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Tibetans end hunger strike outside UN, one month after it began

23 March, 2012 / CBC NEWS: THREE TIBETANS WHO HAVE BEEN QUIETLY starving themselves in the shadow of the United Nations headquarters in New York City in an effort to get the UN to pressure China to end its repressive rule over Tibet ended their hunger strike Thursday, a month after it began.

Richard Bennett, special adviser to the UN assistant secretary general on human rights, met with two of the men and agreed to appoint a special rapporteur for human rights to look into the hunger strikers' concerns, according to supporters of the men who spoke to the media.

They sealed the deal—and broke their month-long fast—by drinking a glass of orange juice.

Only two of the hunger strikers were present for the end of the strike. The third, Dorjee Gyalpo, 69, had been forcefully removed from the protest site three days earlier by police when he couldn't stand up when asked to do so by officers.

The officers gave him no option but to leave by ambulance, and he was transported to New York's Bellevue Hospital, where he continued his fast.

Like his fellow hunger strikers, he told media he was ready to die unless the UN dispatched a



Photo: Ivan Simonovic, the assistant secretary-general of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, is handed an envelope with the demands of the hunger strikers on March 22. (David Common/CBC)

fact-finding mission to Tibet.

The three activists have also been calling on the UN to pressure China to end the de facto state of martial law in the region, whose people have long been oppressed by Chinese authorities bent on assimilating them into Chinese culture and squashing their attempts to gain full autonomy for Tibet.

In the last days of the hunger strike, all three men were looking increasingly gaunt, their eyes

sunken from weeks of starvation.

Each had lost at least 20 pounds. March is the traditional month of protest for Tibetan activists the world over, who every year this month mark the bloody but ultimately futile uprising against Chinese rule that took place in March 1959.

In China, several Tibetan monks and nuns have self-immolated in the past few weeks — Buddhists, who view their body as a temple,

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Amnesty International urged China to stop using excessive force in Tibet in official statement

25 January, 2012

DHARAMSALA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL ISSUED A STRONG STATEMENT yesterday, urging China to stop using excessive force in response to protests and allow independent monitors into areas of protests in Tibetan regions.

The statement comes after Chinese security forces in Sichuan Province reportedly fired on Tibetan protesters killing five and injuring more than 30 people in a renewed unrest in Serthar county and Drakgo township.

“The Chinese authorities are responding only with repression and a security crackdown to an already volatile situation,

instead of addressing long-standing human rights grievances on the part of Tibetans,” said Sam Zarifi, Amnesty International’s Asia-Pacific director.

“The situation has not improved in Tibetan areas since 2008 when tensions exploded into violence. Grievances regarding restrictions on religious and cultural freedoms have gotten worse, not better.”

Amnesty International also stated that the Chinese government should allow access to foreign media to investigate in the sensitive areas and that China should ensure that the investigations are independent, impartial and effective. ■

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Tibet News

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pouring gasoline on that body and burning themselves to death. The Chinese hide the corpses, so that they aren't used to inspire others.

Gyalpo is the oldest of the hunger strikers in New York, and he is also the only American. The other two are much younger activists from Dharamsala, India, the home of Tibetans' government in exile and the Dalai Lama, their spiritual leader.

Yeshi Tenzing turned 39 in the early weeks of the fast, and Tenzin Choeki Gyalsen is 32. Gyalsen is a well-known activist monk who fled Tibet in 1997 and is considered by Buddhists to be the 11th reincarnation of Shingza Rinpoche, a past lama, or spiritual master.

Bennett was the second official to meet with the protesters. Earlier in the strike, another UN representative came out to shake hands and talk with the hunger strikers. They had been hoping to meet with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon himself, but he never showed up at the protest site.

Others have come, though, over the course of the past month. Tourists found the protest a curiosity, taking photos from double-decker buses. U.S. actor Richard Gere, a Buddhist, paid a visit, hoping to raise awareness of the plight of Tibetans and the hunger strike, which went largely unnoticed in this thumping metropolis.

The end of the hunger strike couldn't have



HE the 11th Shingza Rinpoche. UN Headquarters NY

come sooner for those concerned about the men's health. In the first three days of a hunger strike, the body can feed off stored-up glucose.

When that is exhausted, the liver starts to process body fat. Typically, that lasts about three weeks, and then the body enters starvation mode, raiding its own muscles, bone marrow and organs for energy, which is considered life-threatening.

The men's bodies were likely in this final dangerous phase when the strike ended. ■

China closes Tibet during sensitive period

19 January, 2012

BEIJING (AP): FOR A FIFTH STRAIGHT YEAR, China plans to close Tibet to foreign travelers during a sensitive period starting in mid-February, travel agents said Thursday.

Agent Yu Zhi of the Lhasa Youth Tourist Agency said Thursday the government's tourist administration in Tibet's capital had informed agents that foreign travelers would be banned from Feb. 20 to March 30.

Another agent with the China International Travel Agency in Lhasa, who wouldn't give her name, said she'd been told the ban would end March 20.

