

2008: THE TENSION IN TIBET

Before 1950, Tibet was an independent country with its own language, culture, religion, history, and traditions. The truth of Tibet's past history cannot be altered. Ever since the Chinese government invaded Tibet in 1959, Tibetans have lived in constant fear, under cruel suppression, while subject to unimaginable torture, and even killed in their own homeland by people who are not native to Tibet's highlands. Shortly after the failure of the first great uprising against the Chinese, in Lhasa, on March 10, 1959, tens of thousands of Tibetans were forced to escape into exile in India and other neighboring countries. Since 1959, 1.2 million Tibetans have died as a direct result of the Chinese government's brutal occupation. Under the Dalai Lama's leadership, Tibetans have sought to regain the independence of Tibet through nonviolent means.

In February of 1979, Deng Xiaoping expressed a willingness to talk with the Dalai Lama under the condition that the Tibetans would cease to seek independent status. In an effort to reach an agreement, His Holiness agreed to accede to Deng's proposal in the hope that the Chinese would be willing to negotiate openly; thereafter, the Dalai Lama and the exiled Tibetan government ceased pursuing independence in favor of the creation of a meaningful autonomous region, where all Tibetans would be able to preserve together their religion and their peaceful cultural heritage in the pristine Land of the Snow. Regrettably, the Chinese have since refused to negotiate or speak sincerely with the Dalai Lama on the issue of meaningful autonomy. If the Chinese government continues to refuse to negotiate, it may only be a few decades before the peaceful culture, ancient traditions, and religion

of the Tibetans—together with the Tibetan people themselves—are completely eradicated. As His Holiness has said: "You see, a nation is dying. My strength comes from the justice of my cause, and I think from my compassion. But I need help. Not just a few nice words, but some kind of action" (*In My Own Words*).

In view of the Chinese government's illegal invasion of Tibet, the human rights violations, the recent brutal crackdown on peaceful protesters—including the continuous arrests, imprisonments and inhumane torture of Tibetans, amounting to cultural genocide—the International Olympic Committee should withdraw Tibet from the Beijing Olympics torch relay route. To support Tibetans, please go to www.savetibet.org, www.studentsforafreetibet.org, or contact the IOC directly to stop the torch relay from crossing Tibet.

Since March 10th of this year, thousands of Tibetans have risen up against the brutal suppression of the Chinese in the largest and most impassioned protest in Tibet since 1989. Tibetans who have not been killed or imprisoned during these recent demonstrations have gathered together for candlelight vigils to pray for their jailed and murdered brothers and sisters. To this day, the Chinese military police continue their brutal crackdown, even on these peaceful protesters who engaged in lamp offerings, aggressively dispersing them, imprisoning them, even shooting to kill them. More than 203 Tibetans have so far been shot or beaten to death, and many, many more have been severely injured. Those who have been rounded up have been forced, under torture, to participate in what the Chinese call the "patriotic education" campaign—in other words, brainwashing sessions—to

compel Tibetans to denounce and criticize everything that has been meaningful in their lives, including the Dalai Lama and the so-called "separatist" forces, and to agree to obey the dictates of the communist regime.

Monasteries full of monks have been sealed up as prisons, while access to water, food, and medical supplies has been cut off. Many Tibetans monks and laypeople are hiding in cities, towns, or in the woods. Some are dying right now of injuries or starvation. We learned on April 17th that 14 Tibetans had been shot dead on April 3rd in Tongkhor Monastery in Kardze County (Ch.: Donggu, Sichuan Province).

The Chinese continue to send large numbers of soldiers and paratroopers into Tibet. On March 19th alone, on the main highway from Sichuan province, BBC reporters witnessed over 400 troop transports and other motor vehicles, the largest mobilization since unrest began in Lhasa on March 10th. Banners on the trucks proclaim that the soldiers, armed with pistols, rifles, and machineguns, are on a "New Mission."

Before the Chinese issued the warning for all Tibetans to surrender by midnight on March 17th, the Chinese government press reported that ten people had died in Lhasa. Witnesses report having seen a number of dead bodies in the streets, but reliable figures have been difficult to obtain or confirm. On March 16th some 30 protesters in Amdo (Ch.: Aba County, Sichuan), including monks, students, and herdsmen, were shot, the youngest, a 16-year-old girl named Lhamo Tso, a brilliant student at the Tibetan school in Ngaba County. On March 20th, between 4 and 5 p.m., local Tibetans faced cruel suppression by over 5,000 armed police merely

for attempting to save a Tibetan flag. Over 20 Tibetans have been confirmed dead in Keguo township (Ch.: Seda County). There, military police declared that they were ordered to shoot any protesters by order of the central government.

Now that all external communication has been forbidden by the Chinese, there is no way to establish just how many deaths there have been or how many more Tibetans are being killed as a result of the round-ups. Local authorities are offering a reward of thousands of yen to anyone providing information about those who are leaking news of the protests and their suppression to the outside world.

With house-to-house searches taking place, thousands more are being arrested and loaded onto trucks and trains, headed to unknown places. More Tibetans are likely to be tortured and killed. A number of monks in Amdo Labrang (Gannan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Gansu Province) have been detained. There are serious concerns for their welfare, but because of the level of intimidation and the military presence there, monks within the monastery cannot say which monks have been detained.

These brave Tibetans living under oppressive Chinese rule are living through a truly terrifying time, but not always in silence. A Tibetan woman, under house arrest in Beijing after having sent her plea, urged: "Please pass the news to every government and every human rights organization! Please find it in your heart of compassion to save the people in Tibet." So far there have been no fact-finding missions. There are no free media in Tibet, nor any Internet access.

Tibetans urgently need you to take immediate action in protest against this horrifying situation in Tibet. Please:

1. Appeal to your government to pressure the United Nations to send a fact-finding mission to Tibet immediately.
2. Write to your government asking for pressure to be put on China to stop the ongoing violent crackdown on peaceful Tibetan protesters.
3. Urge your government to pressure China to allow independent foreign media into Tibet.
4. Stage peaceful solidarity activities in your area.
5. Please ask your friends and colleagues to follow the current situation in Tibet through www.tchrd.org and www.tibet.com

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Tibetan Solidarity Committee
<http://www.stoptibetcrisis.net/>

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SAVE TIBET!