibet has separate dining facilities and diets for inmates of different groups and provides for them Zanba [Tibetan: tsampa] (roasted highland barley flour), buttered tea, sweet tea, etc. every month.

The stories of the inmates differ significantly from this - most prisons do not have separate dining facilities and prisoners complain of not having enough of any type of food, let alone their ethnic preference. The quality and quantity of the food available at the detention centres appears to be markedly worse than that at the “prisons”, with some of the most frightening stories originating from Gutsa Detention Centre. Lukar Jam, who was held at Terlengkha Detention Centre from 1994 to 1995, was hospitalised when he weighed only 30 kg. He recalled that the primary reason for his illness and ensuing weight loss was the poor prison diet and unhygienic conditions.

The individual accounts listed below are in stark contrast to the UN’s Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. Rule 20 of those rules provides:

Every prisoner shall be provided by the administration at the usual hours with food of nutritional value adequate for health and strength, of wholesome quality and well prepared and served.

Drinking water shall be available to every prisoner whenever he needs it.

[Rinzin Kunsang](#), who was imprisoned in Gutsa Prison in 1988, stated: “We were not provided any water to drink. The criminals were fed first. We got whatever was left after them. The food was very dirty and there was not enough. Around 7 a.m. we were given rice gruel, then for lunch two small tingmos and then in the evening we got more rice gruel. The criminals were given vegetables but we were only served the root of the vegetables. We were never served anything to drink and there was never enough food. We were very hungry.

When the food was ready the guards opened our cell doors and then passed in the food to us. We had to eat it in our cells.”

[Tenzin Choedon](#) described her daily diet while at Gutsa Prison in 1988: “In the morning we were given rice gruel, for lunch we were fed two small tingmo and vegetables that had just been boiled in water. For dinner we had the leftovers from lunch. The food was cooked by the criminals who put cigarette butts in it and once I even saw stools in the ‘soup’. Every three days we were also given a cup of water or black tea. It was summer when I was locked up and we were very thirsty but there was nothing we could do except remember what running water was like. That sometimes helped us to salivate. We were not given enough to eat and were often hungry.”

Yeshe Togden recounted his experiences in Outridu in 1989: “... for almost four months we did not have any water supply. In the morning we were given one small handful of tsampa with black tea and salt. Because we had so little food we really relished what we had: in the morning with our tsampa we mixed a tiny bit and then slowly, slowly licked it, and so on. We were fed twice each day - sometimes there was lunch and no dinner and sometimes dinner and no lunch. The second meal consisted of two pieces of tingmo and vegetable soup. The ‘soup’ was more like vegetable broth as there was no trace of vegetables in it except for some roots. Even the roots were not given to us unless we especially tried to fish them out - and then we were whacked on the head with the serving spoon for our trouble!

The soup was very salty and had a lot of chilly in it. It was prepared in half a rusty oil drum, so the soup was the colour of rust. We were so hungry that people went and stole tingmo, even right in front of the guards, as their hunger was stronger than their fear.

At night we were very thirsty because the soup was so salty but there was no water for us to drink. We were so dehydrated that often we could not even urinate. We had a container in our cell to hold our urine but, even with 20 of us in the cell, we only had to empty it once a week. The only liquid we received all day was the tea and the salty soup... When we left the cell we had to lean against a wall as we were so weak.

If we ever got any water, even about 500 ml., it was like a blessing and we treasured it so much that even with 20 of us in the cell it was in the tin for so long that the tin started to rust. Of course we still drunk it. In the evenings when there was a cool wind blowing we sat and opened our mouths like lizards as the cool breeze was almost like having some moisture at the back of our throats... Our thirst was even worse than the hunger... there were many people who were very weak and suffering from malnutrition.”

Bagdro complained of lack of food in Gutsa Prison in 1989: "At Gutsa we were given very dirty food — it was very dirty potatoes and a small tingmo and something to drink. Sometimes we were given one small cup of black tea and one small tingmo, or at other times it was a small amount of vegetables (just one or two leaves) mixed with water and a small tingmo. There was so little to drink that I had to drink my own urine. Even that there was not enough of and before long I could not even go to the toilet as I had so little to

eat or drink... I was starving and was afraid that I would die. I even tried to eat my shirt."

Yeshe Damdul described the prison food at Tsethang in 1989: "In the morning we were given one small tingmo with a cup of black tea, for lunch sometimes we were given two tingmo and a cup of black tea and sometimes two tingmo with a very small serving of vegetables and for dinner the menu was not regularly fixed — sometimes it was very light noodles and sometimes very light vegetables. At the beginning the food was somewhat clean but slowly it deteriorated and later I couldn't think about how good or clean the food was - I was too hungry and had to eat everything that I was given."

Gyaltzen Choteso recounted her experiences at Gutsa in 1990: "We were served very dirty food. When we were served vegetables they had not even washed the dirt off and sometimes there was excretion in the food. It was also very salty so we could not eat it. In the morning we were served rice boiled in hot water that was yellow - not the proper colour - and at lunch we were given one tingmo with dirty vegetables or sometimes if there was a kind cook we could sometimes get two or even three tingmo. In the evening we had to eat the same as at lunch. The criminals were served rice once a week although political prisoners were not given rice at all until towards the end of my time in prison when we were sometimes given rice and sometimes black tea. Black tea was served at midday to all prisoners except political prisoners."

The prison authorities never served enough food to fill my stomach, but I could get some food from my family through prison guards for a bribe. I suffered a lot from hunger."

Lhundup Monlam described his diet at Nyari Prison in the Shigatse region in 1990: "At Nyari, the food was very poor. We were usually just given black tea with tsampa, for lunch we were given rice with vegetables or sometimes rice in hot water and in the evening we were given black tea with tsampa. We were never satisfied with the amount of food. In the vegetables we could see many white insects because they were not washed properly."

[Gyaltzen Palsang](#), who was held in Gutsa Detention Centre in 1993 for one year and eight months, recounted: "At 4 a.m. we were given a cup of black tea, for lunch there was either rice with vegetables or plain rice or tingmo and for dinner one small tingmo... There was not enough food and we were very hungry. Because of the poor quality of the food we got diarrhoea with blood, we had sore stomachs and felt very weak. The food was given to us through the hole in our cell door. We did not have a separate time to leave the cell to eat."

Lukar Jam recalled the prison diet at Terlengkha Detention Centre in 1994: "We were only given two meals each day. We had a daily allowance of 250 grams of flour and we could also get hot water. So normally for breakfast we just had boiling water with noodles made from the flour or tingmo. For dinner we generally had two tingmo which we made with the flour we had left over from breakfast. Occasionally we would have vegetables that were left over from the market because they were starting to rot."

Lobsang Shakya spoke of conditions in Karkhang Prison outside Shigatse in 1995: "We were only fed twice a day. Around 9 a.m. we were given either rice in hot water or, sometimes, one small tingmo. Around 6 p.m. we received rice and vegetables but the vegetables had just been boiled - not even cooked in oil. The food was very dirty, it was a red or yellow colour and sometimes there were the bodies of dead insects in it. It was really not enough to eat. I was

always very hungry... The first week I ate the food in my cell but after that I was told to eat it somewhere outside, always alone... The guards always told me to eat quickly.”

Prisoners Starved to Death in the Sixties

In the early sixties, after China had occupied Tibet, Tibet experienced its first ever famine. Particularly during the period from 1960 to 1962, as a result of the Chinese campaign known as the “Great Leap Forward,” many thousands of Tibetans died from starvation in the prisons alone.

The Panchen Lama wrote in his 70,000 Character Petition of 1962 addressed to the leaders of the Chinese government:

In the past, although Tibet was a society ruled by dark and savage feudalism, there had never been such a shortage of grain. In particular, because Buddhism was widespread, all people, whether noble or humble, had the good habit of giving help to the poor, and so people could live solely by begging for food. A situation could never have arisen where people starved to death and we have never heard of a situation where people starved to death.

Adhe Tapontsang recalled: “When I was in Dhartsedo Prison in 1959 we were given little more than a glass of very liquid porridge three times a day... There was plenty of water but nothing else to drink. After about 10 days we were so weak from hunger that we could not even stand.

When we were transferred to Golthok lead mines we had the same food but it was even worse than before... Our health quickly deteriorated. The work during the day was very hard and we could not get nearly enough food to sustain us. The men started to put insects in their porridge: the one they thought was best was a yellow creature with a red head. The women were too afraid to eat insects.

Soon, due to the lack of food, I could not even walk. One day I lay down and did not go to work and I was beaten. All we had to eat was one glass of rice gruel three times a day... Many, many people died from starvation. Everyone had a different way of coping. When they were dying, some called out His Holiness’s name, others went mad - they just cried out for food for hours until they had no more energy to cry. Then they just died. One man died and an insect that he had eaten came out of his mouth. It was truly terrible to look at his face. His cheeks were deeply sunk in his face and his eyes were completely back in their sockets.

We could not count the number of prisoners who starved to death. Every night we slept side by side and in the morning many in the room were dead. Every day people died. Once I went to sleep as usual, lying beside two women friends. In the middle of the night one of them didn’t seem to be moving anymore so I checked to see if she was still alive. She was dead. I turned to tell my other friend but she had also died. Everyday at least 10 people died from starvation. This happened for three years every day from 1960 to 1963.

From 1960 to 1963, 12,019 prisoners died from starvation. I know this because at the end of the three years the head of the prison was changed and when the new head arrived the number of deaths was declared.”

Palden Gyatso stated: “In 1959, my family had to bring food as the prisons were not organised yet. Later, when there was a general food shortage in Tibet, we were provided with black tea three times per day but our families had to bring money to cover the cost of fuel. Around 1962, we were no longer allowed to receive food from our families. Instead, the guards supplied us with one container every day which contained about four handfuls of tsampa, sometimes without any seasoning or salt, with only a little water - this was all we received to eat or drink in a day...Around 1969, many people died of starvation in prison. It was worst in 1960-62 when the numbers of people dying from malnutrition and starvation were uncountable.”

[\(Contents\)](#)

WORK AND ACTIVITIES

Theoretically, work can provide the opportunity for prisoners to learn new skills and take valuable experiences away from the time that they have spent in prison. However, prisoners held in Tibet are forced to perform manual labour with no thought of obtaining new skills but merely increasing production for the state. Prisoners are given production quotas which they must meet or they are punished and sometimes beaten. In Tibet prisoners are frequently employed in agriculture and in lumbering, where work is exceptionally demanding and accidents are frequent. Chinese law stipulates that prisoners may not be required to work more than twelve hours per day, with a day of rest once every two weeks (Article 53 of the Statute of Reform Through Labour). However, some of the interviewees reported that they were sometimes forced to work longer than this if there was a particular deadline to meet and also that the fortnightly day off was occasionally waived.

The Laogai Regulations describe the rationale of the Laogai/Prison system in the PRC:

Chapter 1. General Principles: Article 1: ...the regulations are adopted specially in order to punish all counterrevolutionaries and other criminal offenders and to compel them to reform themselves through labour and become new persons.

Prisoners who had been sentenced were generally required to work eight-hour days and to perform manual labour. Many prisoners had not previously worked before due to their young age, time in monasteries or nunneries or in school. The adjustment to forced physical labour was therefore difficult for them. The type of work that they were required to perform varied depending on what institution they were held in. Until recently the Chinese penal system divided the “prisons” into different categories - prisons and reform through labour camps, although now they are all known as prisons. The accounts of the prisoners does not indicate that there were material differences in the manner in which they were treated or the work which they were required to perform at the different institutions.

At Drapchi, male prisoners generally worked either in the vegetable fields, labour construction, brick-making factories or repairing automobiles while females were required to clean human excrement from the toilets or work in tailoring or cleaning and sorting wool. Recent reports indicate that male political prisoners at Drapchi are no longer forced to work but have to “exercise” all morning and then undergo “re-education” sessions in the afternoon. In other prisons, particularly in Southern Tibet, prisoners cleared forests and worked in

lumber mills. Often, prisoners were required to work in stifling hot greenhouses that were filled with fumes from the chemicals that were sprayed on the plants. They were also made to perform demeaning and humiliating tasks such as scooping out the faeces from the prison toilets and taking them to the fields to spread them as manure.

The interviewees reported that they were required to meet a certain labour quota based on the value of their production. The PRC closely monitors the prison system in the “TAR” in order to profit from the prisoners’ work. On October 3, 1990, the “TAR” Public Security Bureau Party Secretary stated that the prison and labour complexes in the “TAR” had contributed 16 million yuan (approximately US\$2,000,000), which was then 10 per cent of the TAR’s total economic output. He added that in 1980 the prisons and labour reform camps contributed 100 million yuan (US\$13,000,000) and that during the period of 1975-79 a net profit of approximately 2 million yuan was generated and forwarded to Beijing by “TAR” labour camps.

Contrary to what a number of former political prisoners reported, the EU delegation was informed by the Chinese authorities that:

The prison educated the [mostly illiterate prisoners] and taught Tibetan and Chinese up to Middle School standard. The general regime was of five days’ work and two days’ rest. Of the five working days, three are spent in manual labour and two on study and politics...Prisoners were able to earn around 2,000 yuan a year through their labour and through raising pigs and vegetables. Conduct and labour performance were reviewed monthly and marked up in complex charts on the prison wall.

A number of interviewees were detained beyond the length of their sentence and were forced to continue to work in conditions that were very similar to those imposed when they were imprisoned. Although they no longer had a lock on their door, their right to leave the compound was strictly limited and they were paid, if at all, far less than they would have received if they were free. Human Rights Watch stated that:

In China, where prisons constitute an important source of income for the country, prison authorities forcibly retain some prisoners who have finished serving their sentences for continued employment. Under this policy, which has been in place since the early 1950s, prisoners throughout the country have been forced to remain in prison after the expiration of their sentences as so-called workers, usually for the rest of their lives. The working conditions and production quotas of these workers are virtually the same as those of prisoners.

Ex-political prisoners report that they were given harder work than the criminal prisoners and were made to do things like break rocks into small pieces and clean toilets. Prisoners generally seem to have one day of each week free from work but in some prisons they were made to work every day without fail. Prisoners are required to work regardless of their physical circumstances or of any injuries they may have. For instance, Kunchok Tsono, whose arm was broken when she was arrested, was required to work cleaning and separating wool at Drapchi Prison for three years despite never receiving medical treatment for her injury. She kept her arm in a sling. It appears that it may now be too late for her arm to heal properly as flesh has grown around and inside the broken bone. Accounts of work performed by prisoners in the early sixties are frightening in their intensity and authorities’ lack of regard for life or the prisoners’ welfare.

In recent years prisoners have recounted being forced to “exercise” in much the same manner as Chinese soldiers. They are made to do many types of activities, ranging from running quickly to staring directly at the sun. Any failure to perform the particular exercise in the required manner is swiftly punished, generally with the prisoner receiving some sort of a beating. For this reason, many prisoners refer to the “exercise” as a form of punishment and it was clear from the interviews that all the prisoners deeply resented the activities, not just because of the physical exertion but also the mental control that was simultaneously exerted over them.

Prisoners who have not yet been sentenced are not generally allowed to leave their cells except for interrogation and possibly for five minutes once a day to empty their toilet container. There is simply nothing for the prisoners to do in their cells: they are not allowed pens or paper; they are often kept in solitary confinement or are not allowed to talk to their cellmates; they are not allowed to practise their religion; and their days are spent with nothing to think about except the timing of their next interrogation session. Given that prisoners are commonly held for six months, and sometimes even longer, without being sentenced, the fact that they remain incarcerated in a cell often by themselves is inhumane treatment in itself.

Leusang, who was held at Trisam Prison, stated: “We had to work all day except for lunch time. We had to leave our cell at 7 a.m. to start work and we would finish at 6 p.m. We did many different kinds of work. Sometimes we worked in government medicine factories. We had to do manual work like carrying bricks and cement on our backs and working in construction. We never had any holidays except for the first and the fifteenth of the month when, if the work wasn’t too important, we were allowed the day off to see our visitors. We were supposed to make 25,000 yuan each year.

Each of the buildings had a monitor who was allowed to go into town to find work for the rest of us. That person then took us in to do the work. The guards made us have competitions in our jobs so that we had to work very hard - things like digging up the earth, putting in sewerage pipes, etc. Some people, including me, fainted while we were working. Sometimes we had to lean on the wall to walk properly as we felt so weak. Many people were emaciated and anaemic. They would suddenly black out for a few minutes. There were also people who were mentally ill when I arrived and they didn’t have to do any work.”

Bagdro stated of his time in Drapchi: “We had to work cutting stones every day except Sunday...The work was worse for political prisoners than for criminals.”

Dawa Kyizom said: “We were let out of the cell to go to work from 9 a.m. until noon and then we were put back in the cells and then we were made to work again from 3 until 6 p.m....The men were forced to cut stones which was very arduous labour and the food was not enough to give them the strength for this. Sometimes the men blacked out as they worked. Sometimes we were made to gather the faeces from the communal toilet and to spread it over the fields and sometimes we were made to do manual work, like carrying cut stones, ploughing the fields, watering the vegetable gardens or sweeping the prison.”

Ngawang Choedon recalled: “At Gutsa we were only let out for five minutes each day. At Trisam we could often leave the cell and stay out for an hour or two.

At Trisam I was made to work in the vegetable garden, planting potatoes and cabbage. We were also made to go to the toilets and collect the faeces and to carry two buckets to the fields

and spread it there. We were made to work in other fields during the harvest time - we had to thresh the wheat and do other things like that. If we had work to do we would have to do it after finishing our food in the morning. We worked from morning until evening. The guards could decide whether we were able to rest on Sunday - some of the kind guards let us rest but the crueller ones made us work...When I was at Gutsa I sometimes had to do some of the same kind of work as at Trisam but it was not common.

At Trisam Prison in the early mornings we were made to run as fast as we could and then to march together and to turn backwards and forwards and to stand in line. We didn't enjoy this. We were taught these exercises in Chinese...we were given the instructions and sometimes we didn't understand them and so they beat us with sticks when we didn't turn as they had told us to."

Lhundup Monlam stated: "At Nyari we had to work in construction and in the vegetable fields. We had to work for eight hours a day every day of the week...it was very difficult as I had no experience of working."

Damchoe Palmo recalled her experience at Drapchi from 1994 to 1996: "From the wool that was soaked and dried we had to yarn four sang - we had to separate the strands and get the wool ready to make into carpets and sweaters...we had to complete the four sang in one day and were never allowed to leave one for the next day. In winter there was not much light so we had to complete the job in the evening under electric lights. We had to work from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 2 to 5 p.m. (or sometimes 6 p.m. in winter). The wool work was what we were supposed to do but sometimes the exercise sessions just ripped our schedule apart. We couldn't return to our cells until the work was finished.

In Drapchi, we were made to 'exercise' but it was really a form of punishment. They made us stand very still with pieces of paper under our arms and between our legs and we were severely reprimanded if we moved or the paper fell down. They also made us stand with bowls of water on our heads and sometimes they forced us to stare into the sun directly with our eyes open. They told us that we should be like soldiers in the army. If we did something wrong they would kick us and sometimes whip us with their belt buckles or a stick or cane or give us electric shocks. During one of the sessions a guard said to me that my way of looking was insolent and that there was a look of disgust in my eyes. He was training us at the time and after he said it he lashed out and kicked me in the chest with his boots. The kick was so hard that even the person behind me fell over and the print of his boots was on my shirt and my mouth was full of blood...I don't know why, maybe I bit my tongue. Now I have a very weak sternum and I still suffer from that incident.

The exercise sessions lasted a long time - I'm not sure exactly when we started but the stars were still bright in the sky and we continued until breakfast, around 8 a.m. Then we resumed after breakfast when we might be made to look up directly into the sun or something else. If we did something wrong or our performance had not been satisfactory then we were even made to continue after lunch. In the evenings we sometimes had to continue from 5:30 p.m. until 9:30 or sometimes even 10 p.m. In between, if our morning exercise session had been satisfactory, after lunch until dinner we had to do our wool work...People died because of the exercise - so many people were beaten severely after they did something incorrectly. They made us do all kinds of things - running, drills...everything that a regular soldier in China had to do except to learn kung fu. The soldiers at least got good food to eat but our food was very poor - and none of us were soldiers. Everyone was kicked, everyday."

Adhe Tapontsang recalled: “When I was held at Gothok lead mines we were made to construct buildings for the prison. We had to start work at 5 a.m. and to work for four hours. Then we had a break for some food and then we were made to work for another four hours. We had to dig earth from the mountain slope. The place was a lead mine and the work was very arduous. We were all given a hammer to flatten the lead after it had been found. The work was divided so that the stronger prisoners built the new buildings that we were going to live in and the weaker prisoners were forced to work in the mines.”

Yeshe Damdul stated: “At Tsethang, there was no way to be fulfilled as there was no work and I was kept in the cell all day long. It was difficult to pass the day. For the first four months I was only allowed out of the cell when I was being interrogated. After four months I was occasionally allowed out of the cell but it was very rarely...”

At Drapchi, we were taken out of the cell every day. Early in the mornings we were forced to do Chinese exercises - we had to stand up and sit down and sometimes we were forced to march. It was very hard for us. Immediately after finishing the so-called exercise we had breakfast. After breakfast we had to go to work - sometimes we had to work in the vegetable greenhouses and sometimes we had to dig up the vegetable fields or cut rocks into small pieces. We were also made to empty the prison toilets - we had to go in them and take out the faeces with buckets. It was really horrible to have to go into the overflowing toilets and scoop the faeces up with buckets. Then we had to put it in carts and take it to the fields.

The work was very difficult. When we were asked to work in the greenhouse we were all given a different section of the field that we had to work on. If we were late in completing our work on that section we were beaten and tortured. We had to do a lot of forced labour and were never paid for it. When we worked very hard to satisfy the prison authorities we were considered to be good prisoners. We had to work for about 11 hours every day including the exercise and education sessions. The exercise was very horrible and difficult for us. It was about seven or eight hours that we had to do physical labour. We had to work everyday except Sunday.”

Jampel Monlam, who was held at Gutsa then transferred to Drapchi, stated: “Initially when we were kept in Gutsa Detention Centre we were not allowed out of the cells at all. But once we had received our sentence we were allowed out from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m. each day (including working days). We could then stay in the courtyard... The political prisoners were made to do the hardest kind of labour. We had to do things like building small houses, shaping rocks and working in the vegetable garden. The work was very intensive. We had to fulfil a certain quota - whether or not we worked hard the quota had to be met or we would be punished. We had to work for eight hours each day and had Sunday off. Sometimes if we had to complete a certain part of the project we were made to complete that part of the work no matter how long it took.”