The periodic closure of the Himalayan region encompasses the Feb. 22-24 Tibetan new year festival of Losar as well as the anniversary of a deadly anti-government riot among Tibetans on March 14, 2008.

Tensions are especially high this year following the self-immolations of at least 16 Buddhist monks, nuns and other Tibetans. Most have chanted for Tibetan freedom and the return of their spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, who fled to India amid an abortive uprising against Chinese rule in 1959.

While authorities have never explained the rational behind the annual closure, it's seen as a standard measure based on the assumption that outsiders could either inspire

or witness renewed anti-government protests or other conflicts.

"We haven't seen a written notice, but it's the same as previous bans. We were not told about the reasons, but it's probably because of the Tibetan new year," said Yu, the Lhasa agent.

In addition to the coming closure of Tibet proper, traditionally Tibetan areas of Sichuan province and other parts of western China where most of the self-immolations have taken place have been closed to outsiders for months amid a massive security presence.

A clerk with the Lhasa Tourist Bureau denied there was a ban, but declined give her name. Chinese officials often issue orders regarding sensitive political issues only verbally to allow deniability and maintain the impression of control.

Although Chinese citizens are generally exempt from such closure orders, they have dented China's hopes to develop tourism into a major economic driver in one of the country's poorest regions. Many Tibetans resent Beijing's heavy-handed rule and large-scale migration of China's ethnic Han majority to the Himalayan region. While China claims Tibet has been under its rule for centuries, many Tibetans say the region was functionally independent for most of that time. ■



Observation of 53rd Anniversary of Tibetan National Uprising Day

TIBETANS AND SUPPORTERS all over the world commemorated the 53rd Anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising Day on 10th March. This year has special significance due to the large number of self-immolation by Tibetan monks, nuns and lay people demanding, freedom and return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. The Chinese authorities responded by imposing undeclared martial law and repressive measures against the peaceful protesters.

Tibetans and supporters in various parts of Australia organized vigils, peaceful demonstrations and protest marches to the Chinese Embassy and consulates. They called for the international community to show solidarity and support for the peaceful movement of the Tibetans and urged China to allow international media and fact finding mission to Tibet. ■

France Concerned by Self-immolations in Tibet

21 January, 2012

DHARAMSALA: FRANCE HAS EXPRESSED ITS CONCERN and sadness over the upsurge of tragic self-immolations by young Tibetans in Tibet, calling on the Chinese government that dialogue is the only way to resolve the crisis in Tibet.

“Following the tragic incidents that have taken place in recent weeks, France expresses its sadness over the death by self-immolation of young Tibetan monks. The extreme nature of their acts reflects a strong sense of despair,” French foreign ministry spokesman Bernard Valero said at a regular press briefing on 19 January.

“France is concerned by the upsurge in the number of these self-immolations since fall 2011,” he told reporters.

“It [France] reaffirms its attachment to religious freedom and the preservation of Tibetan culture and traditions, as well as the respect for human rights. It believes that dialogue is the only way to achieve a lasting solution, while fully respecting Tibet’s cultural and spiritual identity, within the framework of the People’s Republic of China.

“These messages are regularly reaffirmed to the Chinese authorities within the framework of our political contacts and the EU-China dialogue on

human rights,” Mr Valero said.

Sixteen Tibetans have self immolated in the last twelve months, out of which 12 succumbed to their injuries, while the whereabouts of 4 Tibetans remain unknown. All those who set themselves in fire have demanded the restoration of freedom in Tibet and the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to his homeland.

Lobsang Jamyang, aged 22, who set himself on fire in Ngaba in north-eastern Tibet last Saturday, was kicked and beaten by police with clubs spiked with nails. “He doused himself in petrol and set himself on fire. He walked into the street calling for the long life of the Dalai Lama and for freedom in Tibet. Police began to kick and beat him with clubs spiked with nails rather than immediately focusing on putting out the flames,” US based rights group International Campaign for Tibet said.

Meanwhile, China plans to close Tibet to foreign travellers for a fifth straight year.

The Associated Press quoted travel agents in Lhasa as saying that the government’s tourist administration in Tibet’s capital had informed them that foreign travellers would be banned from 20 February to 30 March. ■

Photo: Kalon Tripa Dr Lobsang Sangay addressing the commemoration of the 53rd anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising Day in Dharamsala, India, 10 March 2012/Photo by Namgyal Tsewang.

EU, France, United Kingdom, Germany, Czech and US raise the Tibetan issue at UN

14 March, 2012

GENEVA: EU AND FOUR OTHER COUNTRIES yesterday raised human rights in Tibet at the UN Human Rights Council 19th Session in Geneva. During the three minutes oral statement under the item 4: Human Rights situations that requires the Council’s attention; EU, France, United Kingdom, Germany, Czech and USA expressed concern at human rights situation in Tibet.

