

Action: Call for release of Tibetan language advocate

[18 January 2017] UPDATE: Tashi Wangchuk, an advocate of Tibetan language education, has been charged with “inciting separatism” after his peaceful work was featured by The New York Times.

In early January 2017, his case was resubmitted to the courts. His trial is now imminent. Tashi was initially detained by Chinese police in Yushu, eastern Tibet on 27 January 2016. There are fears he will not receive due process, could face up to 15 years in prison and is at risk of torture.

Action | Background | NY Times documentary

Take Action

1. Sign the international petition
2. Write to the Chinese authorities
3. Images to share via social media

Note: Tibet Society has raised the case with the UK Foreign Office and asked for the British Embassy in Beijing to make representations on behalf of Tashi Wangchuk.

Sign the international petition

The petition is directed to Foreign Ministers around the world, including Boris Johnson, urging them to call for Tashi's release. <https://actions.tibetnetwork.org/release-tashi-wangchuk>

Write to the Chinese authorities

Please write to the authorities listed below, urging them to:

- ° Release Tashi Wangchuk immediately and unconditionally as he has been detained solely for peacefully exercising his right to express his views;
- ° Provide assurances that he has regular, unrestricted access to his family and lawyer of his choice, without delay;
- ° Guarantee his safety and provide assurances that he will not be tortured or ill-treated whilst in detention;
- ° Respect the fundamental right to freedom of expression, as guaranteed in China's own Constitution and in

international treaties such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

i. Chinese Ambassador to the UK

Name: Ambassador Liu Xiaoming

Address: Chinese Embassy

49-51 Portland Place

London W1B 1JL

Email: press_uk@mfa.gov.cn and/or zj_uk@mfa.gov.cn. Put "For the attention of Ambassador Liu Xiaoming" in the subject line. (If these email bounce please send a letter. Note: the embassy-listed address ambassador@chinese-embassy.org.uk is currently refusing emails.)

Salutation: Your Excellency

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

ii. Yushu Police Chief

Name: Qiao Yanpei

Address: Public Security Bureau

Yushu People's Government

Shengli Lu

Yushu

Qinghai 815000

People's Republic of China

Salutation: Dear Police Chief

iii. Director of Qinghai Security

Name: Wang Zhengsheng

Address: Qinghai Provincial Administration of Security

50 Bayi Zhonglu

Xining

Qinghai 810007

People's Republic of China

Salutation: Dear Director

iv. Governor of Qinghai

Name: Hao Peng

Address: Qinghai Provincial Government Office

12 Xi Dajie

Xining

Qinghai 810000

People's Republic of China

Email: qhsxxgk@163.com

Fax: +86 0971 8252135

Salutation: Dear Governor

Images to share via social media

(click on image for larger image to download)

Background (updated January 2017)

Tashi Wangchuk, a 31-year old Tibetan shopkeeper, is an advocate for greater Tibetan language education in schools in Tibet where Mandarin has become the sole language of instruction.

He has expressed his anxieties on social media about Tibetan children being unable to speak their native language fluently, and the gradual extinction of Tibetan culture.

In November 2015, Tashi was the feature of an online New York Times short documentary, "A Tibetan's Journey for Justice" (see video below). The nine-minute film follows Tashi as he travels to Beijing in an attempt to file a lawsuit against local officials over the lack of Tibetan language education in schools.

In November 2015, Tashi was the feature of an online New York Times short documentary, "A Tibetan's Journey for Justice" (see video below). The nine-minute film follows Tashi as he travels to Beijing in an attempt to file a lawsuit against local officials over the lack of Tibetan language education in schools.

In an interview, also published in the New York Times, Tashi said, "My goal is to change things a little bit, to push to

preserve some of our nation's culture. The entire Tibetan ethnic nationality and culture is at risk of disappearing." He also said he was thankful to "all the Chinese people who truly protect minorities".

On 27 January 2016, Tashi was detained by Chinese police in Jyekundo (Chinese: Yushu), in the eastern Tibetan region of Kham (now part of China's Qinghai province).

Tashi was held in secret for weeks at the main detention centre in Jyekundo. His relatives only learned of his detention on 24 March. The family were given an official document, dated 4 March, which stated Tashi was being charged with "inciting separatism". They were only allowed to visit him in September 2016.

Tashi has only been allowed to see a lawyer twice, in June and September 2016.

In early January 2017, Tashi was indicted after his case was resubmitted to the courts. This followed a request last year by Chinese prosecutors for more time to investigate the case.

Though critical of the threats to Tibetan language and culture, Tashi has never written about Tibetan independence. His language campaign is in line with China's Constitution, of which Article 4 states, "Ethnic minorities' right to learn, use and develop their own spoken and written languages is guaranteed in accordance with the law".

It is feared Tashi will not receive due process, as many Tibetans facing 'political' charges are denied legal representation of their own choosing, that he will be subject to torture and ill-treatment whilst in detention, and faces a sentence of up to 15 years imprisonment if found guilty.

Amidst China's current crackdown, Tashi Wangchuk's case is an example of how Tibetans face additional persecution for any activity perceived as a threat to Chinese rule, through charges of "separatism".

Tashi Wangchuk could face up to 15 years in prison and is at risk of torture. In China, defendants are almost always found guilty once a case is brought to court. The conviction rate in 2015 was 99.92% according to official statistics.

Further reading:

10 Mar 2016: Tibetan Entrepreneur Has Been Illegally Detained, Family Says (NY Times)

31 Mar 2016: China Charges Tibetan Education Advocate With Inciting Separatism (NY Times)

28 Dec 2016: Chinese Prosecutors Ask Court for More Time in Detained Tibetan's Case (NY Times)

15 Jan 2017: China - Drop Charges Against Tibetan Education Activist (Human Rights Watch)

18 Jan 2017: Tibetan education advocate indicted: Tashi Wangchuk (Amnesty International)

18 Jan 2017: Tibetan language advocate indicted, trial imminent (Tibet Society)

27 Jan 2017: Tashi Wangchuk's detention epitomises China's brutal regime (Tibet Society)

New York Times articles quoting Tashi Wangchuk:

Tibetans Fight to Salvage Fading Culture in China (28 Nov 2015)

A Showcase of Tibetan Culture Serves Chinese Political Goals (19 Dec 2015)

New York Times documentary (9 mins)

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