Sonam Dolkar said of Seitru: “For the first four months I wasn’t allowed out of my cell. Then I was allowed out for five minutes each morning. I wasn’t allowed out to go to the toilet - I had to use the tin container. There were ten cells in my building and we were all allowed out at different times so that we wouldn’t see each other. The only person I could talk to the whole time I was imprisoned was the Chinese prisoner in my room... They took our books and pens away from us - they even took away our shoelaces and belts.”

Thupten Tsering recalled: “At Drapchi, the guards opened the door early in the morning so that we could go to the toilet. We had to go to work after breakfast and then again after lunch...we had to do many different kinds of work - I had to plant apples and different types of vegetables and to carry manure and spread it over the fields...whatever we were asked to do. We were sometimes able to take vegetables from the garden when we were working in it. We had to work about seven or eight hours a week, every day except Sunday. Previously at Seitru I had been asked to do much harder work like breaking rocks and making brick walls.”

Ngawang Choezom recalled that at Gutsa: “There was no fixed schedule governing when we were allowed out of our cells. It depended on the guards - if they were kind they let us out once a day for about 15 minutes to one hour. If the guards weren't kind we had to stay in the cells...We were sometimes made to clean the toilet. We had to scoop the faeces from the toilet and put it in a bucket and take it to the vegetable fields and spread it there. We were not provided anything to scoop it up with so we used the buckets. There was no particular time when we had to clean the toilet but we were called whenever it had to be done. When I was first imprisoned I was made to clean the prison courtyard - things like sweeping up the leaves. We were sometimes made to weed the vegetable fields.”

Palden Gyatso described the work he was forced to do in prison: “We were made to do nine hours labour every day. From 1960 to 1964, we were made to plough the fields like animals. The harness was huge and made from iron. Six of us had to pull the plough by hauling on ropes attached to it, toiling all day long. We only had one rest - for lunch - which was for one hour. If the men pulling the harness tried to take a rest or rearrange the weight the conditions were so brutal that the Chinese would whip us and the whip often left an open cut. If the prisoner fell and did not get up immediately, his hands and feet were tied around a pole and he was carried off and sometimes buried in front of us...I felt very pathetic and often thought that I would rather die than continue living like this. We saw people dying and being buried in front of us and we were afraid it was going to happen to us - we lived in fear all the time...It was always distressing. Physically it was very tiring of course but it was also depressing and very stressful. When I was last in prison, this kind of manual harnessing was still going on although the conditions were not as bad as in the early sixties.

This was not the only type of work we were made to do - it was common though and one of the most brutal forms. I was made to plough fields for a long time, then to weave carpets, then to break rocks, then I was made a tailor. But in the prisons even if you were assigned to be a tailor, the jobs were split up so that no one really learned any new skills: one person was made to sew the buttons, another to stitch the garments, and another to cut the fabric. It was not constructive - the idea was just to get us to work and not to teach us any craft. I was able to learn all the skills involved but not everyone could. The work was very difficult.

When I was sent to break the rocks, we had to carry them. This was very difficult and very abrasive against our skins as we were not given any kind of protection. We made a small pillow from old prison uniforms but it was still too thin and the weight of the rocks would break it so we used the soles of old Chinese shoes that were made of rubber and we sewed them together to protect our backs. Some drivers gave us their inner tyres and we made aprons from them. We then made gloves and put rubber from the shoes onto them. These are the lengths to which we went to try and protect ourselves. The prison officials didn't provide us with anything.”

Gyaltzen Choetso said: “The third time that I was imprisoned I was made to produce between 400 and 600 bricks each day. If we didn’t meet the daily quota then we were punished that evening. They would beat us with electric cattle prods that they always carried with them and then kick us. Every morning we had to pour water on the bricks we had previously made. We also had to clean the toilets and take the excretions to the vegetable fields and cover them with dirt, as well as to water some plants. We had to work from around nine in the morning until noon and then from after lunch until five or whenever we finished our quota of bricks for the day...We were not allowed any pens or papers - if they caught us with them they would beat us and punish us and ask us where we got them from.”

[\(Contents\)](#)

POLITICAL EDUCATION

Many political prisoners recounted that they were forced to undergo political education sessions. They were told that they had to reform and to change their way of thinking and accept that the Chinese presence was good for Tibet. To this end, prisoners often underwent regular and intensive sessions where they were made to read literature or listen to speeches praising the Chinese presence in Tibet. They were then often forced to write speeches in which they had to reiterate what they had been told and answer questions on the subject. If they failed to satisfactorily tow the party line they were beaten. Drapchi Prison appears to have the most rigorous and regular political education sessions, with the most recent reports stating that prisoners have daily education sessions during which they are required to write answers to various questions on subjects related to what they have read.

Thus, for political prisoners, imprisonment is not only about punishment but about subduing the prisoners’ sense of identity as Tibetans. Many interviewees declared that the political education they were forced to participate in was their worst experience in prison as it forced them to dishonour so much in which they believed. Failure to participate resulted in swift punishment and so prisoners were effectively left with no choice but to say what was expected of them. Clearly, neither freedom of expression nor freedom of opinion have any place in the Chinese penitentiary system in Tibet.

Other than political education, prisoners generally stated that they had no other type of education and were not entitled even to have pens or paper in their cells. An exception to this was at Drapchi Prison where political prisoners reported that they had Tibetan language classes on Friday and that criminals had the same classes on Saturday. Other than this, any form of education or leisure activity was strictly forbidden in the prisons. This conflicts directly with Rule 77 of the UN’s Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners which provides:

Provision shall be made for the further education of all prisoners capable of profiting thereby, including religious instruction in the countries where this is possible. The education of illiterates and young prisoners shall be compulsory and special attention shall be paid to it by the administration.

Bagdro described the situation at Drapchi: “On Sundays, our one day off from work, we had to study Chinese policies. We were taught about Deng Xiaoping and had to write his political

statements in our books and learn about his life and that of other high officials. We were told that Tibet would never be free and that the Chinese government is good. They said that Tibetans and Chinese were members of one family and that we would never get our independence. Sometimes high Chinese officials came and gave us instructions... Then they told us that Tibet would only be free in our daydreams.”

Dawa Kyizom said: “We didn’t receive any kind of education. Sometimes there were meetings and we were made to read the White Paper. There was an article saying that His Holiness the Dalai Lama was a bad man and we were forced to discuss this and sometimes have to write opinions confirming it. If we didn’t do so we were beaten and they even said that they would increase our sentences.

We were given pens and paper when there was a meeting but they collected them afterwards. We were not allowed anything ourselves. Sometimes we managed to get hold of pens and paper but we had to hide them. We were given a Chinese paper to read.”

Lobsang Shakya reported that at Karkhang Prison outside Shigatse: “The only book that I was allowed was one that I was given by the officials which was full of propaganda against the 11th Panchen Lama chosen by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. They told me that I must read the book as I didn’t understand anything about the issue and then said that if I couldn’t understand the book I must be foolish. I had to stay in the cell all day and all night. All I could do was pray for the real Panchen Lama.”

Yeshe Damdul recalled his experiences at Drapchi: “Criminal prisoners had to do much the same type of work as the political prisoners. The only real difference was the meetings that we had to attend. According to the prison authorities the political prisoners had to reform mentally and through labour and the criminals didn’t have to reform mentally, but only through labour. So the criminals generally didn’t have education sessions.

After work we were sent to a kind of educational class and given some newspapers to read and had to listen to speakers... Before the meeting we were given different magazines and newspapers which were all pro-Chinese or sometimes the officials read out something that was supposed to educate us. The guards also gave us a blank piece of paper and a pen. Then, after the meeting, we were forced to write our own opinions about what we had read or what had been discussed at the meeting. It was very rare for someone to write something contrary to the meeting or anti-Chinese... if anyone did he would definitely be beaten after the meeting.

There were different types of meetings - sometimes a large meeting was held and all the prisoners were called together, even the criminals. Our daily meeting was in our cell where there were 12 prisoners. One PSB official went to each cell and gave a written paper to the cell group leader that he then had to read out. Then the rest of the prisoners were given blank paper that we had to write our opinions on. These meetings lasted one hour every day except Sunday.”

Leusang recalled that in Trisam: “During winter the officials brought in a teacher from outside to teach us about communism and the Chinese rules and revolution. Nothing was taught about Tibet. We were not even allowed to say the word ‘Tibet’. The education sessions lasted for about two months and then we had to do intensive physical training. For

one month we had to do a lot of exercise and go for long runs. We hated it. It was even tougher than the work we had to do.”

Gyaltzen Pelsang said: “We never received any kind of education. If the guards saw any pens in our hands they snatched them off us. The only thing we were allowed to read were newspapers that we were given. These papers said that Tibet was not free and that the Chinese were good and honest - things like this. The main purpose of giving us the papers was to try and change the way that we thought.”

Two accounts of the political “re-education” conducted throughout the Cultural Revolution follow.

Thupten Tsering stated: “During the Cultural Revolution, after we had finished our work, we had to study a book written by Mao Tse Dong. Prisoners who were not showing satisfactory signs of improvement in their ways of thinking were subjected to thamzing. We were made to oppose the 10th Panchen Lama and to make derogatory remarks about him. People who were not participating fully were called names and sometimes made to undergo thamzing themselves. We were told that the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama were both traitors. When we were subjected to thamzings, our arms and legs were manacled and we were kicked and beaten. This happened if we were accused of not thinking in the right way and not supporting China.”

Palden Gyatso recalled: “After work we were made to do political study, for example, to memorise all the other communist countries. I still know them by heart. If I didn’t know them all the guards would say to me ‘Ah, you are not reformed. You still think about going to India to His Holiness. You are still affiliated to them.’ Political education continued until I was released in 1992. We were given the Tibet Daily to read. Page four was the international page which some of us always turned to in hope of seeing changes. But some spies in the prison reported us to the guards if we only read that page. I was singled out for punishment by thamzing for only reading this page and not the others (which were full of Chinese propaganda about the good that China had done since ‘liberating’ Tibet)... The guards announced to everyone that I refused to be reformed because I still had empty hopes, and then I was beaten. This continued for months - at least once a week I was made to stand bowed over in front of everyone for hours.”

[\(Contents\)](#)

A MALE POLITICAL PRISONER'S DAILY SCHEDULE AT DRAPCHI PRISON

The following schedules were compiled on the basis of information received from former Drapchi inmates who have recently arrived in India. The schedule has changed since 1993 so that male political prisoners are no longer required to do forced labour, but instead must undergo lengthy forced “exercise” and political “education” sessions. Female political prisoners and criminal prisoners are still required to do forced labour. Former political prisoners have stated that the work in the vegetable fields that was being performed by male political prisoners is now being performed by new Chinese migrants to the “TAR”.

Daily Schedule in 1993

7 a.m.	Cell door opens (the time that the cell door opens depends on the individual prison guards, sometimes it is opened as early as 6a.m. and sometimes as late as 9 a.m.).
7 - 7:30 a.m.	Exercise.
7:30 a.m.	Wash faces (only cold water available).
8 a.m.	Breakfast.
8:30 a.m.	Tidy cells, make beds, cell inspection.
9 a.m.	Ready for work. Roll call.
9 a.m. – 1 p.m.	Forced labour.
1 – 2:30 p.m.	Lunch break.
2:30 – 6 p.m.	Forced labour.
6:30 p.m.	Dinner.
8 p.m.	Return to cell.
8 p.m. – 7 a.m.	Remain in cell.

Daily Schedule in 1997

7 a.m.	Cell doors open.
7 – 7:30a.m.	Exercise.
7:30 a.m.	Wash faces (only cold water available).
8 a.m.	Breakfast.
8:30 a.m.	Tidy cells, make beds, cell inspection.
9 a.m.-11 a.m.	Roll call. Forced exercise sessions.
11 – 11:15 a.m.	Short break.
11:15 a.m. – 1 p.m.	Forced exercise sessions continue.
1 – 2:30 p.m.	Lunch.
2:30 – 4 p.m.	Roll call. Political education: study newspapers or other material and then discuss them.
4 – 4:15 p.m.	Short break.
4:15 – 6 p.m.	Political education session continues.
6:30 p.m.	Dinner.
7 p.m.	Wash dinner dishes.
8 p.m.	Return to cell. Door is locked until next morning.

[\(Contents\)](#)

INTERROGATIONS, TORTURE AND BEATINGS

General

Almost all prisoners stated that immediately upon being arrested they were severely beaten. Most prisoners continued to be beaten until they either confessed or were sentenced. This is standard procedure in the PRC in accordance with its well-known policy “lenience for those who confess, severity for those who resist” (tanbai congkuan, kangju songyan).

The personal accounts of beatings and torture of the interviewees are horrific. Ex-prisoners recounted that they were hung from the ceiling with their hands tied behind their backs; struck with electric cattle prods and sometimes shocked in their mouth, ears, vagina and anus; beaten systematically with wooden planks and clubs; had dogs set on them; were forced to stand naked, sometimes while beaten; had fires lit beneath them and were then left alone with their eyes burning from the smoke; were electrocuted until they lost consciousness; were forced to stand on iced ground until the skin of their feet was stuck to it...the list continues. The treatment of prisoners during their “interrogation” period is not only often extremely violent but is also calculated to degrade and humiliate the prisoners, for example, many former prisoners recalled being stripped naked in front of others. Several prisoners stated that they were often beaten so badly that they lost control of their bladders.

Some prisoners have even been beaten so badly in prison that they died from their injuries. TCHRD has records of 67 deaths as a result of torture since 1987 to date. There have been several incidents of deaths in Drapchi Prison in 1998. Ngawang Dekyi, a 25-year old nun who was arrested in 1995 and then held at Drapchi, died on January 21, 1998, apparently from injuries related to beatings she received in prison. In May 1998, following two demonstrations at Drapchi Prison, 11 prisoners are reported to have died. Of these, two are reported to have been shot and subsequently died, three are said to have died following severe beatings, three appear to have died from suffocation, one from hanging and the cause of death of the other two is not known.

Women prisoners are beaten and tortured just as the men and in some cases they face sexual abuse or rape with sticks or electric batons. Women prisoners have also been subjected to particularly degrading treatment such as being stripped naked during interrogation sessions.

Together with the violence of the beatings, prisoners were sometimes forced to undergo psychological trauma. For instance, prison officials threatened prisoners that their families would also be arrested or suffer recriminations as a result of the prisoners’ “stubbornness” or failure to confess. The questioning was often done in a “good guy/bad guy” style with one official treating the prisoner relatively politely and then, if that was not successful, another officer was brought in and the prisoner was beaten. The length of the interrogation sessions varied greatly between prisoners. Some ex-prisoners were questioned for two hours a day and others almost continuously for over a month.

The questions themselves appear to be mostly directed at eliciting a confession and establishing who was behind the incident leading to arrest. Many prisoners were questioned at length as to whether they had any contact with the “Dalai Lama splittist clique” or with foreigners. They were put under enormous mental and physical pressure to denounce the Dalai Lama and to name the people who had assisted them in their protest or other activities leading to their arrests.

Generally, the prisoners were arrested by officers of the PSB and then taken to a detention centre where the interrogations were conducted by PAP officials. Women were generally interrogated by women officials but not consistently. In the last few years as “trials” seem to have become more commonplace, once a confession has been obtained prisoners are visited at the detention centre first by procurators and then by officials from the court. It appears to be reasonably common for prisoners to be beaten whilst being interrogated by procurators and a less frequent occurrence when they are being interrogated by court officials, although it still happens.

It is clear that the torture techniques employed in Chinese prisons change from time to time but there does not appear to be any move away from beatings and torture as an accepted part of the interrogation. In *Cutting Off the Serpent's Head*, TIN discussed the trend in 1994 and 1995 towards new torture methods that are designed to leave no visible traces, stating "...there is an increase in use of such methods as exposure to extremes of temperature, making people stand in cold water, or making them sit in awkward positions for long periods." No matter what form it takes, torture is clearly a serious violation of a person's human rights and, as such, is strictly condemned by international law. In particular, article 5 of the UDHR, states that "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment." Rule 31 of the UN's Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners provides that corporal punishment, punishment by placing in a dark cell, and all cruel, inhuman or degrading punishment shall be completely prohibited as punishments for disciplinary offences.

The Convention Against Torture was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 10, 1984 and was ratified by the PRC in October 1988. Article One of the Convention Against Torture defines torture as:

[A]ny act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person arising in an official capacity. It does not include pain or suffering arising only from, inherent to or incidental to lawful sanctions.

The Convention Against Torture specifies that State Parties will outlaw torture in their national legislation and also explicitly states that no order from a superior or exceptional circumstance may be invoked as a justification of torture. The parties to the Convention Against Torture pledge to take effective legislative, administrative, judicial or other measures to prevent acts of torture in any territory under their jurisdiction.

The treatment of those imprisoned in Tibet is in gross violation of Articles 7 and 10 of the ICCPR that provides:

Article 7. No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment...

Article 10. 1. All persons deprived of their liberty shall be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person.

This covenant has not been signed by the PRC, although it pledged to do so in March 1998. When discussing signing the covenant, Qian, a representative of the PRC, stated that China was committed to the covenant but needed more time to research its implications before it could be fully implemented. "After the signing, of course we will comply with the covenants, but there are a few issues we will have to look into," Qian said. "We will have to research whether there are areas that clash with Chinese laws or are unclear," he said.

The PRC's Criminal Law and Criminal Procedure Law include several provisions against torture. Article 32 of the Criminal Procedure Law prohibits the use of torture to coerce statements and the gathering of evidence by threats, enticement, deceit or other unlawful

methods. The Criminal Law provides punishments for those who commit torture or treat prisoners badly. Article 14 of the Prison Law of the PRC provides that the people's police of a prison must not "use torture to extort confessions or submit prisoners to corporal punishment or mistreatment" and must not "beat or allow others to beat prisoners." While such laws provide that torture is illegal, the reality is that it frequently occurs and there is no one in the prisons to whom the prisoners can complain of ill-treatment.

It is clear from the proliferation of UN resolutions against torture that abhorrence of torture transcends national boundaries and cultural differences and that the right to be treated humanely is truly a human right. This makes it all the more distressing that such frequent and violent acts of torture are an integral part of the Chinese interrogation system for political prisoners in Tibet. Torture has historically been a large problem within the Chinese penitentiary system. Even the China Legal News reported on May 31, 1985, when considering the extent of torture by police officers, that "This problem is extremely serious in certain area and units...giving the masses the impression that if one enters the Public Security Bureau one will inevitably be beaten." It is clear from the accounts below that torture is still a commonplace interrogation technique in Chinese detention centres and prisons.

In 1997 ICJ conducted interviews with former policemen, judges and detainees in Tibet and confirmed that torture is widespread in Tibet and that torture of political detainees is general practice. Amdo Sangye, a former judge of the Qinghai (Tibetan Province Of Amdo) High Court in Xining, told the ICJ that "not a single case came to the court in which the defendant is not beaten by the police, and when the defendant is a Tibetan political prisoner, the beating is much worse." The judge added that it was policy to ask defendants if they had been mistreated, but that nothing could be done if they had been.

Despite all evidence to the contrary, representatives of the PRC continue to deny that torture takes place in China. In 1992, the PRC reported to the UN Committee Against Torture that it had adopted effective legislative, judicial, administrative and other measures to "rigorously forbid all acts of torture and guarantee that the rights of citizens are not violated." The PRC asserted that "[a]s a matter of principle and discipline for China's public security and judicial organs in handling cases, it is strictly prohibited to extort confessions by torture."

Specifically regarding the question of torture in Tibet, a spokesman for China reported to the UN Committee Against Torture in May 1996 that, "In Tibet people enjoyed the same rights and safeguards as elsewhere in China. The contention that there was widespread torture in Tibet mainly came from a separatist group in Tibet and from NGOs that were biased against China."

In May 1998 the EU delegation were told by a PRC Justice Bureau representative that:

If a prison officer offended against the prison law by insulting or beating a prisoner, he would be dealt with in accordance with the law. In Drapchi Prison the governor assured the delegation that he was satisfied with the way the Prison Law was enforced. He could assure the delegation that there had been no deaths in the prison from improper causes. There had been no cases of misbehaviour by prison warders. In addition the work of the Prison was closely supervised. The local Procuratorate had installed a complaints box for prisoners to make complaints if they wished, and the Legal Committee of the Regional People's Congress had conducted a number of thorough investigations in the Prison concerning the proper enforcement of the Prison Law.

In direct contrast to such claims, the following accounts are testimony to a wide variety of torture methods that are regularly used both to elicit confessions and as punishment.

Gyaltzen Choetso recalled each of her periods of detention at Gutsa Detention Centre following arrests in 1987, 1988 and 1990: “When I was first taken to Gutsa, they stripped me naked and used electric cattle prods and beat me all over my body... There were around 60 or 70 prison guards who all used to torture us and beat us with iron rods and wooden sticks. They used any instrument they could lay their hands on to beat us. After the first day I was not striped naked but only asked questions and beaten. Whenever there were any interrogations my face was slapped and punched and sometimes I was kicked. It all depended on the prison guards whether we were beaten or not - some kind prison guards didn't beat us at all, they just asked us questions; others beat us while they questioned us. Some cruel interrogators made us stand on ground that had iced over and then they threw cold water over us and especially our feet. It was winter at the time and freezing - I really suffered a lot from this. We were left standing there for 15 minutes. Our feet stuck to the ice afterwards and we had to struggle to lift them off - we had to do it very very slowly and it was very painful.

The second time that I was arrested, we were first taken to Kunyin, a police hospital... When they were ready to take us away from the hospital we were handcuffed and they threw us from the ground into the truck as if we were bags... When I arrived in Gutsa we were tortured immediately - they took us outside in an open ground where they spread gravel over the ground and then made us kneel on it with our hands tied behind us. They then told us that we had to stand up quickly but we could not get up. It was very hard for us to kneel so we fell on the ground and then they punished us. There were around 100 police who beat us with anything that they could get their hands on. All of us were bleeding from some part of our head or another part of our body and we were all in a lot of pain...there was no one who escaped the brutal treatment.