“The Chinese authorities’ heavy-handed measures in Tibetan-populated areas, especially in Sichuan province, give rise to serious concerns. The EU was alarmed by recent reports about the violent suppression of protests in this region, which led to many injured and several fatalities,” said the EU delegation.

EU called on China to allow all Tibetans,

including monks, to exercise their cultural and religious rights without hindrance. EU said China must refrain from the use of force against peaceful protest and to improve the human rights situation in Tibet as well as in other parts of China, as a means to ensuring peace and stability. The EU also called for the unconditional release of all those imprisoned and detained solely for the peacefully exercising their basic rights, such as the freedom of expression, assembly, association and religion.

The French delegation said many young Tibetans were setting themselves on fire and this was grave concern to France who is in favour of religious freedom.

United Kingdom called on China to safeguard civil, political and cultural rights of all its citizens and expressed concerned

by the violent suppression of protest in Tibet. And the Germany delegation said it supported the statement by the EU and further voiced its concern about the situation in Tibet.

Czech Republic said that there are reports of continued escalation of Tibetan areas and Xinjiang are alarming.

“We reiterate our called on Chinese authorities to allow for unhindered access to all areas for international monitoring. As we witnessed tightening restrictions on freedom of expression,” said the Czech delegation.

The US urged the Chinese government to reassess policies that undermine Tibetan and Uighur linguistic, religious, and cultural traditions, creating grievances and fostering unrest. ■

Australian Government's Statement on Tibetan Immolations

18 January, 2012

AUSTRALIA TIBET COUNCIL has urged the Australian government this week to make an urgent representation to China in the wake of the escalating crisis in eastern Tibet.

Tibetan immolations continue in Tibet into 2012 - the fourth having taken place on 14 January. A total of 17 Tibetans have set themselves on fire since 2009 in protest against the Chinese government's policies and to demand "freedom in Tibet" and the "return of the Dalai Lama".

In response to a question by an Australian journalist on 15 January, a spokesperson for Foreign Minister Kevin Rudd made the following comments:

- The minister has been deeply concerned by the tragic Tibetan self-immolations. - The Australian government again calls on China to address the underlying causes of tension in Tibet and other Tibetan regions in China.
- The government reminds the Chinese authorities that economic development

should be complemented by protection of the unique linguistic, cultural and religious identities of China's minorities.

- Officials from the Australian embassy in Beijing visited Sichuan province in October 2011 to hear firsthand from the monks there of what was happening.

- The Australian ambassador raised the government's serious concerns with the vice-governor of Sichuan province on 29 November.

- On the minister's instructions, representations have been made repeatedly to the Chinese authorities in Beijing and to the Chinese embassy in Canberra.

- The foreign minister also discussed the treatment of Tibetans with vice-president Xi Jinping in 2010 and again with senior politburo member Jia Qinglin in April 2011.

- The government continues to monitor closely the situation on the ground in the Tibet Autonomous Region and other Tibetan

regions in China.

- The foreign minister receives regular reports from the Australian embassy in Beijing.

- The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade meets regularly with Australia Tibet Council including to discuss Australia's Human Rights Dialogue with China.

- The government receives correspondence from a range of people and groups concerned about the situation in Tibet and ethnic Tibetan regions of China.

Australia Tibet Council has briefed government officials and parliamentarians on the Tibetan immolations regularly over the past year. ATC has advocated for the Australian government to take a strong stand against China's repressive policies in Tibet, which are driving the Tibetans to breaking point. Many hundreds of our members have also written to the foreign minister and their local MPs. ■

'China undermining International Human Rights norms,' says Rights Group

DHARAMSALA, 22 January: THE "ONE-PARTY AUTHORITARIAN STATE" of China continues to impose "sharp curbs on freedom of expression, association, and religion; openly rejects judicial independence and press freedom; and arbitrarily restricts and suppresses human rights defenders and organisations," says a new global report by a leading rights group.

The 676-page 'World Report 2012' by the New York based Human Rights Watch was released today, reviewing human rights practices around the globe, summarising major rights issues in more than 90 countries.

The report noted that the situation in ethnic Tibetan areas "remained tense" in 2011 following the massive crackdown on popular protests that swept the plateau in 2008.

"Chinese security forces maintain a heavy presence and the authorities continue to tightly restrict access and travel to Tibetan areas, particularly for journalists and foreign visitors," the report said.

"Tibetans suspected of being critical of political, religious, cultural, or economic state policies are targeted on charges

of 'separatism.'"

The report went on to say that China, while maintaining highly repressive policies in Tibet, regularly condones abuses of power in the name of "social stability" and rejects international scrutiny of its human rights record as "attempts to destabilise and impose 'Western values' on the country".

Taking note of the stagnant Sino-Tibet dialogue process, the report said the Chinese government is yet to give any indications of accommodating the aspirations of Tibetan people for greater autonomy.

"It (Chinese government) has rejected holding negotiations with the new elected leader of the Tibetan community in exile, Lobsang Sangay, and warned that it would designate the next Dalai Lama itself," the rights group said.

