

ACTION: Panchen Lama

On 17 May 1995, just three days after he was named as the 11th reincarnation of the Panchen Lama and three weeks after his sixth birthday, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima disappeared along with his family. He was abducted by agencies of the Chinese government becoming the world's youngest political prisoner. To date there has been no independent verification of his well-being or whereabouts.

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(Page last updated: 19 May 2015)

Take Action

MISSING

Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, 11th Panchen Lama

Last seen 17 May 1995 (aged six)

What would YOU do if you knew a small child of six
who had been kidnapped?

ACT NOW for Gedhun Choekyi Nyima.

° Write to the Chinese Ambassador & UFWD Director

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° Sign the international online petition

1. Write to Liu Xiaoming, the Chinese Ambassador to the UK Chinese and UFWD Director Sun Chunlan

Write letters to Liu Xiaoning, China's Ambassador to the UK and Sun Chanlan, Politburo member and Director in charge of the United Front Work Department (UFWD). Note: It is believed the UFWD is the body that has contact with Gedhun and his family.

Express your concerns about Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his family, noting it has been 21 years since they were abducted, and call for:

- the immediate release of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his family;
- for independent access be allowed (for example from the Red Cross or United Nations) to ascertain the status and well-being of Gedhun and his family;
- for Gedhun to be allowed to assume his rightful role as the 11th Panchen Lama upon his release.

Addresses:

Ambassador Liu Xiaoming

Chinese Embassy, 49-51 Portland Place, London W1B 1JL

Email: ambassador@chinese-embassy.org.uk

Note: The Embassy occasionally disables this email address (so your email is returned). If that is the case please try political@chinese-embassy.org.uk and/or press_uk@mfa.gov.cn.

Outside the UK: check the Chinese government's webpage listing embassies for contact details of your nearest ambassador and embassy.

Sun Chunlan, Director

United Front Work Department

135 Fuyou Road, Xicheng District, Beijing Municipality 100800

People's Republic of China

2. Download the Missing poster

Updated for 2015. Give to friends, ask local shops, pubs, schools, offices if they will display the poster and also help distribute the flyers. Use at events. Send to your MP.

Download: [Missing poster \(A4 size, PDF\)](#)

If you would like to be sent copies by post please call Tibet Society on 020 7923 0021 or email paul@tibetsociety.com

3. Sign the international petition

International Tibet Network (of which Tibet Society is a member organisation) has created an international online petition calling on China to release the Panchen Lama. The petition is directed to Zhu Weiqun, Vice Minister of the United Front Work Department, China's official spokesperson for Tibetan affairs.

[Click here to sign the online petition.](#)

It is now almost 21 years since Gedhun Choekyi Nyima's abduction, which took place on 17 May 1995. This year, on 25 April, Gedhun turned 27. The Chinese government continue to deny responsibility for his abduction, but in 1996 did acknowledge that Gedhun and his family were being held in a secret location.

In March 2010, the Governor of the Tibetan Autonomous Region, Pema Trinley, told a press conference in Beijing that Gedhun and his family "are now living a very good life in Tibet". Pema Trinley added that, "He and his family are reluctant to be disturbed; they want to live an ordinary life."

Despite repeated requests from international governments, rights groups and the UN, the Chinese government has yet to provide any evidence whatsoever that Gedhun is safe; instead it continues to give a stonewall response that he is not imprisoned, but is a private citizen who is leading a normal life and attending school.

Tibet Society has serious concerns for the well-being of the Panchen Lama and calls upon the Chinese government to release Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his family from any form of detention and allow full access to UN representatives to assess his and his family's well-being.

Further reading:

BBC: China urged to release Panchen Lama after 20 years (17 May 2015)

CTA: Tibetans call for Panchen Lama's release (18 May 2015)

Note: The Tibetan government in exile is also referred to as the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA).

Statement by the Sikyong, 25 April 2014

On the occasion of the Panchen Lama's 25th birthday, Sikyong Lobsang Sangay (Prime Minister of the Tibetan government in exile) called on the Chinese authorities to release Gedhun Choekyi Nyima and his family. He also called for action from the international community saying that China must be made aware "that flagrant human rights violations such as the disappearance of the 11th Panchen Lama cannot be papered over by business and commerce".

The Sikyong also decried the hypocrisy at China's intervention in the process of selecting the Panchen Lama. He said, "Recognising the reincarnation of the Panchen Lamas and other Tibetan spiritual teachers is a religious prerogative that falls solely within the domain of Tibetan spirituality. The identification and selection process of Tibetan spiritual leaders is not a political matter, particularly, not for the Chinese Communist Party, a self-claimed atheist organization responsible for destroying Tibetan Buddhism." [Click here to read the full statement](#)

Background information

The Panchen Lama is a hugely important spiritual figure in Tibetan Buddhism, second in significance in the Gelukpa school only to the Dalai Lama.

When the 10th Panchen Lama died in 1989 the search began to find his reincarnation. The search was led by Chadrel Rinpoche of Tashilunpo Monastery in Tibet, who provided a list of candidates to His Holiness the Dalai Lama. On 14 May 1995 Gedhun Choekyi Nyima was chosen from that list. Three days later he and his family went missing. In May 1996, the Chinese authorities admitted to the UN Committee for the Rights of the Child that Gedhun and his family were being

held in a secret location.

In 2005, the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief sent a communication to the Chinese government expressing concern about Gedhun Choekyi Nyima's case and the "grave interference with the freedom of belief of the Tibetan Buddhists who have the right to determine their clergy in accordance with their own rites and who have been deprived of their religious leader".

China's Panchen Lama

The Chinese government, recognising the political significance of the Panchen Lama, wished to have a replacement of their own choosing to sway Tibetan society and counter the influence of the Dalai Lama. Six months after Gedhun's abduction the Chinese authorities selected Gyaltsen Norbu, a young Tibetan boy to become the 11th Panchen Lama.

Norbu's parents were Communist Party members and he was raised and educated in Beijing. Information from inside Tibet suggests that Norbu is not revered by Tibetans as the authentic Panchen Lama, and that Buddhist monasteries only receive him under duress from the Chinese authorities. Apparently, he is referred to as the Zuma Lama, which translates as 'fake lama'.

Still living in Beijing, Gyaltsen Norbu has made an increasing number of public appearances and statements in recent years. In March 2010, at the age of 20, Gyaltsen Norbu was appointed as a national committee member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), China's top political advisory body. On his appointment, Xinhua news agency quoted Norbu saying that he promised to "uphold the leadership of the Communist Party of China" and "adhere to socialism, safeguard national unification, strengthen ethnic unity and expand Buddhist exchanges".

The Panchen Lama is also charged with the task of recognising the Dalai Lama's reincarnation, and it is felt that the Chinese leadership will use Gyaltsen Norbu to select a candidate who they will exercise considerable control over. This would have serious implications for Tibet's political future. His Holiness the Dalai Lama has stated that he will be reincarnated in exile, out of the reach of the Chinese government. It is expected that Beijing will produce their own Dalai Lama, just as they have with the Panchen Lama, and that the child in question will live a life as a political pawn.

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