Out of 13 nuns I was the only one who had previously been involved in another demonstration. For this reason I was picked out from the other nuns by four police officers and was taken somewhere else where I was accused of instigating the protest and being responsible for the demonstration. Then I was beaten again - they tied my hands behind my back and nearly dislocated my shoulder - one of them put his knee on my back and pushed hard against it while the others pulled back on my arms. Then they told me to get up but I couldn't so they stamped on my back with their boots. They also stamped on my head. One of the other nuns, Gyantsen Zedung, saw what was happening to me and called out to the guards that ‘We decided to protest on our own. She didn't lead us so you mustn't torture her like that.’ Then the police guards took Gyantsen Zedung away from the other nuns and beat her in the same way that they had beaten me. Gyantsen Zedung was quite fat and they tied her very tightly with ropes, so tightly that some of the flesh on her hands fell off due to the pressure of the rope - it is still scarred now...

Then each nun was taken by three policemen into separate cells for questioning. There was only one woman prison guard, all the others were men. After being taken to separate cells we were asked questions and beaten badly... At that time I was wearing thick clothes as I knew that I would be arrested after protesting - the officials pulled the cloth up over my head and beat me severely with sticks.

We never answered truthfully so they brought some dogs into the prison in order to threaten us. All of us nuns were lying on the ground and the guards set a large dog on us but because

we were lying down it could not really hurt us - it would sometimes bite our clothes and pull them but we were not hurt. Then the guards asked us to get up and run. Almost all of us could not even get up as our hands were tied behind our back and it was after we had been beaten. Then one of us, Ngawang Choedon, got up and started to run as fast as she could so the dog ran after her and attacked her and bit her on the left shoulder. She was badly hurt. While the dog was biting her, the prison guards were watching and laughing.

On the first day they started to beat us around 9:30 in the morning and continued beating us until about 5:30 p.m. and then we were taken to separate cells. On this day we were not given any water or food. Some of the nuns were so desperate for water that they cried out for it so the prison guards brought some water but they did not give it to us but threw it on us instead...For the first seven days we were not provided with any water at all. When we were pleading for water they would say to us that they would not give us water as we would not tell them what they wanted to know. The only way that we could get water was through some of the criminals who could sometimes bring us water if the guards were not around.

The third time that I was arrested ...was together with seven other nuns...and we were taken to Gutsa Prison. Out of the eight nuns, five of us had been arrested before. We were beaten and tortured as I had experienced previously but there was one special new torture method. They had electric equipment that was linked to an electric wire that they wound round my finger. Then there was a handle that they pulled down and my whole body was shocked by the electricity. I could see everything in a red colour and my nerves felt like they were being pulled from the bottom of my feet upwards and then I fell to the ground unconscious. We all suffered like this at the same time. We were all handcuffed - my left hand was linked to one nun on my left and another on my right so that when one of us was shocked we all felt it. It was the worst of the torture that I underwent in prison because there is no mark that it leaves but in fact we suffered much more than if we were beaten with wooden sticks, electric cattle prods or iron rods. It was horrific. We were kept like this for more than one hour and thirty minutes. When it happened all I could see was a red glow - I could not even see the prison guards. Then we all blacked out and when we regained consciousness they gave us electric shocks again.”

Dorjee Namgyal recalled his experience at Gutsa in 1989: “For three months I was interrogated at Gutsa. I was taken to the interrogation cell two or three times each week and questioned and severely beaten - sometimes for one hour and sometimes for half a day. They asked the same questions throughout, questions such as ‘Why did you participate in the demonstrations? What made you take part in such counter-revolutionary activity? Who else was involved? - give us names.’ When they questioned me they also beat and tortured me. They knew that I was involved in the demonstration because I had been shot in the leg during it...

My hands were manacled to the window bars, I was stripped naked and then electrocuted. The electric cattle prods were used on every part of my body - they were inserted inside me or beaten against me. My right ear was also vigorously beaten with a piece of wood. Even one year after I had left the prison I had a lot of pus in my ear and I constantly had earaches. After the beatings my body was black and blue and there was blood on my head which was also swollen.”

Bagdro was arrested in 1988 and taken to Gutsa Detention Centre. He stated: “I was arrested in the morning and the police beat me in the head with their rifle butts...Then they put self-

tightening handcuffs on me. It was very painful. Even if I moved a little bit it hurt me a lot. There were about three police who arrested me. Then they took me to Gaden Monastery where there were many police. Around 25 police beat me very badly all over my body, even my head. They were beating me with steel rods, bits of wood and electric cattle prods. They also kicked me all over. My whole face was bleeding...

Then they brought me to Gutsa Prison. On arrival Penpa Teshi and I were hung from a tree in the courtyard while the PSB officers went to get some papers. We were left there for about ten minutes. Then some women police walked by and spat on us. They said to us, 'You are just dogs.' We were then put in cells. Around the prison there were posters with red writing saying (in Tibetan and Chinese): 'If you admit to your mistakes you will be released. Otherwise you will remain here. If you do not tell the truth we will beat you mercilessly. We will continue to beat you and keep you in prison.' Our bodies were searched. There was a fence around the courtyard and prisoners were hanging there, being beaten by the guards. My back was in agony from the beatings I had already received. All the prisoners I could see were political prisoners. The guards told me that the next day I would have to stay with the prisoners who were hanging above the ground. Their hands were handcuffed and tied to the fence around the courtyard. Their feet could not touch the ground. Men were crying and saying that they wanted to die. I was very sad as it was clear to me that the Chinese did not even consider us to be human beings. They taunted me and said, 'This is the freedom that you wanted.'

Then I was left to stand with Penpa Teshi. My handcuffs were taken off but my wrists were bleeding from where the cuffs had cut my skin. I had to stand outside for the whole night. Around 1 a.m. I really wanted to go to sleep but instead the Chinese guard beat me and would not let me sleep... The next morning... four guards took me to their office and asked me many questions.

Then they were very angry with me. On the table there were many torture instruments in front of me. After I said these things they handcuffed me again and then I was beaten and kicked. They put electric cattle prods in my mouth and against my back. I was bleeding from my mouth and nose and had a lot of pain in my stomach. They also put it in my ear and then it also started bleeding. Then I lost consciousness and they threw water on me until I regained consciousness. Then they asked me many more questions until finally they brought me back and hung me from the fence in the courtyard as they had earlier.

Within one day I was interrogated two or three times by different officials. I told them that I had no information to give them about other people who were involved in the demonstrations. I told them that I wanted freedom. They made me stand and put my hands above my head while they beat my back. I was bleeding from my mouth. After a few days they made me lie face down on the table and they put their feet on my back and tried to pull my wrists back to try and break them.

On about the fourth or fifth day I was made to take my shoes off and then to stand on ice. It was freezing and I was left there for 35 minutes. Then they grabbed my arms and pushed me but I could not move. The skin of my feet was stuck to the ground and it peeled off my feet when they pushed me. I could not walk and had to be carried back to my room by other prisoners. I could not stand because of the immense pain and injury I had suffered. For me this was the worst thing that I experienced in prison.

On the sixth and seventh day they stripped all my clothes off me and hung me above the ground then poured freezing cold water over me. The weather at this time was very cold and I was freezing. It was very hard for me to bear both the humiliation of being hung naked and the intense cold. Sometimes I was kept like this for more than one hour. Everybody was looking at me and could see my whole body.

Then I was brought back to the cell and asked the same questions that I had already been asked. The questions were repeated continuously. Then they tied an electric wire around my finger. Some high officials came and questioned me and then they gave me shocks with the electric equipment. I lost control of my bladder.

The severe beatings and torture lasted for four months. It was very tough. On my last day in Gutsa Prison a woman guard came up to me... She was wearing gloves that had steel over the knuckles. There were four officers and three of them held me while she hit me in the face with her gloves and beat me mercilessly. I was cut and my face was bleeding all over. She was smoking and then she put her cigarette butt all over my body. She beat me all over my body and used kung fu on me. It drove me crazy.

I had so many beatings that I really started to lose my mind. Sometimes when they were beating me I would fall over and black out. Even when my parents visited me, I could not recognise them.”

Ngawang Choezom was taken to Gutsa in 1989. She stated: “I was beaten when I was first arrested. When I was arrested they tied my hands behind my back and beat me with electric cattle prods and punched me in the face and kicked me in the back and on my side. They also hit me roughly with the butt of their pistols. When I was being interrogated I was generally kept for around 20 minutes during which I was beaten and questioned.”

Lobsang Shakya was held at Karkhang Military Camp outside Shigatse in 1995. He said: “The first day that I was arrested I was not beaten but on the second day some high ranking police officials came from Shigatse to interrogate me. At first they just questioned me but then they tied some cloth and rope around my legs and hung me upside down from the ceiling. Each day for six days I was treated in the same way - they would leave me hanging upside down for about two hours each time. They arrived around 10 a.m. and would keep me like that until lunchtime. While I was hanging they would punch me in the face and sometimes blood ran out of my mouth. They often kned me in the stomach.

After the first week they questioned me every five days or so. During the interviews they said that I must accept the Panchen Lama put forward by the Chinese and give up my allegiance to the Panchen Lama appointed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. During these interrogation sessions I would sometimes be kicked by the prison guards - they would jump up and kick me in the stomach with the full force of their boots. I was also threatened with a lot of torture instruments which they showed me but did not use on me.”

Damchoe Palmo recalled how she miscarried after being interrogated in 1993: “They took me back to the Lhasa head police station around 6 or 6:30 p.m. I was then kept standing on the cement floor from 6:30 p.m. until 9 the next morning. They would not even let me move an inch. I was four months pregnant at the time...they knew that I was pregnant as I told them as soon as they arrested me. They kept threatening me throughout that I would be suspended in mid-air unless I gave them more information and showed them where the printing materials

were. They brought in the ropes to show me and they threatened to tie me up. There were four men sitting down beside me and interrogating me all night but they were taking shifts so that they could rest.

In the middle of the night they took me away in two cars, each of which had six men. I was driven in a large black car with dark windows and was taken to... a house where they questioned me. One of them was writing down everything that I said. They kept changing the people who were questioning me and they were all slapping me and pulling my hair and bashing my face against the wall. I was afraid that I would be executed as it was very frightening. I told them that I didn't have anything to say but they kept questioning me for about half an hour and grabbed me by the hair and threw me back in the car.

About 9 a.m. a woman came in and asked me who else had been involved in the printing and then she told me that I could finally sit down. But my legs had become so stiff from standing still all night long that I couldn't even bend my knees... I was like a stick that couldn't bend. It was very cold at night and I had no warm clothes as I was arrested when I was at the marketplace. I was hungry as I hadn't had any food since they arrested me, even though I was pregnant. I was totally exhausted. The woman just shoved me into the chair and my body collapsed where she had pushed me. Then she gave me a glass of hot water to drink.

They continued to question me and then they took me to the county security department and then to Seitru Prison... I was feeling very unwell as I had been left standing all night and had not had enough to eat. I told them that I was feeling unwell and faint and they just said to me that I had been fine when I decided to break the law and that I should have thought of it earlier. I was very sick for the next four days - I was vomiting water and was very dehydrated. They told me that I was lying and wasn't even pregnant but I insisted and finally was taken to a hospital outside the prison complex where they confirmed that I was pregnant and very weak and in desperate need of good food, rest and that I needed to rehydrate myself. So, the doctor recommended that I should stay in the hospital... the officials from Seitru said that my case was still unclear with many ambiguities and they needed to interrogate me further. So they took me back to prison.

For ten days I couldn't eat anything... I could only drink water. My health was deteriorating and I kept saying that I needed to see a doctor but nobody would take me to him. Then on the tenth day, in the evening, I was going to the toilet when I suddenly blacked out and when I came to I realised that I was miscarrying my baby. I was in awful pain so I was crying out and writhing on the ground. My uncle was in the cell next to me and he heard me calling out in pain and called the guards. They came and found me lying on the ground. I lost so much blood that I couldn't even stand.

They brought prison doctors and they confirmed that I had lost my baby. They also called the place where I was first taken and the person that had first interrogated me was called in. No one wanted to take any responsibility. I was taken to the prison hospital but they said that I was so sick that they could not take any responsibility for me. Four men carried me and then I was driven to the hospital where they gave me glucose and oxygen. I remained in the hospital for seven days. When I had first been brought to the hospital I felt almost like I was dead... I couldn't even move an inch. When I was in the hospital after only two days when I was still very weak and could barely move, almost unconscious... the three women guards started asking me questions. Then on the fourth day they were asking me many questions and saying that I had better tell them who else was involved for my own good. It was very threatening.

There were three guards with me all day and night and then there were also some high ranking officials who would come in every hour or so and ask me questions.

Then I was taken back to Seitru after one week... until my sentence was passed, which was one year and four months after I was arrested, I continued to be. The questions were the same, over and over again. After some time the procurator came to question me. The interrogations lasted all day - from 9 in the morning until 1 p.m. and then from 3 p.m. until 6 p.m. The interrogations were always very intense and sometimes they would even go on past the lunch break. They still slapped me and pulled my hair. No one was ever held responsible for my miscarriage. My family intervened in the sense that they spoke to some officials to try and get an investigation performed but when the man came he didn't even ask me anything personal."

Yeshe Damdul was held at Tsethang prison in 1989 before he was sentenced. He recalled: "When I was first taken to Tsethang I was interrogated twice a day for four months and beaten severely several times. Most of the interrogation sessions lasted for two hours, but sometimes it would be three hours. They used every means they could to torture me. Sometimes they tied my hands behind my back or handcuffed me behind my head and they kicked all different parts of my body. I was sometimes forcibly placed on a table and they pushed me down and kicked me and punched me. During the beatings the policemen used electric cattle prods to hit me on different parts of my face and head. It was different each time, sometimes I was still handcuffed after the interrogation session and was sent back to my cell. If they were really angry they would even manacle my legs.

The Chinese used two different methods to interrogate me - there would be a peaceful, polite person who treated me well and didn't put handcuffs on me and then there would be the violent style of interrogation.

I was mainly questioned by the PSB for the first four months and then before the court session it was mainly by the procurators. I was interrogated for two months by the procurators. The style of interrogating was quite similar except that the procurators based their questions on the files that had been prepared by the PSB. They treated me much better and did not beat me. Some of the other political prisoners were beaten by the procurators but I was lucky and was not."

Sonam Dolkar, who was taken to Seitru prison in 1990, said: "For the first three days after I arrived in Seitru I was not asked anything and then the questions started on the fourth day. On the fourth and fifth days I was asked many political questions like 'Who was behind you? What foreigners do you know?' Then they told me that they had the documents I meant to send to His Holiness the Dalai Lama and that they knew everything that I had been doing. They told me that I should confess immediately and give an excuse as otherwise I would suffer a lot.

At first the questions were conducted in quite a friendly manner... Then they showed me some torture instruments - things like handcuffs and electric cattle prods. They then questioned me further... Then they started to torture me with an electric cattle prod and to beat me severely. There were four guards - two of them were Tibetan and two of them were Chinese and they were punching me in the face... They tied my hands behind a chair and then beat me all over my body with the electric cattle prods. They beat me everywhere - on my breasts and my stomach and slowly my whole body lost the ability to feel anymore and just

became numb. I was bleeding from the mouth because of the beatings. One of the Chinese guards finally said ‘That’s enough for now. We’re going to give you three days to think about talking to us. You know we’ll get you in the end - and just think of your husband and daughter.’

I was left alone for two days without further questioning. I was suffering from a sore jaw - my jaw was covered in blood - and my whole body was stiff and sore. After two days they called me into the interrogation room again and asked me whether I had thought about talking to them. I told them that I had nothing to say to them. Then they went to my home and asked my parents who I knew and who my friends were and when I went out and where I went... They returned to the prison and threatened me saying that they would bring my child to the prison.

Then when I still refused to talk to them they beat me again with the electric cattle prods and handcuffed me and punched me... One of the officials became very angry as I still wouldn’t answer their questions. He got up and picked up one of the electric cattle prods and hit me on the neck very forcefully with it. It broke right through my skin and a lot of blood started seeping through. I lost consciousness when he hit me and didn’t regain it until I was in the hospital... I just stayed in my cell for more than a month recovering... I still have a three-inch scar on my neck from where I was hit.

When my wound had improved I was interrogated for another four months. They kicked my thighs a lot. I was handcuffed with self-tightening handcuffs for 22 days - whenever I moved they got tighter and cut my wrists.”

Dawa Kyizom was arrested in 1990 and taken first to the county security department, then to Taktse Military Camp and then to Gutsa. She recalled: “Two police, one Tibetan and one Chinese, came to my home and took me to the an quan chus (the county security department). They questioned me as to which person gave me the flag. At first they were quite polite... The next day Lobsang Gile, the Tibetan officer, threatened me and beat me. He hit me and kicked me and then he tied my hands behind my back and hung me from the ceiling so that my feet could not touch the ground and left me there for 15 minutes...

At Taktse Military Camp I was left handcuffed for four days and my legs were manacled for 12 days. For 28 days all I was given to eat was a small bowl of tsampa and black tea. At this time I was very worried about all the questions I was being asked... Sometimes I was treated politely and at other times I was tortured. Mostly they would slap me on the face with their hands and kick at my ribs with their shoes on...

I was interrogated by five officials - four Tibetans and one Chinese, three of whom were men and two of whom were women... Generally it was the Tibetans who tortured me and the Chinese who treated me politely but I think that the Chinese made the Tibetans beat me so that Tibetans would be against Tibetans... Even though the Chinese treated me politely they were always trying to trick me into telling them what they wanted to know. I was questioned all day long except Sunday - from 9 –12 p.m. and then from 3-5 p.m.

After I was transferred to Gutsa Prison I was interrogated again... After three or four days I was questioned for eight months until I was sentenced.”

Ngawang Choedon was arrested and taken to Gutsa in 1989. She said: “At the central police station I was asked many questions, such as: ‘Why were you calling out ‘Free Tibet’? Who was the leader of the demonstration? Do you have friends who were supporting you? Which nunnery do you belong to?...’

While I was being questioned they hit me with the butt of their pistols on my breasts and the upper part of my body. When I was taken to Gutsa, I was asked the same questions and beaten in the same way. We arrived at Gutsa around 11 a.m. and they continued to beat and interrogate me until around 5 p.m. I was tied with a rope all around my body and then hung from the ceiling by my hands and kicked and beaten... On the day that I was arrested I was questioned until 5 p.m. and then from 5 p.m. until midnight I was made to stand outside. After that I was questioned for one or two hours each day.

Sometimes they inserted an electric cattle prod in my mouth, and hit me with it all over my back and my breasts. After four days I was sentenced and then I was no longer interrogated... When I was first arrested and questioned it was by male officials but after I had been sentenced all the prison guards were female.”

Lhundup Monlam was initially held at Gyaltse Prison when he was arrested in 1990. He said: “While I was interrogated I was made to stand and both my hands and legs were cuffed. I was not beaten at first. I was taken to Gyaltse Prison where I was kept for about six months.

For the first five months I was kept handcuffed and had my legs manacled and I was asked questions relating to the period from 1987 until the present... On my leg manacles there were three gyama - and the lock had another two gyama - in total there were five gyama [one gyama is approximately 500 grams]... After the leg manacles were put on me they took a tape recorder to my home and told my parents to advise me to confess. Then they played the tape to me but I learned that my parents had been forced to talk to them so I did not confess. Then I was leg cuffed for 2 days with 28 gyama. I was told that the leg cuffs they put on me were very old and had been used in 1959.

I was not beaten when I was at Gyaltse or Ngari Prison but I was when I was at Drapchi... When I was at Gyaltse I was interrogated for five months for 16 hours every day except for when it was time to eat... After I confessed I was only questioned every two or three days.”

Use of Hand and Leg Manacles

Article 46 of the Act of the PRC for Reform Through Labour states that instruments of restraint may be used only where there is a possibility of escape, violence or other “dangerous act” by an offender. The reality appears quite different as many prisoners are handcuffed or have their legs shackled on arrival at the detention centre or prison, and later it is also used as a means of punishment. Some prisoners reported that they had weights placed on the cuffs as an additional punishment. Some of the cuffs have metal teeth and a special self-tightening device so that they tighten around the prisoners’ hands, the metal teeth cut into the prisoners’ skin and the flow of blood to their hands is constricted.

Rule 33 of the UN’s Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners provides that:

Instruments of restraint such as handcuffs, chains, irons and straitjackets shall never be applied as a punishment. Furthermore chains or irons shall not be used as restraints.

In November 1992, the Ministry of Public Security in conjunction with the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procurate, published a decree on the administration of prisoners:

(b) During interrogation, trial and sentencing, no prisoner shall be handcuffed, put in leg irons or bound, unless the prisoner is liable to act violently, to escape or to commit suicide, and except where the prisoner is guilty of a capital crime.

A number of the former prisoners recounted that they were kept in handcuffs and sometimes had their legs manacled for extended periods of time.

Lobsang Shakya, who was arrested in November 1995, stated: "I was handcuffed for the first six days that I was kept in prison. The only time that one of them was taken off was when I went to the toilet. Before they put the cuffs on me they tied some cloth around my wrists as the cuffs had metal teeth that bit into the skin. Even with this cloth whenever I moved my hands up or down the metal teeth cut into my skin."

Lhundup Monlam said: "Drapchi was much stricter [than Nyari Prison or Shigatse Prison]...I was leg manacled for five months and on several days during that time I had to carry cuffs of 28 gyama [14 kg.]: there were two cuffs and four locks on my legs. This was a punishment because they said that my way of acting and looking was insolent and not as it should be, especially for someone so young."

Gaden Tashi stated: "My hands and legs were manacled for about a year... Sometimes my leg cuffs had a lock and at other times a chain was just welded around my legs. These chains weighed about 6 gyama (3 kg). When they wanted to open the chain, they used an electric saw."

Punishment

Corporal punishment is a common occurrence in prisons in Tibet. The types of punishment vary but include the widespread use of beatings with many different implements and of handcuffs and leg manacles. Prisoners are also put in solitary confinement for infringing prison rules or rebelling against the prison authorities.

While the most common form of punishment is beating, prisoners are also often forced to do excessive exercise to which they are unaccustomed. For instance, former prisoners reported that they were forced to run quickly and that the guards threw stones at them if they slowed down.

Contrary to the Convention Against Torture, which the PRC has signed, and to the UN's Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, interviewed former prisoners say that they are never able to complain to anyone in authority about the manner in which they are treated.

A number of the former political prisoners believed that they were treated worse than the criminal prisoners. Those who were held at Drapchi also stated that the fifth division (which only holds male political prisoners) had particularly cruel guards who were never punished for their treatment of political prisoners:

Jampel Monlam said: “Everyone was beaten by the prison guards. As soon as we arrived at Drapchi we were all severely beaten. The guards had been there for such a long time that they were used to beating us. They were never reprimanded if they beat prisoners for no reason. The guards treated the political prisoners a lot worse than the criminals. When the prison was divided into divisions, the fifth division was just for political prisoners and the guards for the fifth division were specifically selected so that they would treat us severely. The idea was that we would be ‘taken care of’ properly.