The report noted that the Arab Spring struck fear in the Chinese leadership, which went on to take the "unprecedented step" of rounding up over 30 of the most outspoken critics and "disappearing" them for weeks.

"In February 2011, the government launched the largest crackdown on human rights lawyers, activists, and critics in a

decade," the annual report said while giving official and scholarly estimates of 250-500 protests occurring every day in China. The participants number from ten to tens of thousands.

Strongly criticising Chinese government's "overt hostility towards genuine judicial independence", the rights group said that weak courts and tight limits on the rights of the defense led to "forced confessions under torture" and "miscarriages of justice."

"China continued in 2011 to lead the world in executions. The exact number remains a state secret but is estimated to range from 5,000 to 8,000 a year," the report said.

Lambasting China on its continued violation of the domestic and international legal guarantees of freedom of press and expression, the report said China imprisoned at least 34 Chinese journalists on ambiguous charges of "inciting subversion" and "revealing state secrets."

Underlining the increase in its hostility towards liberalisation and legal reform since the 2008 Beijing Olympics, the report said that the Chinese government continues to undermine international human rights norms and institutions. ■

Kalon Tripa Calls for More Concrete Actions from International Community on Tibet

DHARAMSALA, 8 February: EXPRESSING GRAVE CONCERN OVER THE WELL-BEING of Tibetans in Tibet in view of the Chinese military build-up in Tibet, Kalon Tripa has called for more substantive support from the world community to end the Chinese government's repression in Tibet.

Kalon Tripa Dr. Lobsang Sangay, Supreme Justice Commissioner Ngawang Phelgye, Deputy Speaker Lopen Khenpo Sonam Tenphel and Kalons reciting 'Words of Truth' with the public before the Candle Light Vigil at Tsuglag Khang, Mcleod Ganj on 08 February 2012.

"Hundreds of convoys carrying Chinese military personnel with automatic machine guns are moving towards Tibet. We fear many Tibetans might face unfortunate experiences," Kalon Tripa Dr Lobsang Sangay told hundreds of Tibetans and supporters gathered at a solidarity vigil in Dharamsala today.

"We really feel the Chinese government is preparing for something really tragic. Hence it is critical that the international community must intervene now to show support for Tibet and Tibetan people," Dr Sangay said. "The Tibetans in Tibet are giving up their lives because the occupation of Tibet and repressive policies of the Chinese government is unacceptable," Kalon Tripa said.

"We really appreciate statements issued by different countries like the US and European countries. But we would like to seek some more concrete actions to send delegates to Tibet to investigate the reality and the military build-up in Tibet, deaths and torture of Tibetans, and the reasons why there is repression, why Tibetans are self-immolating," Kalon Tripa added.

He urged the US to pass the Senate resolution to show support to the Tibetan people.

Kalon Tripa urged the international media, including those working in China, to make more efforts to go to Tibet and objectively report why the Tibetans are self-immolating. "If the world media cannot go to Tibet, we never know what else is happening inside Tibetan areas, and how many more Tibetans are being killed and dying," he added.

Kalon Tripa said the Chinese government's response towards the Chinese people's protest in Wukang in Guangdong province show the discrimination against the Tibetan people. He said Guangdong governor fired local communist party officials, gave powers to the protesting groups and addressed their grievances.

"Whereas in Tibet, several hundred Tibetans gathered in Dragko area, but the

Chinese police indiscriminately shot Tibetans and killed them. So, the world is watching that there is a blatant discrimination towards Tibetans because Chinese can protest, their grievances addressed, whereas Tibetans cannot protest," Kalon Tripa said.

"If the Chinese government thinks the Tibet issue can be solved through violence, force and intimidation, then it's not going to happen because the Tibetan spirit is strong. The Tibetan spirit would remain strong until freedom is restored in Tibet and His Holiness the Dalai Lama return to Tibet," Kalon Tripa said.

"As we gathered in Dharamsala today, we can say with pride that we are joined by many others around the world from the US, Canada, France, England, eastern European countries, South Africa, South America and Asia with hundreds and thousands of Tibetans to show solidarity with Tibetans inside Tibet and to pray for those who have sacrificed their lives," Kalon Tripa said.

"We will not let your voices go unheard, we will not let sacrifices go unattended," Kalon Tripa told Tibetans living in Tibet.

