

Young Farmer Stages First Tibetan Self-Immolation of 2017

[20 March 2017] Pema Gyaltzen (also known as Pegyal) set himself on a fire around 4pm local time on Saturday, 18th March 2017, near Tsoga monastery in Nyagrong (in Chinese: Xinlong) in Kham region of eastern Tibet in a protest against the Chinese rule in Tibet.

Sources close to the Radio Free Asia said that Gyaltzen “called for the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Tibet and for freedom in Tibet at the time of self-immolation.”

According to the Tibetan sources, Chinese police swiftly removed his charred body from the scene immediately.

A minute-long video, which has emerged out of Nyagrong, shows a huge police presence at the self-immolation site.

It is reported that the 24-year old Pema Gyaltzen, an unmarried farmer is the lone breadwinner for his family of six-parents and four siblings.

Two sources from the Tibetan exile community said Gyaltzen was taken to a hospital in Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan. One source said he later died, but the other said his contacts in the region believed he was still alive in hospital.

A Tibetan exile source with contacts in the town said “around ten close relatives of Pema Gyaltzen from Nyagrong went to Kandze county police station to see self-immolator Pema Gyaltzen. But the Chinese beat them severely and detained them for the entire night, and forced them to stand up the whole night.”

Due to the communications crackdown and block on the use of Chinese social media (WeChat) in the region, the flow of information out of Nyagrong is very limited.

Gyaltzen’s protest was the second case of self-immolation in Nyagrong, following the death of 18-year old Kalsang Wangdue in March 2016.

The latest protest brings to 146 the number of self-immolations by Tibetans living under Chinese rule since the wave of fiery protests began in 2009.

Source: RFA / CTA

Take Action

China has to be called to account, not only to end the crackdown in Tibet but also to respect the fundamental rights and freedoms of the Tibetan people. The British government must publicly state its concern over the current situation and, along with other international governments, persuade China to ease the increasingly tense situation by withdrawing its troops from Tibetan regions, review its repressive policies in Tibet and grant universally recognised human rights to the Tibetan people.

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