The guards often punished us. The punishment took many forms but included things like being beaten or having our right to read or study restricted. There were many kinds of beatings, for example, sometimes our hands were tied behind our backs and we were beaten or given electric shocks. Often everything was confiscated from our cells. Sometimes they made us stand in front of everyone and they publicly humiliated us. The worst restriction for me was when my cell was searched and, if the guards found any books or reading material, they would confiscate it.”

The former prisoners recalled that they received different types of punishment.

Yeshe Togden recalled: “In 1989 when I was held in Seitru there were five in our cell and there was an adjoining cell which was connected to us by a door between the cells. We managed to break the lock on the door so we could get together and talk. For one week we went freely between the cells. When we were caught we were all beaten severely. I was beaten on the jaw with a police baton and I couldn’t eat for some days. The man who broke the lock was put in solitary confinement for seven days, and was badly beaten every day.”

Leusang recalled: “We used to be beaten while we were doing our exercises. It happened everyday. We had to know the exercise routine and if we didn’t or we did it wrong we were kicked or slapped.”

Ngawang Choezom said: “After I had been sentenced I was beaten as a punishment for praying and singing a song praising His Holiness the Dalai Lama and wishing him a long life. We were threatened with longer sentences and told that we were not allowed to sing such songs. One guard called Wishe punished us by making us stand on the roof of greenhouses and then making us run fast on a football ground.”

Ngawang Choedon recalled: “Generally the prison guards were very cruel to us, they even swore at us and abused us on one pretext or another...When I was first arrested and questioned it was by male officials but after I had been sentenced all the prison guards were female...At Gutsa, whenever I tried to write to my family and the guards caught me they beat me and questioned me about what I wanted to write. They also questioned me about where I got the pens and paper from.”

Bagdro said: “There were many types of punishment. Sometimes we had to take our shoes off and then we were made to run on gravel, sometimes we had our arms tied behind us and we were made to stand while we were beaten. We were beaten with electric cattle prods and wooden planks. Sometimes we were made to carry stones on our back and then to run fast. If we couldn’t run fast they kicked us.”

Gyaltzen Pelsang, who was imprisoned in Gutsa Detention Centre at age 13, said: “If we did not listen to them they were always ready to beat us. I was sometimes lightly beaten but not

seriously. For punishment they made us stand against the wall and then they beat us with the electric cattle prods. The main reasons were that we were political prisoners or if we hadn't been good or they didn't think we were thinking the right kind of thoughts or they didn't like our us."

[\(Contents\)](#)

MEDICAL TREATMENT

Former prisoners consistently complained that they were unable to get adequate or appropriate medical care. An alarming number of the interviewees had been released on medical parole into hospital care as the prison clinics were unable to provide them with sufficient care. The prisons appear to all have clinics, staffed by either doctors or nurses, but frequently the clinic staff seemed to simply dispense medicine rather than perform check-ups. Concerningly, the medicine that was handed out was often outdated and inappropriate for the symptoms complained of. Many former prisoners reported that the clinics only had one or two types of medicine and that no matter what symptoms they complained of they were given either painkillers or sleeping pills. Many of the interviewees believed that they received a lower standard of medical care because they were political prisoners.

The limited level of medical care available at the prisons was apparent from the way prisoners were treated if they developed a serious illness or complications. If they were lucky enough to receive treatment, and unfortunately some died from inadequate or belated treatment, the prisoners were taken to one of Lhasa's hospitals where they were kept until they showed signs of recovering. One example of a prisoners' death whilst in custody is that of Lhakpa Tsering, who died in December 1990, probably from inadequate medical care after beatings that caused internal injuries. His death led to a protest that all the political prisoners at Drapchi Prison participated in. Several interviewees also reported the death of Tsamla, a Lhasa businesswoman in her thirties, who died on August 25, 1991, some months after her early release from a three-year sentence. The exact cause of her death is not known but she sustained damage to her internal organs, probably from repeated and brutal beatings whilst in prison. She had been sent to the hospital for exploratory surgery shortly before her release, which supposedly was for "good behaviour" but more likely was because prison authorities did not want her to die in prison.

A recent case of a political prisoner dying in prison is that of Ngawang Dekyi, a 25-year old nun, who died on January 21, 1998 after being hospitalised for 16 days. Prior to being taken to Lhasa Regional Military Hospital on January 5, 1998, she had been serving a six-year prison sentence at Drapchi Prison. The topden who performed her sky burial reportedly said that: "From the injury marks it looked as though the deceased had received severe beatings and as a result blood had entered the circulatory veins of the brain, turning it red and blue. The red and blue colours on the shoulder blades also indicated severe beatings." While Ngawang Dekyi was admitted to hospital, it was evidently too late to save her life.

Article 54 of the PRC Prison Law stipulates:

A prison shall be equipped with a medical installation as well as facilities for daily healthcare. It shall establish a system for the inmates' living and sanitation facilities.

Similarly, Article 26 of the PRC Detention Centre Regulations provides:

A detention centre shall be equipped with the necessary medical instruments and common pharmaceutical products. An inmate falling ill shall be given timely care; one in need of hospitalisation shall be given prompt treatment by the local hospital; one whose illness is serious may be released on bail pending trial, in accordance with the law.

Prisoners who were hospitalised were generally accompanied to the hospital by prison guards and, in some cases, were even handcuffed to the hospital bed. If the hospitalised prisoners did not show any signs of improvement, their families were generally made to sign a document saying that they would take responsibility for them. Such “responsibility” meant paying for the total cost of their medical care from the date the responsibility letter was signed. A disturbing number of interviewees were hospitalised following beatings. In such cases it is even more abhorrent that prisoners’ families were made to bear the financial burden of their medical care. If hospitalised prisoners did recover, they were returned to the prison from which they had been released on parole.

Prisoners seemed to generally suffer either from injuries resulting from beatings or from illnesses resulting from the unhygienic conditions they were kept in. Ex-prisoners also complained that they had a lot of difficulty digesting the normal prison food when they were ill but that they had nothing else to eat. A number of prisoners reported that when they were ill and hospitalised their families had difficulty recognising them. This is a clear indication of the poor health of many prisoners.

A further disturbing feature of prison life is the extraction of prisoners’ blood. Almost all political prisoners who were interviewed reported that their blood was extracted and that none of them were asked for their consent to the procedure. The amount taken varied from approximately 200 ml. to over one litre. No one was given a satisfactory reason for the blood extraction - prisoners were sometimes told that they were having a check-up but the amount of blood taken and the fact that it was often only taken from Tibetan political prisoners rather than Chinese prisoners makes this questionable. Article 7 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights provides:

...In particular, no one shall be subjected without his free consent to medical or scientific experimentation.

Given that none of the prisoners knew why their blood was extracted, and certainly never heard any results of the “tests” it is possible that it was either taken for experimental purpose or to punish the prisoners. Either possibility is clearly inappropriate and the practice of extracting prisoners’ blood should be stopped immediately.

Rule 22 of the UN’s Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners provides:

22. (2) Sick prisoners who require specialist treatment shall be transferred to specialised institutions or to civil hospitals. Where hospital facilities are provided in an institution, their equipment, furnishings and pharmaceutical supplies shall be proper for the medical care and treatment of sick prisoners, and there shall be a staff of suitable trained officers.

Former prisoners routinely reported that they were not examined or checked in any manner when they complained of illness or injury. If the prison staff believed their complaints, they were simply given sleeping pills or painkillers, a far cry from the standards contemplated in the Rules. Rather than receiving appropriate medicine, the prisoners were often given drugs that were many years past their “use by” date.

A large number of the interviewees still suffer medical problems arising from injuries and illnesses that they sustained in prison.

Sonam Dolkar recalled her treatment following a beating during interrogation and the events that later lead to her being hospitalised: “One of the officials...picked up one of the electric cattle prods and hit me on the neck very forcefully with it. It broke right through my skin and a lot of blood started seeping through. I lost consciousness when he hit me and didn’t regain it until I was in the hospital. In the meantime the guards took my shirt off and a Tibetan woman doctor took me to the prison hospital where I was given three stitches. The doctor told them that they couldn’t continue with the interrogation. I was taken to my room. I had lost a lot of blood and was feeling very weak. After I had been given the stitches, the doctor gave me some painkillers and some sleeping pills. In the evening the guard gave me some more painkillers. The next morning I lost all control over my neck muscles. I stayed in my cell for more than a month recovering. My bandage was hardly ever changed so my wound took a long time to recover - they only changed it every eight to ten days. There was always a lot of blood on the bandage and all my clothes were stained with it. I still have a three-inch scar on my neck from where I was hit...

One day I refused to take the food so the cook got very angry and attacked me. I fell down and he kicked me repeatedly in the stomach. For four months my condition got worse and worse until I was vomiting coagulated blood and was taken to hospital. Initially I was taken to the prison hospital although they only accepted me there for one day as they said that I was too ill. I was taken back to prison and then to the Tibetan hospital (Mentseekhang) where I remained for two months. I was suffering from severe problems related to my spine. I couldn’t go to the toilet properly and I was vomiting blood.

Two prison guards went with me. They stayed for 12 days. On the 12th day my parents came to the hospital to meet me. My parents were told that they would be responsible for me from that time on and that the guards would keep in touch with the hospital to decide what would happen in the future. My parents had to pay for all my medical care from that day. When my parents came to visit me my mother was crying and very sad - she said that I was so thin I didn’t even look like a human being anymore and that I was going to die.”

Lhundup Monlam stated: “Once I was taken to hospital in Lhasa but even there I did not get proper treatment. I went with the prison doctor and stayed for an hour for tests and then returned. There was a clinic at Drapchi but I did not go there as they only gave outdated medicine...There was only one medicine that we were given whether we had a cold or a headache. The political prisoners could not get proper medicines.”

Damchoe Palmo stated: “When I was in Gutsa about 250 ml. of my blood was extracted. There were four of us and we were taken to have a check-up as we were suffering from some kind of brain problems, one of the others was Tsamla, who later died. We felt so weak after they had taken our blood that we had very little control over our bodies. We didn’t know what they did with the blood but some people said that it was used for the army.”

Lukar Jam, who was released on medical parole in April 1995, recalled: “I became very ill, mostly because of the insufficient food and unhygienic conditions but also because of the congested conditions in the cell – especially in winter when we burnt coal to keep warm and there was lots of carbon monoxide in the cell. My sickness may also have been partly due to the beatings that I had received. When I became sick, I asked the prison authorities to treat

me but they just ignored me. It was only five or six months later when I was almost dying that I was taken to hospital. At first the guards took me to Hai-shi People's Hospital. I was taken there every day for two months and then every night I was taken back to Terlengkha Detention Centre. After two months I was no better and was about to die. It took a long time and was very difficult to get released on medical parole. Finally I was released for medical treatment and then my family had to take responsibility for me. That meant that they had to pay for all my medical bills from that time on.

My parents took me to Siling (Ch.: Xining) Military Hospital for tests and I was in Chabcha People's Hospital for a long time – when I was first taken there I only weighed 30 kg. My medical bills came to about 80,000 yuan [about US\$10,000]. All my relatives and friends gave money to help pay the bills.”

Release Order of PSB Detention Centre for Lukar Jam

Translation

Reference No. 090 of the Terlengkha Public Security Bureau.

Convict Lukar Jam, male, native of Shing-Hai County, Qinghai Province. He was arrested on September 3rd 1993 and has been released on bail due to medical reasons after thorough examination.

By Public Security Bureau Detention Centre, Terlernghka town on this day of April 28th, 1995.

Dorjee Namgyal recollected: “When I was transferred to Drapchi I was very sick and weak from the interrogations I had had in Gutsa. I was only kept there for one month before I really fell very ill. At the end of the month I was taken to the prison hospital for three days as I was too sick to even eat. Because I was so sick I could not be taken care of at the prison hospital and so I was taken to the People's Hospital. I was escorted by three guards. The PAP man guarded me constantly and the two prison guards watched me in shifts. My hands were in handcuffs and I was chained to the bed. After 15 days when I showed no signs of recovery, my parents and relatives were called and the doctor gave them a letter saying that he did not think that I would recover. My parents had to sign a letter saying that they would take me home and be responsible for me and that if I did recover they would take me back to the prison. I think they were scared that if I died the prison would be held responsible.

The prison paid for my hospital fees until my parents signed the letter assuming responsibility for me and then my family had to find the further money required. I stayed in the hospital for another 15 days and then my parents decided to take me to a Tibetan hospital. I stayed there for a further three months. I was then a little better, although still not close to full recovery. However, I was well enough to return home on the condition that a doctor provided a letter every month to the prison saying that my health would deteriorate if I was returned to the prison. I was still under strict medication. My illness resulted from the beatings - I was extremely weak and sick. I was not well enough to return to prison until four years after I had first been taken to Drapchi...

After people had been beaten during interrogation they would often have injuries or bruises but these would generally be ignored and no medical treatment would be given. If an injury was particularly bad or seemed to be infectious, the prisoner might be taken to a small clinic.”

Gyaltzen Choetso recalled: “When I was in prison I sometimes had diarrhoea but even though I was given some medicine it was no good as it was the wrong kind. We were given the same medicine whether we had a cold or diarrhoea. I was not given any treatment for my breathing problem or my internal injuries. Whenever we asked for medicine, we were only given one or two pills, nothing more... There was a clinic at Gutsa with no doctor, just nurses.

After I was released I felt very sick and so I received treatment as an outpatient at the local hospital for three months. Then the local hospital said that I should get an x-ray but that they did not have any equipment to do it and so I asked permission from the local council to go to the hospital in Lhasa... The doctor there told me that he could tell from the x-rays that my lungs had been damaged and that I was suffering from internal injuries. Of course, it would have been foolish for the doctor to have said that the injuries were a result of the beatings I received, but I know that it was caused by the torture I underwent in prison... when I was released I could hardly breathe. Now I still have difficulty breathing. When I arrived in Dharamsala I was an inpatient at Delek Hospital for three months. I improved a lot and then had to continue to take medicine for another nine months. I still have some problems relating to my injuries from the beatings.”

Yeshe Damdul said: “I was physically injured, particularly in the stomach and I started to suffer from stomach ulcers. I went to the prison clinic several times but was not satisfied. The medicines that the clinic gave me had all expired. A Tibetan doctor who was one of my cellmates diagnosed me. Besides the ulcer I now have problems with my kidneys and my shoulder. I tried to take Tibetan medicine but it was very difficult to get it. When I went to the clinic I could get medicine but there was no kind of check-up. They just asked what the matter was and then we described the pain we had and they gave us some medicine.

Every year all political prisoners had their blood extracted. From some prisoners they took a litre of blood. They only took a small bottle from me - about the size of a test tube. I'm not sure why they took our blood. After our blood had been extracted we were told that we should drink hot water with sugar and then they said that they were taking our blood so they could check it.”

Ngawang Choedon recalled: “When I was in Gutsa, I had a lot of pain in my kidneys due to the torture and the beatings. I was given sleeping pills and painkillers from the clinic. When I was in Trisam I was taken to the prison clinic for a check-up. For about one week I was taken to the clinic every day by two prison guards and given injections and then I was given painkillers and after about one month I recovered. In 1996 and 1997 I started suffering from the same complaint but I consulted a Tibetan doctor and now I am feeling all right again.

At Gutsa my blood was extracted. There were about 60 Tibetan women prisoners and we all had our blood extracted. There were two Chinese women prisoners who did not have their blood extracted. We were told that we were being taken for a check-up but the only thing they did was extract our blood. They took a bottle of about 200 ml. Two of the nuns fainted. I didn't feel any extraordinary pain...

There was one woman prisoner called Tsamla who was given injections twice. She suffered a lot and had to be taken out of the prison to hospital for medical care. We were told afterwards that Tsamla had been released but in fact she had died.”

Lobsang Shakya stated: "I never asked to go to hospital but my parents arranged it for me. At first I was taken to the public hospital in Shigatse. Two guards came with me and they stayed with me for the month that I was there. Then I was taken to the Tibetan hospital where I stayed for another two months. The guards stayed with me almost the whole time - until about one week before I escaped. I think that my illness was a result of the beatings I was subjected to in conjunction with the poor food I was given. Something was wrong with my internal organs and my intestines - I was told that I had a wound in my belly. My family had to pay for all my health care."

Ngawang Choezom said: "At Gutsa I was told that they were going to check my physical fitness at the prison clinic. When I arrived, doctors from outside the prison extracted a full needle (about 200 to 250 ml.) of my blood. They put it in a bottle with my name on it. We were not told why they did this but Tibetans in Lhasa said that the blood was given to Chinese soldiers who were guarding the national border. There were many prisoners at Gutsa, both Chinese and Tibetan, but it was only the Tibetan prisoners who had their blood extracted.

When our blood was extracted one nun fainted. That day I felt all right but two or three days later I started getting headaches that slowly got worse and worse until one day I fell down, hit my head and became unconscious...the fall was so severe that I was bleeding from my head. My health then became very poor. First of all I was taken to a Chinese clinic where the doctor said that I was suffering from some illness but when they realised that I was a prisoner they told me that I had no illness and I was taken back to Gutsa. I was kept there for another three days but I was suffering tremendously - I could not bear the pain. Then I was sent to the Tibetan hospital. When I arrived there I was told that I didn't have enough blood and that this meant I had defects in my nervous system and my brain, I think. Prison guards took me there but I couldn't see or hear them as I was very ill and often blacked out.

When I was in the prison clinic I was only ever given sleeping pills for medicine. My family paid for all my other medical care. I remained in hospital for four months. Even then I was still not fully recovered so I was sent back to my home so my parents could look after me and arrange for my treatment. I never returned to prison...

I am still not fully recovered and have to take medicine. Whenever there is a sudden event or any kind of excitement my whole body shakes uncontrollably and then I get a migraine on the right side of my head. I can't really explain what the pain is like but when I have a migraine I can't move.

There was one woman prisoner called Tsamla who was 33 years old and who died in prison. She was arrested before me and when she was arrested she was kicked viciously in the kidneys. She was not taken to hospital for medical care but had to remain in prison where she suffered a lot from the pain. When her condition became very serious she was returned to her home. She was then given medical care but it was too late for her to recover and she died. When she was in prison she was operated on but instead of operating where she had a problem they operated on the other side of her body where she was all right before the operation and she never recovered."

Dawa Kyizom recalled: "In 1992 I was hit on the head with a stick and was severely injured. My parents came and told the officials that I was very sick and asked whether they could give me medical care. They were given permission to take me to the Tibetan Medical Centre as

long as they paid all my medical expenses. I was kept there for three months and 15 days. I could not see at the time because of the beating but I was not allowed to leave the hospital and I heard that there were guards around me. The guards had also told the doctors that I could not be released. After I was released from hospital I was returned to the prison.

There was a clinic at the prison but all the medicine that they provided was outdated - its 'use by' date had already expired. There was only one type of medicine - whether I had a headache or a stomach-ache I was given the same medicine. When we went to the clinic they said to us that we were not really sick and that we were just trying to avoid work. They gave us the pills but they didn't do anything else, not even give us check ups."

Thupten Tsering remembered: "All the political prisoners had a small bottle of their blood extracted. They did not take any blood from the Chinese criminals. We were told that it was taken for tests but I think that they just took it for their own purposes. After they had taken the blood I didn't feel well and had to visit the clinic. The doctors just said that I should have some sugar."

Adhe Tapontsang said: "In Minyak Ra Nga Gang Prison one day a doctor came and took a sample of blood from our ears and made a note of our names. A few days later many doctors came and we were called by our names. Then they extracted blood from 20 of us (although they had taken samples from 100). We were taken to hospital where we were made to sit on chairs beside containers with fires. They gave us a lot of sugary water to drink and we were forced to drink more and more and to stay near the fire until our faces were red from the heat. We did not know why we were being treated so well - we were warm and had a lot to drink. Then some doctors came in and extracted our blood. I am not sure how much blood was taken - it was a container of about 500 ml. Then they gave us more sugary water to drink and took more blood from us. We were very weak afterwards. Even those of us who had been relatively healthy before became faint and our bodies turned yellow afterwards. Two women died from these blood extractions."

Bagdro stated: "I was sick many times while in prison. When I was in Drapchi, I was taken to the police hospital, outside the prison, for one month. Most of the time I was very ill. My condition was very serious - I almost died. My whole body was shaking uncontrollably. At the police hospital I was injected and given oxygen and glucose...There were prison guards around me every minute of the day. After one month I was somewhat better although I had not fully recovered.

There was a small clinic at both Drapchi and Gutsa from which we were given outdated medicine. Some of the medicine had expiry dates like 1960 or 1970. We could go to the clinic but the only treatment the nurses gave us was injections and this didn't generally help...One day in the hospital a woman came in and she gave me some white medicine but after having this my body turned black...

My blood was extracted in 1990. When I was preparing to have my blood extracted I was told that all political prisoners were going to be taken to the hospital but it was a lie. We were never given any reason for having our blood extracted. They took about 250 ml. of my blood. Afterwards they told us to drink hot water with sugar in it.

Lhakpa Tsering died in prison. I didn't know him. The prison officials said that he had died of natural causes but he died because he was tortured and then given wrong medicine."

Gyaltsen Pelsang recalled: “I was very sick. My parents came to visit me and they could not even recognise me. I went up to my father and he said ‘This is not my child’ because I looked so dreadful...There was a small clinic at the prison where they would give medicine to us but it didn’t make us feel better - it was useless. My whole body was sore and felt awful, especially my stomach. I never received anything from the prison to help me.

In minor cases prisoners were not taken to the hospital but were just given some medicine. Prisoners were only taken to hospital if they were very seriously sick...Prisoners who were over 15 years old had their blood extracted every year. I never had my blood taken as I was too young.”

Leusang stated: “I got diarrhoea and had blood in my stool. I became very weak and very thin. I couldn’t even eat. There was a clinic so I went there for treatment when I was very sick and they gave me 12 bottles of glucose. I was also taken to a Tibetan doctor outside the prison and he gave me some Tibetan medicine and an injection. After one month I finally recovered.

There were many sick people because of the torture they had received and some people even tried to commit suicide...If anyone became very sick or the officials thought that someone might die, that person was taken out of the prison and sent home...