Thousands of Tibetans and supporters took part in a prayer service at Tsuglagkhang, the main temple, to show solidarity with the Tibetans in Tibet. ■



STATEMENT BY MARIA OTERO: UNDER SECRETARY FOR CIVILIAN SECURITY, DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS, AND UNITED STATES SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR TIBETAN ISSUES

24 January, 2012

AS UNITED STATES SPECIAL COORDINATOR for Tibetan Issues, I am gravely concerned by reports of violence and continuing heightened tensions in Tibetan areas of China, including reports of security forces in Sichuan province opening fire on protesters, killing some and injuring others. These reports follow the self-immolation of four Tibetans earlier this month, bringing the number of reported self-immolations by Tibetans to 16—mostly monks and former monks, and two nuns—since March 2011. The U.S. Government consistently and directly has raised the issue of Tibetan self-immolations with the Chinese government. The U.S. Government

repeatedly has urged the Chinese government to address the counterproductive policies in Tibetan areas that have created tensions and that threaten the distinct religious, cultural and linguistic identity of the Tibetan people. As I have noted previously, these policies include dramatically expanded Chinese government controls on religious life and practice; ongoing "patriotic education" campaigns within monasteries that require monks to denounce the Dalai Lama; the permanent placement of Chinese officials in monasteries; increasingly intensive surveillance, arbitrary detentions and disappearances of Tibetans; and restrictions on and imprisonment of some families and friends of self-immolators.

Over the last year, Chinese government security and judicial officials also have detained and imprisoned Tibetan writers, artists, intellectuals, and cultural advocates who criticized Chinese government policies. We call on the Chinese government to safeguard the universal human rights of all of China's citizens. We urge Chinese security forces to exercise restraint, and we renew our call to allow access to Tibetan areas of China for journalists, diplomats and other observers. We call on the Chinese government to resume substantive, results-oriented dialogue with the Dalai Lama or his representatives to address the underlying grievances of China's Tibetan population. ■

UN to China: Suspend the non-voluntary resettlement of nomadic herders from their traditional lands

31 January, 2012

GENEVA: THE UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR on the right to food, Olivier De Schutter called on China to suspend the non-voluntary resettlement of Tibetan nomadic herders from their traditional lands.

He urged China to "allow for meaningful consultations to take place with the affected communities, permitting parties to examine all available options, including recent strategies of sustainable management of marginal pastures."

The report said China must improve employment opportunities, education and health services in "new socialist" villages, in order to enable the realization of the right to adequate food of all resettled rural habitants.

The nomads and herders have to give up "herding and farming revenues, and consequently losing economic independence". This results in loss of land, limited ability to keep livestock, relocation in areas unsuitable to agriculture, and generally a disruption of traditional patterns of livelihood.

The report expressed concern on the lack of job opportunities in the "new socialist" villages or have been filled by new migrant (Chinese) labourers moving in. The living cost of the relocated herders increased as the "new socialist" villages were near urban areas.

The resettlement policy conducted in the Tibet Autonomous Region has expanded to non-

herders, and is also aimed at relocating a majority of the Tibetan rural population into newly built concentrated settlements under "Comfortable Housing" policy.

Between 50 and 80 per cent of the 2.25 million nomads on the Tibetan plateau were relocated in 2010. In Sichuan, the provincial government said that about 80 per cent of its October 2008 objective was met. By the end of 2012, it plans to resettle another 470,000 nomads in the province.

Tibet Autonomous Region government reported that it has relocated 1.43 million people (300,000 families) and plan for another 185,500 families (about 880,000 people) to move into new homes by 2013 according to a Xinhua news report date 16 January 2011.

In March 2011, the Qinghai province authorities reported that they had built 46,000 settlements between 2009 and 2010, and planned to build 25,000 more for 134,000 families.

As early as 1998, according to Xinhua News Agency, 18 March 1998, Qi Jingfa, the vice-minister of agriculture was reported as saying that all herdsmen were expected to end the nomadic life by the end of the century.

One of the reasons given by the Chinese authorities for the resettlement policy has been overgrazing of the grassland. However, the report states that "climate change is most probably the main driver of environmental changes on the

Tibetan plateau, mining is another driver of land degradation in some areas."

The report highlights that sometimes herders may be put in a situation where they have no other option than to accept the standing offer from the State to buy out their remaining herd, after being affected by natural disasters or when debts accumulate.

China is a signatory of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights is prohibited from depriving any individual from its means of subsistence. Further the Convention on Biological Diversity (1992) acknowledges the importance of indigenous communities as guarantors and protectors of biodiversity.

The Special Rapporteur asked the Chinese authorities to invest in rehabilitating pasture, and to support the remaining nomads with rural extension. The potential of livestock insurance programmes should also be explored, as tested successfully in Mongolia. Such programmes, which pay nomads to restock and recover after a major disaster, encourage nomads to keep herds at a much smaller scale, in effect replacing the insurance against disaster traditionally provided by the sheer size of larger herds.

The Report will be debated during the forthcoming UN Human Rights Council Session in Geneva. The Special Rapporteur visited China in December 2010. ■

Report by Tibet Bureau, Geneva.

The Dalai Lama - Best hope for stability in Tibet, US Congressional committee tells Xi

DHARAMSHALA, 5 February: COINCIDING WITH THE WHITE HOUSE meeting between US President Barack Obama and Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping, the Chairmen of the bipartisan US Congressional-Executive Commission on China (CECC) in a release yesterday called on Xi to recognise that the Dalai Lama "remains the best hope for restoring stability to Tibet".

