

China condemned as Tibetan community leader dies in prison

Chair of UK All Party Parliamentary Group on Tibet says "China has his blood on its hands"

[Tibet Society press release: 13 July 2015] Tibet Society is greatly saddened and outraged by the news of the death of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche who died in a Chinese prison on 12 July [1]. Tibet Society condemns the Chinese government for not releasing Tenzin Delek Rinpoche on medical parole after an application was submitted by his family in 2014 and subsequent requests were made by numerous governments, including the UK during the April UK-China Human Rights Dialogue [2].

"The death of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche exposes the true nature of the Chinese government's attitude towards Tibet," said Fabian Hamilton MP, chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet. Mr Hamilton, who raised Tenzin Delek Rinpoche's case during a parliamentary debate on 18 June 2015 [3], added, "China has disregarded the concerns of the international community over Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, flouted universally-accepted norms on legal processes during his case and refused medical parole despite his serious illness. Now China has his blood on its hands."

Philippa Carrick, CEO of Tibet Society said, "Tenzin Delek Rinpoche was an influential community leader whom the Communist Party could not control. Rather than work with him to bring progress and raise standards within local society, the authorities framed him for a crime he did not commit and then left him to die in prison. To China, enforcing its oppressive ideology and silencing the Tibetan population is of greater concern than human rights or individual lives."

A much respected and popular Tibetan community leader, Tenzin Delek Rinpoche had been serving a life prison sentence. Arrested in 2002 on false charges, he was initially sentenced to death after a trial that Human Rights Watch described as, "procedurally flawed". In 2002, his sentence was commuted to life imprisonment. He was known to be in seriously ill health for a number of years, with a heart condition and high blood pressure. Despite numerous international requests for medical parole over the last 18 months, the Chinese government failed to respond, with tragic consequences.

Tenzin Delek Rinpoche died on 12 July 2015 in Chuandong prison in Sichuan province. His family were informed of the 65 year-old's worsening condition but arrived after he had died. According to Radio Free Asia, the authorities have not released Tenzin Delek Rinpoche's body to his family.

Tibet Society calls on the Chinese government to officially confirm the death in prison of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche and release his body to his family to allow traditional funeral rites. Tibet Society also demands that the Chinese government conducts an official enquiry into Tenzin Delek's death and make the findings public.

Tibet Society has passed on the information to the UK Foreign Office and requested a statement from the UK government condemning the death.

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Notes:

[1] Background information on Tenzin Delek Rinpoche's case

Tenzin Delek Rinpoche was serving a life sentence on false charges of causing explosions. The only evidence presented at his trial was extracted by torture. He was arrested on 3 April 2002 and sentenced to death with a two-year reprieve on 2 December 2002. On 26 January 2003, at the appeal hearing, the sentence was upheld and his colleague, Lobsang Dhondup who had been sentenced to death with no reprieve was executed. In 2005, Tenzin Delek Rinpoche's sentence was commuted to life imprisonment.

Tenzin Delek Rinpoche consistently protested his innocence. Whilst waiting for the appeal hearing in 2003, he said, "I am completely innocent... I have always said we should not raise our hand at others. It is sinful... I have neither distributed letters or pamphlets nor planted bombs secretly. I have never even thought of such things, and I have no intention to hurt others."

Tenzin Delek suffered from poor health since his arrest, which was exacerbated by the torture and beatings he received whilst in detention. He suffered from a serious heart condition, high blood pressure, dizziness and problems with his feet. In April 2014, he was known to be in very ill-health and had not been receiving medication or allowed proper medical treatment. During a rare visit, a doctor said he believed Tenzin Delek Rinpoche needed surgery for his heart condition.

Tenzin Delek Rinpoche was eligible for medical parole under Chinese law, being chronically unwell and having served at least seven years of his sentence. An official application for medical parole was made by Tenzin Delek's family in 2014. The authorities never responded to the application and denied his family visitation rights.

Read more: www.tibetsociety.com/content/view/469/#background

[2] On 18 June 2015, during a parliamentary debate on Tibet, Hugo Swire, the Minister of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, said "Many hon. Members... mentioned Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, who was discussed during the human rights dialogue in April and who continues to suffer from ill health in detention. We again urge the Chinese authorities to ensure that, while detained, all such people have access to adequate medical care or, in severe cases such as Tenzin's, are released on medical parole."

Hansard:

www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmhansrd/cm150618/halltext/150618h0001.htm#15061881000141 (col 180WH)

[3] During the 18 June 2015 parliamentary debate on Tibet, Fabian Hamilton MP said, "We should also be aware of the case of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, which I have raised with the Minister before. He was sentenced to death for alleged involvement in a bomb plot, for which there was no evidence. His sentence was later commuted to life in jail. He has served seven years and is believed to be in dangerously poor health. I urge Her Majesty's Government to call for immediate medical parole for him."

Hansard:

www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmhansrd/cm150618/halltext/150618h0001.htm#15061881000141 (col 169WH)

Read Tibet Society's report (13 July): [Tenzin Delek Rinpoche dies in Chinese prison](#)

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