When I was arrested there were 13 of us political prisoners. One of the others was my cousin Pasang. He was sent to a different prison than me and sentenced to four years. His health deteriorated and he became very weak and eventually died in prison. At the monastery he had always been healthy. When he was taken to prison he was kept in solitary confinement without any clothes, mats or blankets. Pasang was publicly humiliated by being forced to leave his cell naked and empty his urine pot in front of others. He was taken to the prison hospital but they did not treat political prisoners very well and the medicine he was given didn’t help much. After I was released I heard that he had died.”

Jampel Monlam said: “I was not ill. However, I knew many other political prisoners who had serious complications even after they were released. They were told by their doctors that, if they had received proper medical care at the time they first developed the problems, they would be fine now...There were doctors and nurses in the prison hospital but we were treated differently from the other prisoners - they questioned our needs and were very biased against us. Sometimes we visited the hospital with internal problems and the medical staff just said: ‘You look very young and healthy – there’s nothing the matter with you.’

All political prisoners had our blood extracted once and we were told that it was for checks. About 400 ml. of my blood was taken.

Political prisoners died in prison as they were not given due care. Lhakpa Tsering, a 20 year old, died from lack of medical attention while I was in Drapchi and then another monk, 49 year old Kalsang Thutop, passed away after that.”

Gaden Tashi recalled: “On November 8, 1992 I was taken to hospital. When I was first arrested during the demonstration the police beat me brutally and then I was taken to Gutsa Detention Centre and not given any treatment. In Gutsa I was again severely beaten when I was being interrogated. I was also badly beaten on March 4, 1989 when I was transferred to Drapchi and then again after our political group was discovered and I was accused of forming

the group. After that I was kept in solitary confinement for 34 days in a dark cell and my hands and legs were manacled for about a year and I still had to work in my labour unit. All these factors lead to my health to become very poor and yet I was still not able to obtain medical treatment in the prison...I found that I was often falling down from weakness. My health was really in a critical state. The other political prisoners saw how weak I was and requested that the authorities take me to hospital for medical treatment and so I was taken to the "TAR" People's Hospital.

After I was admitted to the hospital I lost all feeling in my legs and according to my medical report after the doctors had checked me, it was clear that I was suffering from brain damage. I remained in the hospital for just over two months and then I was transferred to the Tibetan Medical Institute. In September 1993 an official from the "TAR" labour department and another from the People's Court recommended that I should be released on medical parole provided that my father acted as a guarantor. I remained in the hospital for a further 17 months and when my condition improved a little I was discharged from the hospital. I still had to report to the prison once a month so that they could check whether I intended to pursue further political activities...

When I was released my father acted as my guarantor and the paper that he had to sign said that if I were involved in any political activities he would be taken to court. So when the officials came to my house they reminded me of this and my father had to convince them that I was not really involved in whatever they were accusing me of."

Yeshe Togden recalled: "Like many prisoners, I had dysentery because of the poor food and lack of sanitation. I could not digest my food and had a lot of cramps. I also had hearing problems after a beating I received when I was arrested...Whenever I went to the hospital, no matter what my problem was, I was given painkillers and nothing else...Prisoners were generally sick either from the beatings they had received or from diseases resulting from the lack of hygiene."

Palden Gyatso stated: "I was sick for a very long time and I was hospitalised. Each prison had a prison hospital although not all of them had proper medical services...If anyone fell sick they were not admitted immediately to the prison hospital as admittance took some time. If there was no possibility of getting better at that hospital they took prisoners to the police hospital which provided overall medical care for the prisoners.

While I was in prison there were major changes - after 1987 things changed a lot and the treatment was very different for political prisoners, for example, sometimes they would not even get enough water to drink to quench their thirst. The prison hospital facilities were not the same the whole time that I was in prison: after 1987 when there were a lot more prisoners it was impossible for prisoners to get proper medical attention...

When I was in Outridu in early 1990, I was taken with the two other political prisoners in the prison to have our blood checked. I was surprised to find that they needed so much blood for a check; they took about one litre. Someone who knew Chinese overheard them saying 'Extract as much as you can from the political prisoners as they are the splittists.' When we stood up afterwards I felt very dizzy. When I was transferred to Drapchi prison in March 1990 a number of political prisoners were lying down resting as they had just had their blood extracted."

[\(Contents\)](#)

SOLITARY CONFINEMENT

The interviewees were placed in solitary confinement as punishment for activities as diverse as participating in protests to singing freedom songs. Those prisoners who were placed in solitary confinement reported that they were often manacled, arms and legs, and their food rations were considerably less than usual. The size of solitary confinement cells differed depending on which prison they were held in, but at Drapchi the cells were very narrow, with just enough room for a prisoner to lie down and the room was completely dark, without either windows or electric light.

A number of prisoners were not placed in solitary confinement as a punishment but rather were locked up in a cell by themselves for several months straight after they had been arrested. The only time that they were allowed out was generally to be interrogated or, if they were lucky, to empty their toilet container. These cases are discussed below together with cases where prisoners were placed in solitary confinement as a punishment, although in the former case the cells were generally larger and the conditions not as stark.

In the PRC, Article 62 of the “Detailed Rules for the Disciplinary Work of Prisons and Labour Reform Detachments” of 1982 provides:

Except in the case of condemned prisoners for who final approval of execution is still pending and also the case of prisoners currently undergoing trial, the period of solitary confinement is in general not to exceed a period of seven to ten days. The maximum permissible period is fifteen days.

Unfortunately it is clear from ex-prisoners’ accounts that these rules are not adhered to in the “TAR”.

The UN’s Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners provide:

31. Corporal punishment, punishment by placing in a dark cell, and all cruel, inhuman or degrading punishments shall be completely prohibited as punishments for disciplinary offences.

32 (1) Punishment by close confinement or reduction of diet shall never be inflicted unless the medical officer has examined the prisoner and certified in writing that he is fit to sustain it.

Prisoners are routinely placed in dark, cramped cells with reduced diets in direct contravention of the PRC’s own rules, as well as the UN’s suggested rules. Certainly no one who was interviewed had seen a doctor before they were placed in solitary confinement, even if they were suffering from injuries at the time. In addition, many prisoners were manacled when placed in solitary confinement in a gesture that was no doubt designed to degrade them.

An example of the way in which the Chinese authorities continue to use solitary confinement as a punishment for Tibetan prisoners in direct violation of the UN’s and their own rules is the account of the treatment of Chadrel Rinpoche. In September 1997, Human Rights in China reported that Chadrel Rinpoche, the former abbot of Tashilhunpo Monastery in

Shigatse and head of the official search team for the reincarnation of the Panchen Lama, was being held in Chuandong No. 3 Prison in Dazu County, Sichuan Province. He was believed to be locked in a cell that only three other people were allowed to visit: two commissars who reported directly to the Ministry of Justice in Beijing and a prisoner who acted as his cook and guard and was never permitted to leave. Chadrel Rinpoche was reportedly denied all outside contact after his arrival at Chuandong No. 3 Prison and was not allowed to leave his cell to exercise. His health was reported to be very poor. There have been no further reports on his condition since the Human Rights in China press release.

The interviewee's accounts of their treatment when placed in solitary confinement as a punishment follow.

Yeshe Damdul described being placed in solitary confinement as a punishment for participating in a protest at Drapchi in 1991: "Then I was placed in solitary confinement for one month and six days during which I was handcuffed and leg cuffed the whole time...The cell was very small. There was no window and there was supposed to be a light but it was never switched on. For the whole time I was put in there I could not see the sky. The cell was so narrow that there was only just enough room for me to lie down in it. The ceiling was very high. There was nothing in the cell. The food was much worse than normal in Drapchi - we were normally given food three times a day but when I was in solitary confinement I was only fed twice a day. I was given one tingmo at about 11 in the morning with a mug of black tea and at around four or five o'clock in the afternoon I was also given one tingmo with a mug of black tea. I nearly starved. I didn't even see the prison guards when I was in solitary confinement - I couldn't see out any window or move freely because the room was so narrow that I was constricted in my movement. The only time I saw the guards was when they gave me my food..."

Gaden Tashi stated: "I was kept in solitary confinement at Outridu Prison with my hands and legs manacled for 34 days. The cell that I was held in was very dark and small. For the first three days I experienced unbearable fear and I even felt like committing suicide. That sort of dark cell was considered by most of the prisoners as one of the most frightening things that could happen to us. Many prisoners said that lots of prisoners had committed suicide in those cells. The cell's doors and walls were made of iron. Whenever there was clear weather and sunshine I could just see my hand in the cell. If the weather was grey, I couldn't tell the difference between day and night as it was always dark. After I was released from that cell, I was blinded for some hours and couldn't see anything."

Dorjee Namgyal was never kept in solitary confinement although he said that: "Other prisoners were taken there for violating prison rules or answering back to the guards. Their hands were manacled when they were taken away and then we could not communicate with them."

Adhe Tapontsang recalled being put in solitary confinement in the sixties: "When I was in Dhartsedo two men who had been shot in the leg arrived from Lhasa and told us that His Holiness the Dalai Lama had escaped to India. I was delighted by the news. I was so happy that I sang a song while I was looking after the pigs. The song was about not being sad as even though we were suffering now, a time of freedom would come. The officials heard that I had sung the song and I was beaten and then put in solitary confinement for one week. After two days I was taken out of the cell for interrogating about what I had heard to make me sing such a song and what I was thinking. I was questioned every second day - when I was taken

back to the cell I was told that I would be given one day to think some more. The food was the same as it normally was. The prison guards treated me very badly this week and the officials accused me of being a protester and causing trouble. They cut a log into two parts and made me kneel on them with my hands behind my head and to stay there until I could bear it no longer. There was no light in the cell. There was nothing at all in the cell.”

Gyaltzen Pelsang said: “One of my friends was put in solitary confinement because she had participated in a demonstration in prison. She was tortured with electric cattle prods for about one hour and kept in solitary confinement for more than six months.”

The following accounts describe the conditions of the cells that some of the former prisoners were kept alone in following their arrest.

Bagdro was kept in a cell by himself when he was first taken to Gutsa: “In Gutsa Prison I was kept in a cell by myself. The cell was about 1 1/2 feet by 6 feet. There was no natural light but at night there was always a light on. When I was in this cell I decided to commit suicide by hanging myself with my belt but I couldn’t because the ceiling was too high. There was no bed in the cell. There was only a dirt blanket with holes throughout it. There was a small hole in the corner for food to be passed through and also for the toilet. I was kept here about ten days. Both my hands and legs were manacled. Then I became really crazy. I was turning into a madman so I was let out to see my parents. When my parents saw me and hugged me they burst into tears...”

Tenzin Choedon was held at Gutsa for two months in 1988. She recalled: “I was kept in a cell by myself for the whole time that I was in Gutsa. It was quite big - there was room for 10 people, around 20 feet by 15 feet. There was a block of eight cells beside each other with different women prisoners in each of them. We were not allowed to talk to each other.

I had to sleep on the floor. The room was empty - there was no furniture. It was filthy - there was blood on the floor and old excrement. I was only provided with one thin quilt that was bloody and had holes in it. When I first arrived, for three days I wasn’t able to go to the toilet. I had to go to the toilet in a tin in the cell and was only allowed out every three days to empty it. While I was carrying the tin to empty it in the toilet I was made to run there and back so that I would not see anyone else in the other cells. The guards threw stones at me while I was running. If I was taken out for questioning I was allowed to go to the toilet but not otherwise.”

Leusang was kept alone in a cell for four months when he was first arrested. He was aged 15 at the time. He recalled: “I was kept in a cell by myself initially after I had been arrested for my involvement in the demonstration. There was only one mattress on the floor. Everything else in the cell had either been provided by my family or I had taken it with me when I was arrested. For example, the only blankets I had were ones I took with me from home. For food we only got tsampa once a day together with a flask of black tea. There was no light in the cell and it was very dark even though there was a small window covered by bars.”

Lobsang Shakya, who was held at Karkhang prison outside Shigatse for one month before being hospitalised, stated: “The whole time that I was held I was kept in a cell by myself. I had no communication with any of the other prisoners. When I was taken to the toilet, if I looked around to try and see in some of the other cells the guards would hit me with a stick.”

Ngawang Choedon, who was held at Gutsa, recalled: “After I was sentenced I was put in a cell by myself for 20 days. Another nun who was arrested the day before me and was sentenced to seven years was also put in solitary confinement for 20 days. For the first two days I was not given any food in the morning, only lunch and dinner. The food was the same as the general prison fare but because I was used to eating more I was extremely hungry during the first 20 days. I was only allowed out of the cell once in the evening to empty my toilet container.”

[\(Contents\)](#)

PROTESTS General

There are very few ways in which prisoners are able to object to the conditions they are kept in. The interviewees uniformly expressed that they had no opportunity to complain to any authority about the manner in which they were treated in prison. When they did conduct any form of protest, they were generally stopped quickly and the resulting punishment was often very violent. Recently, in May 1998, matters deteriorated when prison guards and PAP soldiers opened fire for the first time on a group of protesting prisoners in Drapchi Prison. Eleven deaths were reported to have occurred as a result of the protests.

The forms of protest generally vary from chanting slogans to refusing to eat. Even asking questions of the officials is treated as a form of protest. It is not common for protests to be held on mass but this has happened in a number of instances.

A number of protests have taken place during the visit of a foreign delegation to the prison. This happened in 1991 during the visit to Drapchi by the then US Ambassador to China and more recently in October 1997 when the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention also visited Drapchi. New York Human Rights Watch stated in April 1998 that during the UN Working Group’s visit there was a pro-independence protest involving a declaration of support for the Dalai Lama after which some prisoners had been beaten and put into solitary confinement. The Working Group’s Report makes no mention of the incident. The Chinese authorities reportedly gave assurances at the time that no prisoners would be harmed following the incident. A spokesperson for Human Rights Watch in New York commented “In general Human Rights Watch have advised delegations going to Tibet not to visit prisons for fear of inadvertently putting prisoners at risk. This latest incident clearly demonstrates that the danger in fact exists.”

One of the most common factors leading to protests appears to be the lack of medical care given to prisoners who are seriously ill, often because of the beatings that they have received. It is generally the welfare of other prisoners that appears to have given the prisoners the strength and courage to stand up to the authorities and protest, although some of the protests are also concerned with the poor diet the prisoners are subjected to.

In 1991, following the visit of the then U.S. Ambassador, James Lilley, to Drapchi Prison, several prisoners were put in solitary confinement and then removed to Powo Tramo Prison. When the other prisoners learned that they had been removed there was a large protest followed by a severe crackdown. This incident and the protests in May 1998 are discussed separately below.

Ngawang Choezom described a protest by women prisoners at Gutsa Detention Centre: “There was one protest - a woman called Pasang from Lhasa city who was suffering very seriously from an illness but she was not given any medical care. So all the prisoners demonstrated and called out together from inside our cells that she needed medical care. After a while a doctor came and checked her and gave her some sleeping pills. She didn’t fully recover but became a little better. We were punished - they made us all leave our cells and made us run on the football ground. They threatened us that they would beat us with their sticks if we didn’t run fast enough.”

Yeshe Togden stated: “Once we all decided to protest about the food that we were given and to refuse to eat it any longer unless it improved. We said that we would cook it ourselves if they gave us the raw ingredients as it was so badly prepared. We didn’t want the food cooked from the prison. The prison officials said that each tingmo weighed two tsang but then they weighed one and it was only one tsang [10 tsang=1gyama, which is approximately 500 grams]. No one knew that we were kept in this prison so one of the reasons for the protest was that our families would hear about it and know where we were. There were no repercussions because there were so many of us who protested at once and the officials knew the food was really dreadful.

When there were violations of rules or protests or the guards felt that they could not handle us, like when we were in Gutsa and asked about the food, the PAP would be called in and the situation would then become very serious. If anyone was killed by one of them or anything else happened, there were no recriminations, it was treated as our own fault. This is how situations were suppressed.

In 1989 when we were arrested we knew that the food would not be enough so we decided to protest from the beginning. We were given mugs for the tea and most of our cell decided to throw them towards the gate. The PAP were then called in with weapons and 20 of them went into the cell next to us and started beating the prisoners there (who hadn’t even thrown their mugs). Later they came to our cell and beat us too. We told them that we had thrown the mugs to protest because there was not enough food. They didn’t give us our mugs back and so we had nothing to put our food in. We had to use our toilet tins to drink from. It was disgusting but it was better than nothing...some of the tins we had to drink with had holes from rust which we stuffed with tingmo to block them.”

Gyaltzen Pelsang described the situation at Gutsa: “If anyone demonstrated in prison their sentence was doubled. There were protests while I was in prison but they were not successful. The reincarnation of the Panchen Lama was recognised by the Chinese government and we protested to say that we would not accept it. We were tortured and beaten.”

Damchoe Palmo recalled a protest against the Panchen Lama re-education campaign at Drapchi by the women prisoners: “We were made to set up our beds like soldiers. Everything had to be incredibly spick and span and clean. One day it wasn’t quite as neat as usual so the seven cell representatives were all summoned and beaten because the cells were not tidy enough. We all made a small protest because they had been beaten. It wasn’t so much a protest as us just trying to make apologies and excuses so that the beatings would stop. Then the guards looked like they would beat us so we started to shout and protest and they called the soldiers in. Three of the nuns were taken because they were supposed to be the ringleaders of the protest. They were Norzin who was put in solitary confinement for one

month and 17 days and Ngawang Sangdrol and Phuntsok Pema who were each held in solitary confinement for about seven months.”

May 1998 Protests at Drapchi

On May 1, 1998, at a function held at Drapchi Prison, approximately 500 prisoners were reportedly present at a peaceful demonstration. The protest arose at a function to celebrate International Labour Day when Chinese officials hoisted a number of Chinese national flags around the prison compound. This display of Chinese rule apparently provoked some of the prisoners into calling out independence slogans and handing out pamphlets. The demonstration ended when officials of the PSB and PAP soldiers stormed into the prison compound to reassert control and opened fire on the prisoners assembled there. The Chinese authorities also ordered the use of bayonets, sticks, metal rods and electric cattle prods to subdue the prisoners. The protest resulted in some prisoners being placed in solitary confinement and the implementation of strict restrictions at Drapchi. TIN reported that a number of prisoners were beaten, leading to the hospitalisation of two prisoners, one of whom subsequently died in hospital.

Then, on May 4, 1998, some 200 political and criminal prisoners at Drapchi Prison disrupted a function celebrating Youth Day by raising slogans and pasting posters around the prison calling for Tibetan independence. The protesters are believed to have included at least 30 female political prisoners. Following the demonstration, PAP soldiers surrounded the prison compound and prison guards once again opened fire to disperse the demonstrators. Two prisoners are reported to have been killed instantly. Four other prisoners were shot in the leg. The prisoners were also beaten with iron rods, sticks, and bayonets and shocked with electric cattle prods. Sources reported that more than 200 prisoners were seriously injured and that the floors of the prison were smeared with blood. They said that the prison cells were filled with injured prisoners but that no medical treatment was provided.

TCHRD believes that 11 prisoners died following the protests at Drapchi Prison on May 1 and May 4, 1998. At least 60 prisoners sustained severe injuries and 15 were reported to still be in critical condition two months after the incident. Most of the injured prisoners were kept in the “TAR” military hospital near Sera Monastery. The prisoners who died are Karma Dawa, Lobsang Gelek, Tashi Lhamo, Ngawang Choekyi, Choekyi Wangmo, Dekyi Yangzom, Khedron Yonten, Lobsang Wangmo, Khedrub, Ngawang Tenkyong and Ngawang Tenzin.

Following the two demonstrations, all regular activities in Drapchi Prison were stalled and severe restrictions were imposed on outsiders attempting to enter the prison complex or to meet with prisoners. It was reported that all political prisoners in Drapchi Prison were interrogated after the incident. Prison officials threatened prisoners that those who spoke of the incidents to outsiders would be executed and prison staff were threatened with criminal indictment.

In a letter from prisoners in Drapchi Prison relating to the May protests, they said: “Now the situation for the prisoners in Drapchi is critical...All the prisoners involved in the protest are being kept in solitary confinement and are receiving routine torture.” The letter adds that there are not enough dark solitary confinement cells in Drapchi so prisoners have been transferred to other prisons where such cells are available.

These reports indicate a serious deterioration in the way that Tibetan prisoners are treated. Prior to May 1998 there had never been reports of prison guards and PAP soldiers opening fire on prisoners or of prisoners being shot within a prison compound. The death of 11 prisoners for taking part in peaceful protests is clearly deplorable and demonstrates a blatant disregard for international standards regarding the treatment of prisoners. There are clear parallels with the way that the prisoners were treated in 1991 (as discussed below) but it is disturbing to see that rather than there being any improvement in conditions, the treatment of prisoners following a mass protest has deteriorated.

Protests in Drapchi in 1990 and 1991

December 1990: Lhakpa Tsering, aged 20, died in Drapchi Prison on December 15, 1990. The cause of his death is unclear but it appears to be related to injuries he received while being interrogated. Before he died his fellow prisoners were very concerned about his rapidly deteriorating state of health and called for him to be given medical treatment. He received some treatment but it was insufficient and he died shortly afterwards. The prisoners at Drapchi then staged a demonstration and a hunger strike. A senior prison official came and spoke to them and urged them to stop the protest but no action appears to have been taken against them in respect of this incident. Asia Watch reported that, at the post-mortem, held at the burial site and attended by a Tibetan doctor and an official from the local People's Procuratorate, it was evident that Lhakpa Tsering's body "bore many bruise marks" and that unofficial statements made by the doctors and officials who conducted the autopsy implied that the prisoner had died as a result of internal infection due to failure to treat intestinal lacerations caused by beatings. In May 1992, the Chinese authorities issued reports saying that he had died of peritonitis.

April 1991: On March 31, 1991, James Lilley, the then U.S. Ambassador to China visited Drapchi Prison. He was supposed to visit the political prisoners but according to the prisoners' accounts they were not allowed to see him and in fact were specifically sent to an area of the prison where it would be impossible for them to meet him.

Two prisoners, Lobsang Tenzin and Tenpa Wangdrag, did not go to work with the rest of the political prisoners but went to the prison clinic instead. On their way back they found the delegation and managed to hand over a letter listing various grievances of the political prisoners. The letter was grabbed from the Ambassador's hands by the Chinese interpreter and never returned to him. The two prisoners who had handed over the letter were severely beaten and moved to unlit isolation cells. On April 27, after protests by other prisoners against their continued isolation, the two, along with three others who were present at the time of the initial incident, Lobsang Palden, Tenpa Pulchang and Penpa, were chained hand and foot and taken to Sangyip Prison. The next day they were moved to Powo Tramo Labour Camp.