"Instead of condemning the Dalai Lama, Vice President Xi should recognise that the Dalai Lama remains the best hope for restoring stability to Tibet and guaranteeing the genuine autonomy that is the right of Tibetans," Cochairman Senator Sherrod Brown said.

Representative Chris Smith, Chairman of the Commission and Cochairman Brown noted at least 20 Tibetan self-immolations reported to have taken place since March 2011, ongoing repression against Uyghurs in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, and controls on freedom of religion.

"Officials have refused to address the underlying repressive policies against Tibetans' religion, culture, and language that have likely contributed to this

unprecedented tragedy. Instead, they reportedly have fired on Tibetan protesters, tightened security even further, and closed off Tibetan areas to the outside world," said Chairman Smith.

Calling on the visiting Chinese Vice President to take "concrete steps to improve human rights and the rule of law in China," the CECC expressed "fervent hope" that Xi reverses the "course of his predecessors" and ushers in "positive changes" in China.

"But we remain extremely concerned, as the run-up to Vice President Xi becoming the next leader of China has been accompanied by one of the worst crackdowns in recent memory," said the CECC Chairman.

The Chairs noted that China's expanding trade relations through China's membership in the WTO appear to have given China's leaders "greater confidence to trample on the rights of its citizens and dash any hopes for democratic reform."

The Commission's chairs called on Vice President Xi to release all political prisoners and guarantee all Chinese citizens the freedom of expression, religion, and assembly and to pursue policies that protect the fundamental rights of

Tibetans, Uyghurs, and other ethnic minorities.

In a special report released last December, CECC had pointed at a correlation between the worsening trend of religious repression in Tibet and the fiery wave of self-immolations in Tibet.

In its report, the CECC demonstrated an "apparent correlation between increasing Chinese Communist Party and government repression of freedom of religion in Tibetan Buddhist monasteries and nunneries" and the growing number of Tibetans resorting to self-immolation as a form of protest against the Chinese government.

CECC noted that China's heavy-handed reaction to the popular 2008 Tibetan uprisings – including intensification of its long-established anti-Dalai Lama campaign; issuing regulatory measures that intrude upon and micromanage Tibetan Buddhist monastic affairs; implementing aggressive "legal education" to monks and nuns – significantly "worsened" the deteriorating human rights trend in Tibet.

The US Congress created the CECC in October 2000 with the legislative mandate to monitor human rights and the development of the rule of law in China, and to submit an annual report to the President and the Congress. ■

World Parliamentarians Call for UN Fact-finding Mission to Tibet



1 February, 2012

DHARAMSALA: EXPRESSING ITS DEEP CONCERN over the reports of killing of Tibetans by the Chinese security forces in northeastern Tibet and the lockdown of Tibet, the International Parliamentarians has called for a UN-led fact-finding mission to observe the situation in Tibet.

In a statement on 31 January, International Network of Parliamentarians on Tibet (INPaT) said it is extremely concerned for the news that several Tibetans in Draggo, Kardze and in Dzamthang, Ngaba have been shot dead by Chinese security forces last week.

“INPaT considers the use of force not an acceptable response on the part of the Chinese authorities toward peaceful protests carried out by Tibetans to exercise right to freedom of expression and assembly,” the statement said.

“INPaT remains deeply concerned that these cases of extrajudicial killings of Tibetans has happened in the background of self-immolation protests by 17 Tibetans

since 2009 with 12 of them having succumbed to their injuries.

“INPaT deplores that according to various sources there is a massive deployment of security forces in Tibet with journalists and other independent observers prevented from visiting Tibetan areas, especially in Sichuan province.

“INPaT calls upon the Chinese authorities to provide adequate information on the well-being and whereabouts of Tibetans who have been detained since the first self-immolation last year by Ven. Phuntsok on 16 March and to withdraw the security measures imposed, including at religious institutions.

“INPaT welcomes that parliamentarians in many countries have expressed their concerns on the overall human rights situation in Tibet, especially after an alarming number of self-immolation protests by Tibetans. While remaining in solidarity with the aspirations of Tibetan people, INPaT joins the call upon

Tibetans not to sacrifice their valuable lives through self-immolations but instead maintain their collective voice and strength to face the challenges from the Chinese authorities.

“INPaT calls upon the Chinese authorities to promptly follow-up on its invitation to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to conduct a fact-finding mission to China and that such a visit ensures adequate time for observing the situation in Tibet. INPaT believes that such a visit by the United Nations chief human rights official can help convey an independent assessment on the human rights crisis faced by the six million Tibetans,” the statement noted.

133 Members from 33 worldwide Parliaments who took part in the 5th World Parliamentarians’ Convention on Tibet (18/19 November 2009, Rome) adopted the “Rome Declaration on Tibet” which constituted the International Network for Parliamentarians on Tibet (INPaT). ■

STATEMENT OF KALON TRIPA DR. LOBSANG SANGAY

(POLITICAL HEAD OF THE TIBETAN PEOPLE) ON THE 53RD ANNIVERSARY OF THE TIBETAN NATIONAL UPRISING DAY

DHARAMSALA, 10 March: TODAY, ON THE 53RD ANNIVERSARY of the Tibetan National Uprising Day and the fourth anniversary of the 2008 mass protests in Tibet, I offer tribute to the brave people who have sacrificed so much for Tibet. Despite fifty-three years of occupation by the People’s Republic of China (PRC), the Tibetan spirit and identity inside Tibet remains unbroken.

On this occasion, I pay homage to His Holiness the Dalai Lama for his vision, leadership and benevolence. I also pay my deepest respect and gratitude to our elders for their contribution and tireless effort that have sustained our movement’s growth and dynamism over the past fifty years.

One year ago, when His Holiness the Dalai Lama announced the transfer of his political power to a democratically elected leader, Tibetans were apprehensive and implored him to reconsider. Today, the world recognizes and applauds His Holiness’ vision and magnanimous decision. Tibetans are making a smooth transition with the free, fair and multi-candidate 2011 parliamentary and Kalon Tripa elections that involved exile and diaspora Tibetans in over forty countries.

I am deeply honored by the spiritual blessings, legitimacy, political authority and continuity bestowed upon me by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. In his statement at my inauguration ceremony on August 8th, 2011, His Holiness said “when I was young, an elderly regent Takdrag Rinpoche handed over Sikyong (political leadership) to me, and today I am handing over Sikyong to young Lobsang Sangay...in doing

this, I have fulfilled my long-cherished goal.”

I am also enormously moved by the solidarity and endorsements from Tibetans inside Tibet during the elections and since assuming my political post. I have had many deeply moving encounters with hundreds of Tibetans from Tibet as they generously offered their blessings and support.

Blessed by the historic transfer of political power from His Holiness, empowered by the mandate received from the people, and buoyed by the support and solidarity from Tibetans inside Tibet, I can say with pride and conviction that the Central Tibetan Administration legitimately represents and speaks for all six million Tibetans.

Beijing’s view that a generational change in leadership may weaken the Tibetan freedom movement has not and will never materialize. The resiliency of the Tibetan spirit combined with a coming generation of educated Tibetans will provide dynamic leadership and sustain the movement till freedom is restored in Tibet.

If the Chinese government’s claim that Tibetans enjoy freedom and equality are true, then it should allow democratic, transparent, free and fair elections in Tibet. In the fifty-three years of Chinese occupation, no Tibetan has ever held the Party Secretary post of the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). Chinese hold majority of the decision-making positions in all branches of the government and constitute more than fifty percent of the public sector workforce.

Seventy percent of the private sector enterprises are

owned or operated by Chinese. Forty percent of Tibetan high school and college graduates are unemployed.

The Tibet issue concerns far more than the rights and welfare of six million Tibetans. It impacts the entire planet. The unique Tibetan culture, with its rich language, spirituality and history must be protected. The Tibetan plateau is the ‘world’s third pole’ as it contains the largest ice fields outside the two poles. Tibetan glaciers, the source of ten major rivers, affect the lives of more than 1.5 billion people. Billions of dollars worth of mineral resources are exploited annually to fuel China’s economy. Decades of logging have reduced Tibet’s pristine forest cover by half. Clearly, the management of this global common, and the Tibetan people’s traditional role as its stewards, ought to be a planetary concern.

When China invaded Tibet in 1949, it promised to usher in a ‘socialist paradise.’ In actuality Tibetans are treated as second-class citizens. When Tibetans gather peacefully and demand basic rights as outlined in the Chinese constitution, they are arrested, fired upon and killed as in the January 23-24th peaceful protests when Chinese were celebrating their new year. The Communist Party cadre members in the TAR have been ordered to prepare for a “war” against the Tibetan protesters.

In stark contrast, in Wukan (Guangdong Province), protests by Chinese people lasted weeks, their grievances were addressed, one of the protest leaders was appointed in a leadership position for the village, and provincial authorities even supported free village elections.

Intellectuals, artists and leaders in Tibet are being arbitrarily arrested and imprisoned. Thousands of pilgrims recently returning from India have been detained and many have disappeared. Tibetans, including monks and nuns, are forced to denounce the Dalai Lama and attend patriotic re-education classes. Foreigners and international media are barred from Tibetan areas.

A Chinese scholar recently observed there are “more Chinese than Tibetans, more police than monks, more surveillance cameras than windows” in Lhasa, the capital city of Tibet. The entire region is under undeclared martial law.

China has built many airfields in Tibet, stationed many more divisions of the PLA, begun expanding the railway line to the borders of neighboring countries, and dispatched thousands of paramilitary forces into Tibetan areas. Tibet has become one of the most militarized areas in the region.

Today, there is no space for any conventional protests such as hunger strikes, demonstrations and even peaceful gatherings in Tibet. Tibetans are therefore taking extreme actions such as the one by 26 Tibetans who have committed self-immolations since 2009. His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the CTA have always discouraged such drastic actions. However, despite our pleas, Tibetans continue to self-immolate with 13 cases already in 2012. Fault lies squarely with the hardline leaders in Beijing, so does the solution. The self-immolations are an emphatic rejection of the empty promises of the so-called ‘socialist paradise.’