When the prisoners at Drapchi learned that they had been taken to another prison, many prisoners gathered together and questioned the officials as to their whereabouts. The prison officials called in the PAP and their reprisal was swift and violent. Many prisoners were severely beaten and were then placed in solitary confinement and manacled.

Yeshe Damdul recalled: "We heard that a delegation was coming to visit but we never saw them. When the delegation came to Drapchi all the political prisoners were placed either in the greenhouses or the apple orchards. The delegation was only shown the criminal prisoners

and the political prisoners were isolated from it. I was beaten severely and then placed in solitary confinement after the US Ambassador had visited...

On April 27, 1991, I was punished harshly because I had acted against the guards - I was beaten extremely severely. It was a Saturday. That evening when we returned to our cell five of the prisoners were missing... At the beginning some of us went to the prison office to inquire about where the prisoners had been taken. Then all the political prisoners followed us in protesting against the officials. The prison authorities told us that we had no political rights anymore and that we didn't have the right to ask questions... We really irritated and angered the officials and they called in the PAP - soldiers from outside the prison - and they beat us very severely.

Then we were all taken back to our cells and they made a list of the leaders and those who had been seen to be protesting strongly and they called our names out one by one - there were 30 of us... who were beaten together. Fifteen of us were almost beaten to death. We were beaten in an office and the floor was covered with our blood. Since I was beaten that time I have experienced many physical problems - even now I suffer from ulcers and have pains in my shoulders from where the soldiers used ropes to tie my hands behind my back very tightly. Then I was placed in solitary confinement for one month and six days during which I was hand and leg cuffed the whole time."

Lhundup Monlam stated: "When I was at Drapchi Prison, some foreigners from America came to the prison to see our condition. At that time one of the prisoners handed over a document stating that we had no human rights and we did not get enough food. Then the officials took the man who had handed over the paper to Powo Tramo Prison... On the day that the documents were handed over to the visitors four prisoners were taken from their cell and placed in solitary confinement for some days. They were taken to Powo Tramo when no other prisoners were around - we asked where they had gone and were told that we had no rights to ask such questions as we were not responsible for them..."

Then the guards set about 100 soldiers on to us and they beat us all. There were around 95 political prisoners, all men... We were all beaten... The soldiers told us to stand in a row and then told us in Chinese to salute them but I did not understand them. Then they asked why I was not saluting and they beat me with their pistol butts on my back and kidneys. I tried to run away... I was having trouble breathing then and they caught me and beat me further. Those who were disliked by the prison guards had their names called out and they were handed over to four soldiers each who beat them savagely. Afterwards, the prison guards called me over and punched me in the face. About 20 people were put in solitary confinement and they had their hands and legs cuffed."

Thupten Tsering recalled two protests while he was at Drapchi: "A prisoner called Lhakpa Tsering died in Drapchi because even though he was sick he was not given medical treatment. We held a demonstration after he died. Lobsang Tsundue tore up his bed sheet and wrote 'We mourn Lhakpa Tsering's death.' We made this into a banner with wood on either side and carried it in front of us. One of the heads of the prison was a Tibetan called Lobsang Chodok. He told us convincingly that 'You should not be doing this as it will lead to serious trouble... If you stop now and don't cause further problems your involvement in this protest will be pardoned and you will not be punished.' We told him that we wanted to see Lhakpa Tsering's body but they would not let us. Lhakpa Tsering had been severely beaten before he was brought to Drapchi Prison, yet he was tied up when he was taken to the hospital. Because

of everything that the prison leader said we stopped the protest. There were no repercussions...

When I was in Drapchi the US Ambassador came and visited the prison. The officials did not allow him to meet any political prisoners. We were locked up in our cells and he was shown the criminal prisoners...After one month the prisoners who had written the letter, together with three others, were transferred to Powo Tramo Prison. After we all arrived back from work we learnt that they had been taken somewhere else. We asked the officials where they had been taken and then all the political prisoners demonstrated. Then many reinforcements arrived and surrounded us and beat us very badly. Many people were tortured. One 80-year old monk, Hor Larkhen (also known as Lobsang Tsundue) was beaten severely despite his age. Another monk, Toetun Namgyal, was hit continuously with a pistol on his face and body until his whole body was bleeding. Twelve people were handcuffed and had their legs manacled and then one by one they were taken to a small room and beaten mercilessly.”

Jampel Monlam recalled: “There were two demonstrations: the first was when Lhakpa Tsering, a 20 year old, died from lack of medical attention, and the second was when the prisoners who tried to hand the US Ambassador a letter were transferred to another prison. After the first protest there were no repercussions as the officials realised that they were at fault.

After the second incident, all political prisoners were beaten. The PAP was called in. For each prisoner there were two PAP officers beating us and the whole area was surrounded by more of them. All the prison security officials were PAP, even the escorts for labour were PAP...When there was a demonstration the PAP were brought specifically to beat us. Their manner of suppressing us was very different from the police as they were specially trained.”

Palden Gyatso recalled: “On December 15, 1990, we held a peaceful demonstration to protest against the treatment of Lhakpa Tsering, a 20 year old who had received severe beatings and had been refused medical treatment. We all shouted that he needed medical help. He was taken to hospital and two days later he was brought back to his cell after being given an injection. We were told that nothing was wrong with him and he was ‘totally fit’. He died the next day. We protested then...we ripped our sheets and wrote on them ‘You killed our healthy Lhakpa Tsering and we mourn his death’ and ‘All the political prisoners in this prison want change.’ We then tied the sheets outside our windows. The head of our division brought the head of the prison who was scared because we were so angry. We were blaming the prison for Lhakpa Tsering’s death and calling for an explanation, so he said he would get the head judge. The judge was cunning and told us that he was very concerned and would conduct an investigation into the death and see that the men who did this would be punished. He was so convincing that he fooled us into thinking that things would change and we calmed down and stopped the protest. Nothing concrete ever happened...”

The US Ambassador came to visit Drapchi in 1991. Four men tried to hand him a letter which was intercepted by the prison guards and those men were kept in solitary confinement. After a long time had passed and the men had still not been released, we started to protest. They were then taken to Powo Tramo County Prison in Nyingtri (Tibetan: Kongpo)...We started to demand to know the whereabouts of the prisoners who had been taken away. At this time there were about 80 armed guards positioned by two small gates leading into our division and there were armed police on the roof with machine guns...then a door flung open and there

was a group of soldiers with huge rifles who started to poke us with their bayonets. We all started to run and there was total chaos...

Then a huge officer arrived with a list of all our names, together with about five other large men, who were carrying many hand and feet manacles that they threw on the ground. There were also two nurses who were holding injections. The huge man started to read our names out one by one. Then we were picked out from the group, our hands were tied tightly with rope and we were beaten all over so that we were unrecognisable afterwards; the whites of our eyes were completely red and our faces were bashed against the floor. We were then taken to solitary confinement but when they ran out of space, the remaining prisoners were manacled. I was so badly injured that my shoulder was dislocated and I was left alone afterwards. There were about 100 prisoners who took part in the protest and most of them were severely injured.”

[\(Contents\)](#)

VISITS

The prisoners reported that they were not allowed to have any visitors before they were sentenced. Many prisoners were not sentenced for about six months, and sometimes even longer, during which time they were completely isolated from the outside world. Further, if they were kept alone in a cell, they were even isolated from their fellow prisoners. If there was a major political incident either in Lhasa or in the prison, prisoners reported that their visiting rights were curtailed subsequently. This was confirmed recently when, following the May 1998 protests at Drapchi, prisoners were not allowed to receive visitors for some time afterwards.

The revised CPL states that the police should notify a suspect's family within 24 hours of placing him or her under arrest. However, the police may dispense with this requirement if it would “interfere with the investigation” or there is “no way to give notice.” Based on the reports of the former prisoners interviewed for this report, it appears that the notification requirement is more often dispensed with than complied with in Tibet.

When visitors were allowed, the visits were generally restricted to one visit of approximately 15 minutes' duration. During the visits, there were many guards close by who listened to the conversations and checked any food that was handed over to see if it contained letters or other prohibited articles. The Chinese version of these restrictions is indicated by the statement of the Drapchi warden, Losang Gallai [Lobsang Geleg]. He described the monthly visiting day at Drapchi on October 15, 1997, when 300 relatives of prisoners, most of them Tibetans, were allowed to speak through grates around a courtyard in the new visitors' centre, “Visitors to the prison must abide by strict prison measures, including a time limit of 20 minutes...Mildewed or rotten food is not allowed, nor other items which might harm prisoners or affect their sentences.”

The rules regarding who could visit prisoners and what they could bring have changed considerably over the last ten years. In 1988, once they had been sentenced, prisoners could generally receive visitors without the visitors having to get any special permission and apparently without restrictions as to the identity of the visitors. In the early 1990's, people

who wished to visit political prisoners were required to obtain permission from the local council or administrative body. This permission was apparently not difficult to procure but it had to be obtained one month ahead of the visit. Around 1996 the rules were further restricted so that political prisoners are now only allowed to have one visitor, who must be a family member. This person has his or her photo on an identity card used specially for visits and no one else can visit if the official visitor is unable to. In such situations, the prisoner can not have any visitors. For prisoners who are kept in Drapchi or another central prison this is a serious problem if their family lives far away and can not appoint someone else to visit them. Political prisoners report that there are no restrictions on the number of visitors non-political prisoners can receive.

Visitors to the prisons were generally allowed to bring food to the prisoners. Many prisoners rely heavily on this food to supplement their prison diets.

Article 37 of the UN's Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners provides:

Prisoners shall be allowed under necessary supervision to communicate with their family and reputable friends at regular intervals, both by correspondence and by receiving visits.

Many prisoners' families were never officially told that their relative had been arrested. Generally, they only found out after someone who had seen the arrest told them of the incident. Many families learnt of the arrest through the monastery or nunnery where their relative was living. However, even when they knew of the arrest, many families had a lot of difficulty discovering precisely which prison their relative was being held in. Because of the long periods of detention without sentencing, many families were unable to visit their relatives for many months even if they were able to find out where they were being held. This lack of knowledge makes the whole experience far more stressful for both the prisoner and their family.

Tenzin Choedon said: "After I had been held for one month, I was allowed to receive visitors. My relatives had to get permission from the police office in the county where my nunnery was located. They brought cooked food, like dry meat, and clothes. We were not allowed to take the food into the prison with us but had to eat it while the visitors were there. They stayed for fifteen minutes. We were not really allowed to talk to each other. The guards were standing beside us listening to our conversations - they were concerned that if we could speak freely then we would tell our visitors that we had been beaten. Our visitors were told that they were not allowed to talk to us about conditions in the prisons... The nunnery told my family that I had been arrested but they did not know where I had been taken."

Jampel Monlam stated: "For one month after my arrest my family did not know where I was. They were going crazy looking for me. Then they found out unofficially from sources in Lhasa.

You were only allowed to have visitors after you had been sentenced. Once you were sentenced, you were allowed them. Political prisoners were allowed visitors on the 20th day of each month. Criminal prisoners were allowed visitors on the 15th day of the month and they did not need any legal pass or authority to visit. The political prisoners were only allowed three visitors and they had to bring an introductory letter every month from the welfare office of their county. (Visiting rights have been further restricted since I was released. Around 1996 the rules changed so that only members of a family who had an ID card could come and visit political prisoners. This really restricted who could visit us: even if

the prison was far away from our family they would have to come themselves to visit us and could not get a close relative to come in their place). Each visit was only allowed to last five to ten minutes. You could not really communicate anything, we just looked at each other and smiled and ate food that they had brought. A guard would stand next to us to stop us having any kind of political conversation. The guard would also check all the food that they had brought us and determine whether we could keep it. The food that they brought us helped a great deal as it supplemented the food that we were given by the officials. When our families visited sometimes they would try to smuggle money into the tsampa so that we could buy things in the prison shop. We could send and receive mail but it was censored by the guards."

Ngawang Choezom stated: "Generally we were allowed to meet our visitors once a month unless there was a demonstration in Lhasa or His Holiness the Dalai Lama had visited somewhere abroad or there was news of him. If we could have heard of these things then we would not be allowed to have visitors. We were usually allowed to meet for 20 minutes. At first our families were allowed to bring us food but after five months this was stopped although they were still allowed to bring us clothes to change into...One of my sisters lives in the Barkhor and she found out from others on the day we were arrested."

Ngawang Choedon recalled: "In Gutsa I was allowed visitors once a month. At Trisam visitors could come twice a month. They could stay for 15 to 20 minutes and were allowed to bring us food or clothes but they were all checked first...My family learnt that I was in prison through friends and it was also shown on television who was arrested and who had participated in the demonstration."

Lhundup Monlam stated: "I was allowed visitors once a month. Either my relatives or parents could meet me. They had to get permission from Gangtse local township and county and they could not come without the permission. The permission was not very difficult to obtain but it was necessary each time they wanted to visit me. When I was on prison I could be visited by three people – either my friends or my family – but in 1995 the rules changed and now only one family member can visit."

Sonam Dolkar reported: "My parents only found out where I was being held after I had been imprisoned for about eight months. They knew that I was imprisoned but they didn't know where. They found out through an acquaintance who was a prison guard and whom I had asked to tell them. He visited them when he wasn't wearing his uniform and told them where I was.

Once my parents knew where I was they could bring things to me on the 10th day of each month although I was not allowed to see them. If they brought me some bread the guards would break it in two to check that there were no documents hidden inside before they gave it to me. My parents would sometimes take my clothes home and wash them for me so I once tried to give them my clothes that were stained with blood from my neck injury. I hid the blood stained clothes in amongst some other clothes but the guards spotted them and forbade me from sending them out of the prison and generally abused me. They took the clothes from me and wouldn't return them even though I said I had not been able to wash them as I had no water...The only time that I saw my parents was once when I was in the Tibetan hospital."

Gyaltsen Choetso recalled: "The prison officials wrote to my parents saying that I was in prison the day after I was arrested... I could only have visitors on the 15th day of the month after I had been imprisoned for three months. The first time that my parents visited me they

brought some meat, butter and tsampa and I was allowed to receive this from them. They stayed for about 20 minutes but I couldn't talk to them about anything political as the prison guards were all around us and were listening to what we said."

Adhe Tapontsang recalled her experience in the early sixties: "When I was held at Golthok lead mines I was allowed visitors once a year. One relative came and gave me butter and yak meat. The other prisoners could smell the meat on me and I shared everything that I had with them. When we had visitors there were always two prison guards - one Chinese and one Tibetan. They checked that we did not say anything bad about the prison. We were not allowed to say that we were starving in prison but were made to say that we were very happy in prison and that we had enough food. My brother was made to say that I must listen to the Chinese and obey them. When I was asked to say how happy I was in prison I was very angry and could not speak. I looked at my brother and saw that he was crying."

Gyaltsen Pelsang said: "My family was never officially told when I was detained but they knew as I was no longer in the nunnery...The first six months that I was detained I was not allowed any visitors but then my father came to see me. I was so sick that he could not even recognise me. I went up to him but he said 'This is not my child' because I looked so dreadful. Officially my parents were not allowed to visit in the prison but my father had some friends in the prison office and they arranged for us to meet. My brother was also in the prison but he was not allowed to meet my parents. I don't know how my parents had the opportunity to visit me. During one year I saw my father two or three times. My parents sent me a mattress and some food: butter, tsampa and cheese."

Dorjee Namgyal recalled: "I was never allowed visitors. In Gutsa no one is allowed visitors. When I was moved to Drapchi, I once learnt that my parents had come to visit but they were not permitted to see me. My parents sent me food in Drapchi but I was not allowed to meet with them. In Gutsa I was not permitted to write to my family but it was allowed in Drapchi."

Palden Gyatso said: "My family knew as soon as I was arrested in 1959. They had to bring me food when I was first imprisoned so we had limited contact initially...When I was re-arrested in 1983 and then kept in Seitru from 1984 I was allowed visitors. Visitors for political prisoners could come once a month on the 20th and for criminals on the 15th of the month. The visits lasted for 15 minutes and were held in a small room together with about ten other prisoners. Before the visit, both my family and I were searched. There was a limit of three visitors per prisoner. I would sit in the room with one prison guard on either side of me and before my family could give me anything, the guards would check the object. My family would have a cup of tea all ready to give to me when I came in because there was so little time. The guards would sometimes take photos of this and use them for propaganda. Sometimes if a prisoner's family was in too much of a hurry to get into the room, they would be hit with an electric baton and given an electric shock by the guards. Our families would bring many things but then in 1991 new rules were introduced to limit the amount we could be given to one gyama (500 grams). After complaints this changed for the better but later on the restrictions on visits became much tighter."

Leusang, who was held at Trisam, said: "My family knew when I was arrested as the head of the monastery told them straight away...I was allowed visitors on the first and the fifteenth of each month. The rules said that the visitors were allowed to stay for 15 minutes. We were allowed to keep things that our visitors brought us - it was mostly food."

[\(Contents\)](#)

RIGHT TO PRACTISE RELIGION

The former prisoners uniformly stated that they were unable to practise their religion. This was clearly felt by many of the interviewees to be totally unacceptable as proven by the inventive means developed by some to circumvent the stringent prison rules.

Generally speaking, many Tibetans believe that the manner in which you act is more important than religious rituals, however, a number of rituals are so interwoven with the practice that for many traditional Tibetan Buddhists the ritual and the practice are almost inseparable. Tibetans generally pray, or recite scriptures or mantras, aloud as they believe other beings then have the opportunity to hear them and benefit from their practice. In prisons in Tibet the mere act of praying aloud is forbidden. Punishments for disobeying this “rule of silence” vary, but include both physical and verbal abuse by prison guards. Other common ritualistic practices which are forbidden include prostrations, using mala beads (like a rosary), making offerings, burning incense, wearing sacred threads, reading scriptures, debating and chanting in groups. Despite the fact that these manifestations of religion are so important to the prisoners, many of whom are monks and nuns, no religious practices are allowed to be performed.

The Dalai Lama is both the political and spiritual leader of the Tibetan people. Tibetan Buddhists consider him to be not just a great leader, but the living manifestation of Avalokiteshvara, the Buddha of Compassion. Thus, when prisoners are forced to denounce the Dalai Lama, it is not only a denial of their political views but also an especially painful suppression of their most sacred religious belief. There were countless incidents in which the interviewees were taunted by references to the Dalai Lama when being interrogated and later, in political education sessions, they were forced to denounce him.

Many former prisoners have reported that they have not been allowed to celebrate Losar, the Tibetan New Year, since 1992. This is one of the most significant events in the Tibetan calendar, both from a religious and a cultural perspective. It is traditionally celebrated by wearing new clothes and preparing food offerings to Tibetan deities. Prior to 1992 Tibetan prisoners were allowed to celebrate the start of the New Year in a limited fashion. When some nuns imprisoned in Drapchi Prison attempted to celebrate Losar and March 5 (the anniversary of the first widespread independence protests in Tibet since 1959) in 1992, PAP troops came into Drapchi and forcibly subdued the nuns, severely beating and torturing many of them.

Article 18 of the UDHR provides:

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes...freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

Article 18 of the ICCPR, which the PRC has yet to ratify, contains a very similar provision to Article 18 of the UDHR and continues:

3. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

Thus the right to freedom of religion is universally recognised. The international community has accepted at times that restraints may be placed on the right, yet these are limited to very specific situations. While Tibetans' rights to practise their religion are curtailed in their everyday lives, in Chinese prisons there is a complete prohibition on all basic religious practices. Chinese authorities deny that prisoners' religious rights are unreasonably curtailed. The EU Delegation were told in May 1998 that it was permitted to carry out normal personal religious activities in prison provided this did not offend against prison regulations. However, the accounts of the interviewees reflect quite a different reality.

Rules 41 and 42 of the UN's Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners provide:

41. (1) If the institution contains a sufficient number of prisoners of the same religion, a qualified representative of that religion shall be appointed or approved. If the number of prisoners justifies it and conditions permit, the arrangement shall be on a full-time basis...

42. So far as practicable, every prisoner shall be allowed to satisfy the needs of his religious life by attending the services provided in the institution and having in his possession the books of religious observance and instruction of his denomination.

Even the limited rights stated above in the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners bare no resemblance to the treatment of those imprisoned in Tibet.

[Mala beads made from tingmo by political prisoners at Drapchi.](#)

In November 1994, the UN Special Rapporteur on Religious Tolerance, M. Abdelfattah Amor, visited China and Tibet and met with Yulo Dawa Tsering, a highly respected veteran political prisoner who was a former abbot and philosophy lecturer. Yulo Dawa Tsering was conditionally released just before the visit although reports indicate that he is now under house arrest in Lhasa. Yulo Dawa Tsering confirmed to the Rapporteur that religious activity was forbidden in prison and that there was also a ban on readmission to monasteries and nunneries for monks and nuns who have completed prison sentences for political offences. Both practices were condemned in the Rapporteur's subsequent report.

The importance of the religious practices to many of the political prisoners is evidenced by the ingenuity that some of them displayed in hiding their mala (rosaries) or scriptures, or making replacement mala when their old ones were confiscated or destroyed by the guards.

Thupten Tsering stated: "We were not allowed to recite our prayers or practise our religion. We used to practise in our minds. We made mala with tingmo, linking 10 or 15 pieces together. We were not allowed any scriptures. Some monks had them but they were not allowed to and were punished if they were caught with them."

Ngawang Choezom stated: "We were not allowed to pray at all, we could not even say mantras - we were beaten if we were caught. If the guards were not around we could read Buddhist scriptures and pray. If the guards were around we would hide the scriptures in our robes or in the toilet container or in the ceiling. Generally we were not allowed to celebrate any of our Tibetan holidays but on some Chinese holidays we were given rice as a treat...After I had been sentenced I was also beaten. It was punishment for praying and

singing a song praising His Holiness the Dalai Lama and wishing him a long life. We were threatened with longer sentences and told that we were not allowed to sing such a song.”

Palden Gyatso recalled: “Even saying day to day prayers was a big violation of the prison rules. We tried to practise them quietly. If we were found with our mala, we were beaten and they were confiscated. Because having our mala was so important to us we would make other ones by tying thread into knots and later prisoners used tingmo, which they coloured, to make beads. This had to be done very quietly and then they had to be kept out of sight.”

Adhe Tapontsang recalled: “If we so much as moved our mouths they would abuse us and say: ‘You are praying. You are not allowed to do that.’ So we had to say our prayers without even moving our mouths! The guards told us that there are neither gods nor ghosts in this world and that practising Buddhism would not help us... They said that religion was nothing and that we must not follow it. One officer took down a thangka (Tibetan religious painting) and put it on his chair and then he stood on top of it and said to us: ‘Here, look at me! Even though I am standing on this “sacred” thangka I have a healthy body but look at you - you all look like ghosts. What happened to you? Did Buddhism help you at all?’”

Bagdro explained: “Practising religion was not allowed in prison. I had to wait until night and then when I was lying in bed put a blanket over my face and recite my prayers. If anyone practised openly they were beaten and tortured.”

In a clear violation of the prisoners’ human rights, a number of the interviewees recounted that they were beaten or punished in another way simply for praying or reciting mantras.

Gyaltzen Choetso recalled: “Once when I was praying silently by myself I was caught by one of the prison guards who beat me all over my body with some firewood that he took from the kitchen. I was badly injured.”

Yeshe Togden stated: “We were not allowed to practise our religion but of course we did so. Once the head of the prison who was a Tibetan caught us praying and he punished us by denying us food for a whole day. We set up a lookout to keep an eye out for guards. Also, if we were praying and the prisoners in the cell next to us saw a guard coming they would bang on the walls of their cell to warn us. So we would pray, but very quietly and always in fear of being caught.”

Gyaltzen Pelsang, who was a nun and arrested at the age of 13, commented: “If we ever recited mantras or anything like that we would immediately be beaten.”

[\(Contents\)](#)

TREATMENT OF WOMEN PRISONERS

Women political prisoners are initially held at Gutsa, Trisam and Seitru prisons and detention centres, although once sentenced they are believed to all be held at Drapchi. The Tibetan Government in exile believes that there are currently approximately 250 female political prisoners at Drapchi Prison. Generally, women appear to be kept separately from male prisoners. Sometimes they are kept in the same cellblock as male prisoners but always in

different cells. Most of the women were unable to differentiate between their treatment and that of the male prisoners as they were kept separately and did not have any contact with the men. Having compared the testimonies of the men and women prisoners, it is clear that the women did not receive lighter treatment because of their sex.

Human Rights Watch conducted a study of Chinese prisons and reported that:

The proportion of women prisoners in China, as in virtually every country, is small and their situation varies by locale and type of facility, but they appear to be better treated than men. Women are less subject to beatings and electric shocks.

While this may be true of the treatment of women in Chinese prisons generally, it is not accurate as regards the treatment of Tibetan women political prisoners. On the contrary, they appear to be treated, or mistreated, in very similar ways to male political prisoners, if not worse.

In some instances it appears that the women prisoners were treated in a more offensive, violent and degrading manner than the male prisoners. Several of the nuns recalled that as part of their initial interrogation they were forced to undress and stand naked while being interrogated and tortured. Others were raped or had instruments - sticks and electric cattle prods - stuck in their vaginas and anuses. Such behaviour is clearly unacceptable anywhere and it is certainly deeply disturbing that it exists within a penal system supposedly dedicated to "justice". The worst sexual abuse was carried out by women prison officials.

Of the 1,216 Tibetan political prisoners that TCHRD had records of as at December 31, 1997, 295, or 24.26 per cent, were women. Of these, 255, or 86.44 per cent, were nuns, 13, or 4.47 per cent, were lay women, and the occupation was unknown for 27, or 9.15 per cent. Given the high number of nuns who are political prisoners and the types of lives they lived before being imprisoned, the accounts of sexual abuse and being stripped naked are particularly abhorrent.

The prisons do not appear to provide any sanitary napkins or other cloth for women prisoners' menstruation. Only one prisoner who was held at Seitru reported that she was provided with some cotton when she had her period. The other prisoners simply had to bleed onto their clothes or, if they were fortunate, their visitors supplied them with something to use. When considering this it must be remembered that prisoners could not wash regularly - some reported they could only wash their face twice in six months and others that they could wash every couple of weeks. Whatever the case, conditions were clearly unhygienic. Even where visitors could bring something for the woman's menstruation, prisoners were not generally allowed to receive anything from outside the prison until they had been sentenced, which commonly took up to six months and sometimes never happened at all. Until sentenced, most women had nothing for their menstruation.

CEDAW defines the term "discrimination against women" to mean:

Any distinction, exclusion, or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, regardless of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.

While gender-based violence is not specifically referred to in the CEDAW provisions, the Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women has formally extended the general prohibition on gender-based discrimination to include gender-based violence, which it defined as:

...violence that is directed at a woman or that affects women disproportionately. It includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty...

Despite the PRC having been a party to CEDAW since 1981, the testimonies are evidence of continuing discrimination against women, particularly in the form of physical violence and humiliations they are forced to undergo. While a number of the women who were interviewed reported that they did not believe that they were discriminated against, they were often violated or stripped naked in a manner that indicates that they were treated in particular ways because of their gender.

Tenzin Choedon described her interrogation at Gutsa: “After they had questioned all of us nuns, we were taken to where we had been unloaded from the truck and were made to take off our nuns robes and to stand in a line against the wall. We were only wearing our underwear. One official came with an electric stick and gave us all electric shocks. Most of the time he hit us on the face. Then we were taken one by one to another room where four Tibetan women and one Chinese woman were waiting to torture us. Each of them had a different weapon to beat us with. One had an electric cattle prod, another some twisted rope and another a large wooden club. We had to take off all our clothes and stand there naked in front of them. I was made to lie face down on the floor and then they hit me with the rope, the club and the electric cattle prod. I was hit with the stick all over my body and one of them gave me an electric shock in my anus. It was so painful. All the nerves around my heart contracted and I lost consciousness for a few seconds.

When I recovered they continued to beat me all over my body. I was asked to stand against the wall and they taunted me saying I was really a mother and that I was fat. I told them that I had chosen to be a nun. They inserted a stick forcefully into my vagina four times and then put it in my mouth. They told me that I was a prostitute and worthless and that I just came here so that I could be with the monks. While the stick was in my mouth it was pushed so hard that my two front teeth were moving. Then I shut my jaw firmly and no matter how hard they pushed me I would not open my mouth. I was tortured for about five hours on the day I arrived.

We were not provided with anything for our periods - the blood just seeped onto our clothes.”

Gyaltzen Choetso recalled her experiences: “When I was first taken to Gutsa [in 1987] they stripped me naked and used electric cattle prods and beat me all over my body. They beat me a lot around my breasts and nipples, my neck and my back. They did not insert anything in my vagina but some of my friends who were nuns had electric cattle prods inserted there and afterwards they become incontinent. It was women prison guards who did this.

The prison authorities did not give us any sanitary napkins. I got them from my home after some months but at first I had nothing. I tore up my clothes and used them.

There was one young Tibetan criminal and one Chinese criminal who came outside our cell during the night and called us all kinds of names and made sexual innuendoes. They said things like ‘You should never have become nuns. We’re going to come into your cell and

have sex with you.’ At the time we thought they were there of their own accord but the next day they told us that they had been sent by prison officials to harass us.”

Ngawang Choedon stated that: “We could use sanitary napkins if we had them but we were never provided with them. Our visitors had to bring them for us.”

Damchoe Palmo miscarried while she was in detention when she was almost four months pregnant. She recalled: “We had to buy sanitary napkins in the prison with the money that our family gave us. The prison didn’t give us any money. They were very expensive - much more so than outside prison...Political prisoners were treated in the same way whether they were men or women.”

Ngawang Choezom recounted: “We were not provided sanitary napkins but I was only 15 at the time and did not need such things.

There was a woman called Tille from the Barkhor area in Lhasa who was held while she was pregnant but was released to give birth. She was arrested with me on the same day and we were made to stand for a long time facing the sun but I don’t know why. We were then separated so I don’t know how she was treated beyond this.”

Rinzin Kunsang recalled: “I was interrogated by three male officers - one Chinese and two Tibetans. They made me take off all my clothes except my underpants. Then they made me put my chin on a chair, so that I was facing down. They had a large wooden club that they beat me with. They beat me forcefully on the back. Two of them were holding my arms and lifted up my body after each blow so that I would not fall over...On the day I was taken to the prison the woman prison guards made me take off all my clothes and stand naked in front of them.

Sometimes the officials made me lie naked on the cement floor and then they would walk all over my body with their shoes on. Then they would make me kneel on the floor and would beat my back and bottom with a wooden club. They also made me stand by the wall and they beat me forcefully on my stomach and my breasts...We were not provided with anything for our periods.”

Dawa Kyizom recounted: “After one month in Taktse Military Camp I got my period but I was not given anything to help keep myself clean. My blood just had to flow onto my clothes. When I was in Gutsa my parents brought me sanitary napkins. The prison authorities gave us nothing.

There was one woman who was pregnant in prison. Her name was Dawa Dolma. She was treated the same as the rest of us and had to work like the rest of us. I don’t really know what happened to her.”

Adhe Tapontsang recalled the early sixties when she was raped by the head of the prison: "When I was in Dhartsedo prison one day four of us younger women prisoners were taken aside. The other three were not married and we were all quite attractive. We were taken to the office where the Chinese head of the prison [Tang Tson Dru Dong] said ‘You will be my wives. If you do as I ask you will be given whatever you want to eat, you will be allowed to eat and you can have whatever you want. If not, you will be sentenced to death. If you obey me there is no need to stay in your cell but if you tell anyone what I have asked and what you

have done you will be killed.' We could not reply... Sometimes an official came and asked one of us to go and wash the head of the prison's clothes. When I was inside his room he raped me. When I returned to the room where I slept my friends hugged me and we all cried. It happened to all of us. We were kept like this for around one month. Then the official became afraid that others would find out so we were sent back to the cell and stayed with the rest of the women again. We talked amongst ourselves and decided that if we told the others what had happened to us then we would either be executed or put in solitary confinement with even less food so we said nothing and just hoped that we would soon be free... When we were raped we were given some pills to take for contraception."

[\(Contents\)](#)

BRIEF BIOGRAPHIES OF INTERVIEWEES

A summary of the details pertaining to each of the 22 interviewee's prison experiences in Tibet together with some personal details follows. Tibetans traditionally do not record the date of birth and so it is quite common for them not to know the day or month or sometimes even the roman calendar year in which they were born, although they generally know the Tibetan zodiac sign of the year of their birth. Some interviewees were not sure of their age and so gave an approximation.

ADHE TAPONTSANG (AMA ADHE)

Adhe Tapontsang was born around 1932 in Ghortsa Village, Nyarong County, Karze "Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture" in Sichuan Province (Tibetan Province of Kham). Before she was arrested in 1958, Adhe Tapontsang worked on a farm and led a nomadic life, looking after the animals. She was married with two children - a boy and a girl.

She was arrested on December 16, 1958 and sentenced to 16 years' imprisonment. She was imprisoned during the sixties when countless numbers of Tibetans starved to death in prison and she remained in prison throughout the years of the Cultural Revolution when she was subjected to many thamzing sessions. Upon termination of her sentence she was not released but was sent to Ra Nga Gang Labour Camp where she was forced to perform various types of manual labour. She was eventually released in 1984, 26 years after she had first been imprisoned. She arrived in Nepal in October 1987 after getting permission to leave by telling the Chinese government that she was going to meet friends and relatives in India. She lied and said that she was going to bring her relatives back to Tibet.

She recalls her most horrifying prison experience in the many years she was incarcerated: "The worst thing for me was when I was kept in Karze Prison. My friends and fellow prisoners were crying out loud with their hunger and some women went mad. They were just crazy because of the hunger."

BAGDRO

Bagdro was born around 1968 in Tsangdo township in Taktse District to the east of Lhasa. He joined Gaden Monastery in March 1986 and was arrested on April 18, 1988, when he was around 20, after participating in a demonstration in Lhasa on March 5, 1988. He was accused

of being an accomplice in the death of a policeman. He was imprisoned for three years - he spent one year in Gutsa Detention Centre and two years in Drapchi Prison.

Bagdro underwent four months of intensive beatings and torture while he was in detention at Gutsa and was hospitalised for around one month in the police hospital in Lhasa as a result of the beatings. He was released in April 1991 and fled to India later that year when he discovered that he had been expelled from Gaden Monastery.

He recounted: “I decided to escape to India, hoping to get proper medical treatment and to inform the outside world about the true condition in Tibet today under Chinese occupation...The worst thing for me about being in prison was the physical abuse I was subjected to. My worst memory was when I was made to stand on icy ground, the next was when an electric baton was put in my mouth, then the times that I was hung from the roof and next is when I was stripped naked and cold water was poured on my back.”

DAMCHOE PALMO

Damchoe Palmo was born around 1964 in Nyemo County, Lhasa City. She had a stall at the market place in Lhasa. She was arrested twice: the first time was on March 9, 1989 after taking part in the demonstrations in Lhasa. She was held without trial for nine months at Outridu, Sangyip and Gutsa and then released after she was forced to put her thumbprint to a document (written in Chinese which she could not read) saying that she would not participate in any further protests.

On May 19, 1993, she was arrested for the second time for distributing pamphlets that talked about freeing Tibet, lack of employment opportunities in Tibet and stopping sterilisation. She and three others had started to print and distribute pamphlets at the start of 1990. Damchoe was held at Seitru for one year and four months and then was given a three year sentence and taken to Drapchi Prison. When she was arrested she was almost four months pregnant. Despite telling the PSB officers who arrested her of her pregnancy, she was forced to stand for 14 hours on the first night of her arrest and was interrogated throughout the night. She miscarried her baby ten days later. No action was ever taken against any officials regarding her miscarriage. She was released at the end of her sentence in 1996.

Recalling the worst thing that had happened in prison to her, she said: “I suffered immensely when I was interrogated and then lost my baby.” She left Tibet in September 1997.

DAWA KYIZOM

Dawa Kyizom was born on September 27, 1973 in Lhasa City. Before her arrest she was a student. She was arrested on October 26, 1990 for helping to stitch a Tibetan flag which a monk called Topgyal later hoisted in Lhasa. Above the flag, on the red silk brocade, she wrote “Long Live His Holiness the Dalai Lama.” She was initially taken to the an quan chus (County Security Department) and on October 31, 1990, she was transferred to Taktse Prison. After 28 days, she was transferred to Gutsa Detention Centre.

After spending eight months in Gutsa, Dawa Kyizom was sentenced to three years imprisonment. While she was held at Gutsa she was once beaten on the head with a stick and suffered so much pain that she was released to the Tibetan hospital for over three months. She still suffers migraines as a result of the beatings she underwent.

She arrived in India in December 1995 after leaving Tibet on December 6, 1995. For two years after her release she lived with her family and studied and participated in underground activities but then left Tibet because, as an ex-political prisoner she could not find work and felt that she did not have any political rights.

She stated: “In prison we lived in hope: of a free Tibet, that the world would see through the Chinese propaganda about Tibet and that His Holiness’ middle way approach would work - when that hope diminished and our struggle sometimes seemed impossible, that was the worst thing for me. We knew that not just those of us in the prison were suffering but our friends and family outside too. The lack of food, the beatings and the work weren’t the worst thing for me - it was the constant mental pressure of wanting a free Tibet and having that hope dashed. I worried about all the suffering that generations of Tibetans were undergoing...For a long time after I was released I suffered from migraines but now they are much better than they used to be.”

DORJEE NAMGYAL

Dorjee Namgyal was born in September 1968 in Norbulingka, Lhasa City. He worked as a driver for the Planning Secretariat in Lhasa. Dorjee was arrested in early May 1989 after he participated in the March 7, 1989 demonstration during which he was shot in the leg. He was held in Gutsa Detention Centre for four months where he was subjected to severe beatings and torture and then transferred to Drapchi Prison after being sentenced to 10 years’ imprisonment.

Following his transfer to Drapchi, Dorjee was so weak and ill from the beatings he had received whilst at Gutsa that he was released temporarily from prison. He was initially taken to the People’s Hospital for 15 days and then the Tibetan Hospital for three months and then kept at his parents’ home for four years. When he finally recovered, his parents were told by the PSB that he would have to return to prison to complete his term so he decided to leave Tibet. He left Lhasa on November 1, 1993 and arrived in Dharamsala on December 10, 1993.

Dorjee stated: “For me, the worst thing was the injury to my leg. When I was shot, the bullet went through the bone in my calf and I was told that my leg might have to be amputated. I lived with this fear for a long time and then my leg took a long time to heal. For most prisoners, the food was the biggest problem.”

GADEN TASHI

Gaden Tashi was born in 1968 in Lhasa, Meldro Gonkar County, Gyama Shang, Village no. 2. His lay name is Lhundup Kelsang and he was ordained with the name Gaden Tashi when he joined Gaden Monastery at the age of 15. He participated in the March 5, 1988 demonstration in Lhasa during the Monlam festival and was arrested on the same day and taken to Gutsa Detention Centre. After one month he was transferred to Sitru Detention Centre. He was formally arrested in July 1988 and then found guilty of being a counter-revolutionary. The “TAR” People’s Court sentenced him to three years imprisonment and deprivation of his political rights for one year and he was transferred to Drapchi Prison on March 4, 1989.

At Drapchi, Gaden Tashi formed an independence group with three other prisoners and when the prison authorities found some of their pamphlets his sentence was increased to 12 years.

His hands and legs were manacled for over a year until he lost all feeling in his legs and was hospitalised in November 1992. His medical report stated that he was suffering from brain damage. He believes that this was a result of the beatings he had received. He remained in hospital for over 18 months and was then released on medical parole. He escaped to India in November 1996.

He recalled: “The most suffering that I experienced was from August 3, 1989 until September 8, 1989 when I was kept in solitary confinement at Outridu Prison with my hands and legs manacled for 34 days. The cell that I was held in was very dark and small. For the first three days I experienced unbearable fear and I even felt like committing suicide.”

GYALTSEN CHOETSO

Gyaltzen Choetso was born on October 12, 1969 in Dechen Village, Taktse County, Lhasa City. She joined Garu Nunnery on the outskirts of Lhasa in 1986. She was arrested three times. The first arrest was in December 1987 after she had participated in a demonstration in Lhasa. She was held for one month and 13 days. The second time was in April 1988 after also participating in a demonstration in central Lhasa and this time she was detained for 11 months. The third time she was arrested was in February 1990 after she refused to sign certain politically- oriented documents and then lit fires on the hillsides to commemorate the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, following which she was detained for six months. Each time she was held at Gutsa Detention Centre without being sentenced.

Gyaltzen Choetso was one of the first nuns to ever protest against the Chinese occupation of Tibet. She underwent severe torture and beatings each time she was arrested. She became very ill as a result of the beatings she was subjected to and still suffers from health problems arising from them. She recalled: “The worst things for me were when we were kept in prison and not provided with any water and when we were interrogated I was very sad and upset because they beat me.”

She left Tibet for political reasons in August 1991 and arrived in Dharamsala, India on October 13, 1991. After she was released from prison her movements were watched and she had to seek permission before leaving her local town. She escaped while in Lhasa receiving medical treatment for injuries she received as a result of beatings in prison.

GYALTSEN PELSANG

Gyaltzen Pelsang was born in 1981 in Meldro Gyama County, Lhasa City. She joined Garu Nunnery as a novice. She was arrested at the age of 13 on April 5, 1993 after participating in demonstrations against the Chinese occupation. Gyaltzen was taken to Gutsa Detention Centre for one year and eight months and held without trial or sentencing. While she was imprisoned the Chinese government told the UN in May 1994 that she had been released and the then members of a European Union delegation visiting Lhasa in October 1994 were also told that she had been released. In fact she was held together with adult prisoners without being sentenced until she was released on February 9, 1995.

She became very sick when she was in prison to the extent that once when her father visited her he could not even recognise her. She was not given any reason for her release. She left

Tibet in September 1996 because she had no opportunity to study and was not happy under Chinese rule.

Gyaltzen Pelsang stated: “While in prison we thought that we would willingly suffer as long as we could get our freedom.”

JAMPEL MONLAM

Jampel Monlam was born on August 8, 1968 in Lhasa City. He became a monk and joined Drepung Monastery in 1987 and became a businessman after his release from prison in 1994. Jampel was arrested twice after participating in peaceful demonstrations in Lhasa. He was first arrested on September 27, 1987 and detained at Gutsa Detention Centre for four months from where he was released, together with 59 other monks, following an appeal by the 10th Panchen Lama. The second time that he was arrested was on July 18, 1989 when he was sentenced to five years and held in Drapchi.

After he was released from Drapchi he was not allowed to return to his monastery, his movements were restricted, he was under constant police surveillance and he and his family were frequently harassed by the police. He left Tibet to escape this repression, and arrived in India in February 1998.

He stated: “While the physical pain was enormous, this was nothing compared to the mental pressure we were subjected to. We were imprisoned because we believed that Tibet should be free and yet we were forced to say things contrary to this. The worst thing for me was that I was made to deny His Holiness by calling him a splittist or the serpent’s head, or saying that he was trying to split the motherland. This was very hurtful, particularly as His Holiness is not only our political leader but our spiritual leader. It was particularly painful having to say that Tibet was part of China. The mental pressure was imposed on us continually - both by the guard’s comments and, even worse, when they forced us to say such things ourselves.”

LEUSANG

Leusang was born in 1979 in Taktse County, Lhasa City. He became a monk when he was 12. He was arrested on December 10, 1994, when he was 15, after he and four others painted ‘Free Tibet’ and similar statements on a Chinese official’s office. He was detained for four months in Taktse Prison. Leusang was then transferred to Trisam Labour Camp for one year and nine months where he was forced to do manual labour with the adults. He was told by prison officials that he had been tried and sentenced to two years’ imprisonment.

When he was released from prison he was no longer allowed to be a monk. He felt that he could not do anything else so he came to India. Leusang stated: “The worst thing was that we were forced to work for the whole day. We had no opportunity to get a proper education.”

LHUNDUP MONLAM

Lhundup Monlam was born in 1971 in Gyangtse Town in Gyangtse Count, Shigatse Region in the “TAR”. He became a monk in 1987 when he joined Gyangtse Pel-choy Monastery in Shigatse region. He was arrested on February 16, 1990 after putting up posters in the summer of 1988 saying that Tibetans need human rights and that Tibet is an independent country. It was two years before he was linked to the posters and arrested.

Lhundup was held in Gyangtse Prison for six months until August 4, 1990 when he was transferred to Nyari Prison in Shigatse and then to Drapchi Prison in Lhasa on October 23, 1990. On July 24, 1990, he was sentenced to four years and six months. He was told that his sentence would have been four years but, as he had taken so long to confess, his sentence had been extended by six months.