The Tibetan struggle is not against the Chinese people or China as a nation. It is against the PRC government’s policies. China must acknowledge the depth of the problems in Tibet and understand they cannot be solved through violence.

To address the tragedy in Tibet, I call on Beijing to accept our Middle Way Policy, which seeks genuine autonomy for Tibetans within the framework of the Chinese constitution and as proposed in the Memorandum and Note of 2008 and 2010 respectively. Hong Kong and Macao have been granted high degree of autonomy. Despite resistance from Taiwan, China has offered Taiwan more autonomy. Why are Tibetans still not granted genuine autonomy as stipulated in the Chinese constitution?

We hope that China’s upcoming leaders will initiate genuine change, and that they find the wisdom to admit the government’s long-standing hardline policy in Tibet has failed. We have chosen to move down a mutually beneficial path even though Tibet historically

enjoyed independent status and Tibetans have the right to self-determination according to international law.

Concerned Chinese citizens and intellectuals should make an effort to seek the truth and understand why Tibetans are protesting and self-immolating. Dialogue and a peaceful resolution to the Tibet issue are in the best interest of China, the Chinese people and Tibetans.

We stand ready to send envoys to resume the dialogue process even though the Chinese envoy belonging to the United Front Work Department has of late invested far more energy traveling around the world and making outrageous attacks on His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the CTA led by the Kalon Tripa. In the process they have actually further internationalized the Tibet issue.

A key reason for creating the United Nations was the pursuit of human rights. I urge the UN to live up to its objective and address the crisis in Tibet by appointing a Special Rapporteur and visiting Tibet. The international community and media must send a fact-finding delegation into Tibet to remove the veil of censorship and disinformation campaign. “Even Pyongyang (North Korea) has an international media presence, which is not the case in Lhasa,” says Reporters Without Borders.

I appeal to the officials and member states of ASEAN and SAARC to include the Tibet issue in your agenda given Tibet’s geopolitical and environmental significance affecting billions of Asians. A China that is able to address the Tibet issue will make it a more peaceful neighbor and contribute to harmony and stability in the region.

To my fellow Tibetans, now is the time to show solidarity and support with our brothers and sisters in Tibet. We must give education top priority so that educated and community-minded Tibetans will provide dynamic leadership and sustain the Tibetan movement till freedom is restored in Tibet. The Kashag would like to request that mantras and prayers be recited every Wednesday for those who have sacrificed their lives for the Tibetan cause. Younger Tibetans should embrace and celebrate our proud heritage and identity by wearing, speaking and eating Tibetan every Wednesday.

Let us make 2012 a Tibet Lobby Year. In this Tibetan New Year, I call upon all Tibetans and friends to reach out to elected representatives at the state and national levels in your countries. Invite and educate them about Tibet and the efforts of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the CTA. Generate debate about

Tibet and get legislations passed in support of Tibet and the Tibetan people. Initiate activities that raise the profile of Tibetan democracy and visibility of Tibetan political leadership and the CTA.

The fourteenth Kashag will make maximum efforts to realize our larger goal, as well as take steps to prepare the Tibetan people and institutions for the 21st century under the guiding principles of unity, innovation and self-reliance. The Kashag again urges all Tibetans and friends participating in various solidarity activities to ensure that the activities are undertaken peacefully, in accordance with local laws, and with dignity. Please remember non-violence and democracy are two of our constant principles.

The Tibetan people and current Kashag are extremely blessed to have the continuing presence and wisdom of His Holiness the great 14th Dalai Lama. The Kashag extends absolute support to the historic statement issued on September 24, 2011 by His Holiness concerning his reincarnation. We believe His Holiness alone has the right to determine his reincarnation, and that the communist government of China has absolutely no say or role in this matter.

I would like to take this occasion to thank all governments, especially the governments of United States, Europe and Asia, organizations, Tibet Support Groups, and individuals who have supported the Tibetan people. Your support is greatly appreciated. I also call on our old and new friends alike to reinvigorate the Tibet Support Groups around the world. We need you more than ever at this critical time. The Kashag would also like to acknowledge the full cooperation of the Chitue Lhentsok and looks forward to a productive partnership in serving Tibet and Tibetan people.

I am also happy to express the Tibetan people’s deepest and continued gratitude to the government and people of India for their generous hospitality and kindness over the past five decades. My appreciation has grown tremendously since becoming the political head of the Tibetan people. Hardik Shukriya!

Lastly, to our dear brothers and sisters in Tibet, we would like to say that you are in our hearts and prayers every day. We will walk side by side with you till freedom is restored for Tibetans and His Holiness the Dalai Lama returns to Tibet. I pray for the long life of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. May our long cherished goal of freedom and reuniting in the Land of Snows be realized soon! ■

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