Lhundup left Tibet on February 5, 1998 and arrived in Nepal on April 3, 1998 and in Dharamsala around May 7, 1998. Lhundup Monlam said: “The worst thing for me was when I was held in Gyangtse Prison as I could not rest day or night because of the constant interrogations. I was also extremely hungry. My grandfather died when I was in prison and this was also very distressing for me.”

LOBSANG SHAKYA

Lobsang Shakya was born in 1974 in district no. 3 in Shigatse. He joined Tashilhunpo Monastery in Shigatse when he was 12. He was arrested on November 26, 1995 together with other monks from his monastery after they refused to recognise the so-called Panchen Lama appointed by the Chinese. He was taken to Karkhang Prison and Military Camp outside Shigatse where he was kept for a little over a month before he was released so that he could be taken to hospital. He believes that the internal injuries for which he was hospitalised were a result of prison beatings in conjunction with poor prison food. From the hospital he escaped to a remote village with the help of one of the doctors.

Lobsang left Tibet around July 1997 as he believed that he could not recognise the boy appointed by the Chinese as the Panchen Lama. He arrived in Nepal on 22 August, 1997.

He recalled: “The worst thing for me was the way that I was beaten as if I was an animal. The Chinese tortured us inhumanely.”

LUKAR JAM

Lukar Jam was born on February 3, 1969 in Sangnak township, Shinghai (Ch.: Xinghai) County of Tso-lho (Ch.: Hainan) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Amdo (Ch.: Qinghai) Province. He was arrested in March 1993 on his return to Tibet after studying for one year in India at a Tibetan exile school. He was found guilty of espionage, for which he was sentenced to eight years imprisonment and also of forming and leading a counter-revolutionary group, for which he was sentenced to an additional ten years imprisonment, followed by five years of political rights deprivation.

He was sentenced on July 28, 1994 by the Tsonub (Ch. Hai-xi) People’s Court, Mongolian and Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, after being held in Shigatse Nyari Prison and Seitru in the “TAR”. He was then held in the Terlengkha (Ch.: Delingha) PSB Detention Centre. He was released on April 28, 1995 on medical parole after he had become seriously ill and only weighed 30 kg.

Lukar left Tibet after he recovered from his illness and arrived in Dharamsala, India on November 17, 1997. He stated that: “The worst thing for me is that there is no regard for prisoners’ human rights. They are regularly violated even though the rights exist under Chinese law. The prison authorities act however they want to and not with any regard to the

law. Beating and torture are commonplace occurrences in all Chinese prisons. Many prisoners die from the way they are mistreated.”

NGAWANG CHOEDON

Ngawang Choedon was born in 1967 in Gamanunda Town, Medro Gongkar, Lhasa City. She became a nun on December 26, 1986. Initially she did not join a nunnery but then she joined Chubsang Nunnery where she stayed for four months.

She was arrested on October 15, 1989 after taking part in the Monlam (prayer festival) demonstrations in the Barkhor. She demonstrated with three other nuns who all called out ‘Tibet is the country of Tibetans...Chinese quit Tibet.’ She was taken to Gutsa Detention Centre and sentenced to three years imprisonment after four days. She was kept in Gutsa for two years and four months and then transferred to Trisam Labour Camp for eight months. She was released on October 15, 1992.

Ngawang Choedon arrived in Dharamsala, India in April, 1993. She recalled: “When I was in prison I didn’t believe that I would ever be able to leave and I thought that I would die there. The worst thing for me was watching criminal prisoners go free and yet I was still locked up and had no freedom. I don’t remember so much of the beatings because of the emotions I felt at the time.”

NGAWANG CHOEZOM

Ngawang Choezom was born in 1973 in Toelung, Dechen County. She joined Chubsang Nunnery in 1987. She was arrested on October 15, 1989 after participating in a demonstration around the Barkhor in Lhasa with three other nuns in 1989 and was taken to Gutsa where she was sentenced to three years’ imprisonment after 15 days. While in Gutsa, she became very ill and so was released and hospitalised after one year and 10 months because of illness.

Ngawang Choezom left Tibet in 1992 because after she was released from prison she was expelled from her nunnery so she escaped to India to continue her religious life. She arrived in Dharamsala, India on November 20, 1992. She said: “The worst part for me was when I was very seriously ill. It was very hard for me to bear.”

PALDEN GYATSO

Palden Gyatso was born in 1931 in Panam, Gyantse, in the Shigatse region of the “TAR”. He joined Gadong Monastery in Shigatse when he was 10 and moved to Drepung Monastery in the outskirts of Lhasa six years later. Palden Gyatso was first arrested in late 1959 or early 1960 after participating in the 1959 first Tibetan national uprising outside the Norbulinka in Lhasa. He was held for a total of 33 years until his final release in August 1992, except for a period of one month and 18 days when he was returned to Drepung Monastery in 1962. He was held in a number of prisons, including Drapchi Prison, Panam County Prison, Gyantse Prison, Shigatse Prison, Outridu Prison and Nyethang Prison. After serving a 15 year sentence (seven years for participating in the uprising and a further eight years for attempted escape) he was held (without sentence) for ten years in “administrative detention”. In 1983 he received a further eight-year sentence for putting up signed wall posters calling for independence.

Because of the length of his stay in various prisons, Palden Gyatso has experienced many horrors: he saw uncountable fellow prisoners die from starvation from 1960-1962; his teeth fell out following the insertion of an electric cattle prod in his mouth; he was made to plough the fields like an animal; he was subjected to long and strenuous tamzing sessions during the Cultural Revolution; he witnessed fellow prisoners dying from lack of medical care and had his shoulder dislocated following a beating. He escaped from Tibet in September 1992.

He recounted: “The worst thing for me was that in addition to the daily political meetings we were subjected to we also had to undergo severe interrogation sessions in which we were compelled to accept that Tibet is part of China. I was in prison because I firmly believed that this was not true and it was contrary to my deepest convictions yet they beat us until we said such things. This was not only demoralising for those of us in prison but it also affected the entire Tibetan community and their struggle for independence as they heard that even the political prisoners said that Tibet was part of China. It was extremely tormenting for us all. We lived in constant fear of the interrogation sessions and what we would be made to say in them. We knew that we would be beaten if we did not say what they wanted and that the sessions would happen again and again - they were unavoidable. It was awful being made to say things that were totally against my principles. Up until my release, thinking of the interrogation sessions to come was always my worst nightmare. There would be a brief period of happiness in my life and then I would recall that at any moment I could be called again to go against everything my life had stood for.”

RINZIN KUNSANG

Rinzin Kunsang was born in 1965 in Jelsam Nu, Nyemo County in Lhasa City. She became a nun at 19 and joined Shugseb Nunnery. She was arrested on May 17, 1988 after participating in a demonstration around the Barkhor with two monks and eight other nuns, including Tenzin

Choedon, shouting slogans like “Long live His Holiness the Dalai Lama” and “Chinese leave Tibet” and distributing pamphlets with the same messages. She was taken to Gutsa Detention Centre and held there for two months until she was released on July 15, 1988 after the Panchen Lama interceded on behalf of a number of political prisoners.

Rinzin arrived in India around 1992. She stated: “The worst thing for me was the hunger. And also, for the first few days it was difficult to adjust to being locked in a cell all day and night and not having any freedom of movement.”

SONAM DOLKAR

Sonam Dolkar was born in 1967 in Lhasa. Before she was arrested, she was a tailor in Lhasa. She was arrested on August 30, 1990 after being politically active for some time. She had taken part in demonstrations in 1987, 1988 and 1990. In 1987 and 1988 four nuns were arrested. When they were released she interviewed them and then prepared documents about their treatment that were sent to the Tibetan Government-in-exile and elsewhere overseas. The Chinese authorities later connected Sonam to the documents.

Sonam was taken to Gutsa for two days and then to Seitru where she was held for one year. When it was time to sentence her, Sonam had become very ill as a result of beatings received in Seitru and she was taken to hospital. While she was in the hospital she was sentenced to 10

years' imprisonment. When she learned this she escaped from Tibet with the help of some friends so that she would not have to return to prison to complete her sentence.

She arrived in Dharamsala on October 27, 1991 having left Tibet three months earlier. Sonam recalled: "When I was asked questions and beaten for several months I felt very sad and depressed."

TENZIN CHOEDON

Tenzin Choedon was born in 1970 in Tapluaga Village, Toelung County, Lhasa City. She joined Shugseb Nunnery when she was 16. She was arrested on May 17, 1988 after she participated in a peaceful demonstration with two monks and eight other nuns, including Rinzin Kunsang. She was taken to Gutsa Detention Centre and held there for two months, and then released. She was told that she was released because of her youth and that the officials believed that, because of her age, others must have forced her to protest. She was told that the "others" would be investigated.

Tenzin left Tibet in December 1991 because, upon her release from prison, she was expelled from her nunnery and had no place to stay. She arrived in exile the same month. Tenzin recalled: "The worst thing was the ways in which we were tortured, especially when I was given electric shocks or when they held my head against the wall and then kicked it with steel-toed shoes. Then my head swelled up awfully and was black all over from the bruises. A foreign doctor who examined me after I was released said that because of the torture I had been inflicted with I had various nerve diseases in my back and problems with my liver and kidneys. I also frequently got very bad migraines and felt very sick. Even though I felt so awful I was glad that I was doing something for my country. While I was being tortured part of me didn't really feel it as I knew that I was doing my part to free Tibet."

THUPTEN TSERING

Thupten Tsering was born in 1925 in Damshung County, Lhasa City. He was a monk from Sera Monastery. He left Tibet in 1996 and arrived in India on December 18, 1996. He was arrested several times, including in 1960, 1965 and December 1987, after protesting against the Chinese occupation. In 1987 he was arrested for speaking on an Italian tourist's video about the lack of religious rights and economic opportunities in Tibet.

Thupten was first arrested in 1960 and sent to a prison in Phenpo Lhundrup County, Lhasa City, for three months for "educational" purposes. In 1965 he was again arrested and taken to Gutsa. Then he was transferred to Outridu, in Sangyip Prison, and sentenced to seven years. He was officially released in 1972 but was then kept in a forced labour camp at Outridu until 1979. In 1979 he was still not released but he was then paid a nominal wage for his work. He remained there until 1987. In December 1987 while living in Lhasa Thupten was again arrested with Yulo Dawa Tsering and returned to Seitru Prison in Sangyip. After he was sentenced to six years he was taken to Drapchi Prison.

He remembered: "The worst thing for me was the torture that I was forced to undergo in Gutsa. I was tortured for sharing my tsampa with other prisoners. I was finger-cuffed and beaten severely so that I later became incontinent."

YESHE TOGDEN

Yeshe Togden was born around 1965 in Meldro Gongka, Lhasa city. He became a monk and joined Gaden Monastery. He was arrested twice - the first time on March 5, 1988 after having participated in a demonstration during the Great Prayer Festival (Tib.: Monlam) and the second time on March 9, 1989 after again participating in demonstrations in Lhasa. In 1988, he was detained in Gutsa Detention Centre and then transferred to Outridu in Sangyip complex for a total of five months. In 1989, he was first taken to Outridu and then to Seitru and was held for more than two months. Each time he was arrested and detained he was held without trial.

He left Tibet in 1990 as he had been barred from rejoining any monastery in Tibet following his participation in two demonstrations. His movements were also restricted after he left prison the second time; he was not even allowed to leave the place where he was living for more than one week.

He stated: "For me, the worst thing was not being able to speak openly about what I thought and felt and not being able to be honest because of the fear of beatings and repercussions."

YESHI DAMDUL

Yeshe Damdul was born on December 12 or 14, 1970 in Gonkar County in Lhoka Region in the "TAR". When he was 17, he studied for two years at Sungrapling Monastery and Drepung Monastery. He was arrested on March 16, 1989. In 1988 and 1989 he participated in the demonstrations in Lhasa although he was not arrested. Then he returned to his village monastery in Gonkar and began to be involved in political activities such as making wall posters and pamphlets with anti-Chinese slogans. After some time the Chinese authorities found out and he was arrested.

Yeshe was detained for eight months in Tsethang Prison. After he was sentenced he was taken to Drapchi Prison. He had two trials, the first of which he was told was the first trial for political prisoners since 1959. He was found guilty of being a "counter-revolutionary propaganda activist". He was sentenced to five years imprisonment and was told that it would have been longer because of the seriousness of his crime but the authorities had taken into account that he was only 19 years old. He was released on March 17, 1994.

Yeshe stated: "The biggest problem I faced in prison was my stomach ulcer after I was beaten. Once I started to suffer from the ulcer it was very difficult for me as the food was very poor and there was no choice but to eat the food given by the prison authorities. I could not properly digest it and often suffered a lot of pain and had diarrhoea. I still suffer from problems related to this."

[\(Contents\)](#)

SUMMARY

Thousands of Tibetans have been imprisoned in Chinese penal institutions since the Chinese occupation of Tibet. Throughout the last forty years Tibetan prisoners have been physically and psychologically abused, attempts have been made to "re-educate" them and their identity as Tibetans has been attacked. Tibetans have had no right to freedom of expression, assembly

or association and have been punished brutally in the prisons when they have tried to exercise these rights.

The treatment of political prisoners in Chinese-administered prisons in Tibet falls far short of commonly accepted international standards. It is, moreover, contrary to many of the PRC's own laws and regulations governing the conduct of PSB and PAP officials, as well as in violation of international conventions which the PRC has ratified such as the Convention Against Torture and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The use of torture and corporal punishment is widespread throughout China. However, the ill-treatment of Tibetan prisoners appears particularly inhumane and they are singled out in that they are denied the opportunity to practise their religion and hence to assert both their distinct cultural and national identity and officials place a high emphasis on political "re-education".

Almost all political prisoners in Tibet, including those interviewed for this report, were arrested for non-violent crimes, generally for calling out pro-independence slogans and producing and distributing pamphlets. In contrast, their treatment upon entering the Chinese penal system is appallingly violent.

The most recently released of the prisoners interviewed was released in 1996. A letter from political prisoners in Drapchi Prison in March 1997 confirms that the atrocities which the interviewees reported are continuing. While the form which the maltreatment of prisoners takes is modified from time to time, it is clear that it continues to be acceptable to abuse political prisoners. The extent of the prison authorities continuing disregard for the prisoners' welfare is manifested by their recent behaviour in May 1998 when prison guards and PAP soldiers opened fire on a group of protesting prisoners. Eleven prisoners are reported to have died as a result of the shooting and torture that followed the protest.

TCHRD records indicate that, as at January 1998, there were approximately 1,200 political prisoners in Tibet. It is likely that those prisoners are being subjected to the kinds of brutalities and degradations suffered by the former prisoners interviewed for this report. Very few Tibetan political prisoners make it through their experience of Chinese penal institutions without being subjected to the most demeaning and violent forms of abuse imaginable.

Both the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention Against Torture state: "No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment." While some Chinese laws are designed to prohibit such behaviour, the reality is that it continues to be perpetrated in Chinese prisons. In Chinese-administered prisons in Tibet, political prisoners are subdued physically and mentally and often housed in empty, cold cells and given dirty food lacking in nutrition. They are forced to undergo education sessions in which they are "educated" as to the supposed validity of China's claim to Tibet and to the "advantages" of the Chinese occupation.

There can be no excuse for the atrocities that continue to be perpetuated against Tibetan political prisoners. Rather than even seeking to find an excuse, the Chinese prison authorities seem to either ignore or condone the manner in which prisoners are treated. Recent official statements from PRC representatives present a glowing picture of the Tibetan prisons but the accounts of the former prisoners stand as a memorial to their true treatment.

[\(Contents\)](#)

RECOMMENDATIONS

- During and subsequent to “arrest,” prisoners should be treated humanely. The conduct of the interrogating officers must be regulated and the constant use of corporal punishment as an interrogation technique and a punishment for any perceived breach of discipline must stop. The use of electric shocks, cold rooms and other torture techniques must cease.
- A detainee's family should be informed of his or her whereabouts immediately after he or she is taken to detention. While the revised CPL states that the police should notify a suspect's family within 24 hours of placing him or her under arrest, in practice the notification requirement is frequently dispensed with.
- In each detention centre and prison there should be at least one official to whom prisoners can complain to of any violation of their rights.
- Prisoners should be fed an adequate and nutritious diet so as to ensure good health.
- Rules relating to the behaviour of prisoners and guards should be posted in the prison. (At present the rules only relate to the prisoners' behaviour).
- Prisoners should be accorded their right to meaningful legal representation before and during their trial.
- The use of handcuffs and other restraints should accord with the PRC regulations - that they should only be used where there is a possibility of escape, violence or other “dangerous act” by an offender. The use of solitary confinement as a punishment should be restricted and limited to the maximum period of 15 days stipulated in the PRC regulations.
- The standard of the cells must be dramatically improved, particularly in the detention centres and local jails where prisoners are first held. The rooms should be clean, and adequate beds and bedding should be provided.
- Prisoners should be given the opportunity to wash and use a toilet regularly.
- Prisoners should be allowed to practise their religion freely. Tibetan prisoners should be allowed to perform prostrations; to have mala beads (Tibetan rosary), to possess scriptures and pictures of Tibetan deities; and to chant mantras without fear of persecution or punishment.
- Prison work should emphasise teaching prisoners ongoing and practical skills. Penal institutions should not be treated as profit making ventures.
- Prisoners should be allowed to practise their right to freedom of expression. The practice of indoctrinating political prisoners with pro-Chinese propaganda is a violation of their right to hold their own opinions. The use of brute force to ensure an appropriate response to questions posed must also be stopped.
- Prisoners should be entitled to decent medical care within the penal institution in which they are kept with properly qualified staff and appropriate medicine. Medicine that is outdated should never be dispensed. In cases of serious illness, external health care should be sought. The cost of hospitalisation of prisoners should be borne by the PRC and not by the prisoners' families.
- The recent practice of prison authorities opening fire on prisoners following protests at Drapchi Prison is totally inappropriate behaviour. Other methods of non-violent control must be used. Prisoners should not be punished by use of torture or degrading treatment for expressing their opinions. Appropriate fora should be made available to allow prisoners to register their views on prison conditions and other issues relating to prisoners.

- Upon release, Tibetan political prisoners should be allowed to participate freely in the community without harassment and without having their movements monitored and restricted.
 - The treatment of women political prisoners must be improved. The practice of any form of sexual abuse or harassment must cease. Women prisoners should be provided with sanitary napkins.
 - Juveniles must be kept separately from adults in accordance PRC legislation and its international obligations under the CRC.
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[\(Contents\)](#)

APPENDIX

Questionnaire

Personal information:

Name: (check very carefully if the person is planning to return to Tibet or not and whether s/he really wants his/her name used)

Sex:

Monk/Nun/Lay Person:

Date of birth: (any details even if only year or Tibetan date)

Origin: (village, county, region, province, "Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture" - both Chinese and Tibetan place names if applicable).

Date s/he left Tibet and date of arrival in Nepal or India:

Reasons for leaving Tibet:

Arrest/Prison:

Date of arrest(s):

Reasons for arrest:

Places and dates/periods of detention from arrest until release:

Details of trial, including whether any legal representation or right to give testimony:

Details of prison sentence (if known):

Did you receive any documentation of your sentence - was it in Tibetan and/or Chinese?

Date of release:

Reasons for release:

Prison conditions:

Cell condition:

How big was your cell? How many prisoners were kept together in the one cell? Was the cell clean?

What was in the cell? Were there beds? What toilet and cleaning facilities were there?

How often could you wash?

What did you wear? Who supplied it? Was it cleaned? Were you warm enough?

What was your cell like in different seasons (temperature, etc.)?

What lighting was there in the cell?

How were the cells organised - was one person in charge of the cell? What power did they have?

Food:

What/when were you fed each day?

Did you get sufficient food? Do you know of anyone who died from starvation or malnutrition?

Was there a separate dining room?

Work/Recreation:

How often were you allowed out of the cell? For how long and for what purpose?

Were you made to work? Doing what? What were your hours of work? Do political prisoners have to perform the same type of work as criminals - How different? Did you have to meet quotas? Were you punished if you didn't meet your quota? Was the work safe? Did you see any accidents?

Did you receive any kind of education?

Was there any opportunity to exercise?

Were you permitted reading or writing material?

Treatment by Guards and Prison Rules:

How were you generally treated by prison officials?

Were you ever tortured (Note: this includes threats) or beaten while in prison or detention?

Describe (when, by whom (Chinese or Tibetan), how, for what reason). Describe interrogation sessions. Did you suffer any injuries from this?

Were there rules that you were aware of? Were they available to inmates? Could you complain about your treatment to anyone in authority in the prison?

Were you ever punished by the guards? What for? What was the punishment? Were you ever physically restrained? - what with? Why?

Were you ever punished jointly together with others in the prison?

Solitary Confinement:

Were you ever kept in solitary confinement? For how long? Describe the cell (size, clean/dirty), the food you were given and your treatment by the guards.

Health care:

How was your health while in prison? Were you ever ill?

What type of medical care was available in the prison? Did you ever request medical care?

Was it received? Describe the type of care received - who examined you and were you given any medicine?

Was your blood ever extracted or were you given any injections? Were you asked for your consent?

Did anyone ever become seriously ill or die while in prison? What measures did the prison authorities take?

Contact with Outside:

Were you permitted visitors? How often? Were they allowed to bring things? Could you receive mail or any news of the outside world?

Was your family told when you were detained/arrested/sentenced?

Religious Freedom:

Were you allowed to practise your religion in prison? What did the authorities do if you (or anyone else) tried?

Were you able to honour Tibetan holidays?

Segregation:

Were you held with Chinese prisoners? Were you held with criminals? Were the men, women and children below 18 years old separated? Were each of these groups treated the same way by the prison guards? Did this lead to any problems?

Protests/Demonstrations:

Were there any protests or demonstrations while you were in prison? What did the guards do to stop them? What did the guards do after the demonstrations? Was anyone killed or beaten? Were there any delegation visits while you were in prison? When, who, what happened before and after such visits?

What was the worst part of being in prison for you (apart from being locked up)?
Is there anything you would like to add?

Women:

Did you have access to sanitary napkins?

How were women treated who were pregnant?

Were women treated in the same way as men? What were the differences, e.g. work?

Were you aware of any sexual abuse by guards (including during interrogations or torture)?

Were women prisoners ever raped by the guards?

[\(Contents\)](#)

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