

H. E. Kirti Rinpoche's testimony at the European Parliament's Sub-Committee on Human Rights

-- March the 7th, 2013 --

Tibet was an independent nation until 1959, and this historical fact cannot be distorted. Tibet, also known as 'the third pole' is the roof of the world and source of all the major rivers in south-east Asia. For centuries Tibet served as a peace zone and maintained peaceful relationship of kinship and priest-patron with its neighbouring countries.

However, I have a special relationship with Ngaba in Amdo province of Tibet, which is my native land and where the first self-immolation took place in 2009. Three generations of people of Ngaba have undergone unbearable repression since 1935, when the Red Army led by Mao Zedong on 'The Long March' entered Tibet through Ngaba. The Chinese government has deepened the wounds in the hearts of Tibetans. During the peaceful protest of people in Ngaba in 2008, the Chinese security forces open fired on Tibetans, killing and injuring many of the Tibetan protestors. Moreover, the Kirti monastery was virtually turned into a prison twice with all the monks held as prisoners. The continued subjugation and severe suppression at the time triggered the current crisis in Tibet.

As a result of Chinese occupation, Tibetan identity, religion and culture is now on the verge of extinction. The four generations of Chinese leadership denied Tibetan people with basic human rights and instead adopted the following policies to annihilate the Tibetan identity:

1. The policy of rampant destruction of Tibetan fragile ecology also known as "The Third Pole"
2. The policy of degeneration of the growth of Tibetan population by birth control.
3. The policy of raising the mortality rate among Tibetans by denying basic healthcare facilities.
4. The policy of transforming Tibetans into a minority in their own land by population transfer.
5. The policy of constantly shrinking habitation space for Tibetans.
6. The policy of complete destruction of unique religion and cultural heritage of Tibet.
7. The policy of complete destruction of Tibetan language which is the soul of Tibetan culture.
8. The policy of forcible transformation of Tibetan tradition and way of life.
9. The policy of transforming Tibetans into servitude under the dogma of Han superiority.
10. The policy of inequality between Chinese and Tibetans before the court of law.
11. The policy of inequality between Chinese and Tibetans for employment and recognition.
12. The policy of inequality between Chinese and Tibetans for economic opportunities; and

13. The policy of false promises in the name of development and benefits to Tibetans.

It is because of the implementation of these repressive policies in Tibetan areas that Tibetans in all three provinces have lost faith in Chinese authorities and are left with no choice but to resort to self-immolation.

From what we know, so far 107 Tibetans have self-immolated and they have called for the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Tibet and freedom for Tibetans. This is the aspiration of six million Tibetans living in and outside Tibet. These 107 Tibetans have not uttered a single harsh word—let alone acted violently—but the Chinese government has consistently condemned them as acts of madness, separatists and terrorists. The self-immolators who have survived have been taken away into Chinese custody under the pretext of medication and are mercilessly beaten to death. The Chinese authorities are not able to hand over the bodies of the self-immolators to the family members because they have mutilated them. Only their ashes are returned.

The Chinese authorities have acted like barbarians by blaming the family members and the so-called Dalai Clique for instigating self-immolation. The family members are arrested and severely tortured to confess their involvement in the self-immolation. The Ngaba Intermediate People's court on 31 January 2013 had meted out death sentence with two years reprieve to Lobsang Kunchok and stripped him of his political rights for the rest of his life. The same court sentenced Lobsang Tsering to 10 years in prison and stripped him of his political rights for three years. On the same day, the Sangchu People's court in Gansu Province sentenced six Tibetans, including Pema Dhundup, to 3 to 12 years in prison, following which the government spokesperson in Beijing and state media immediately announced that they have got sufficient evidence. However, the testimonies of Lobsang Kunchok and Lobsang Tsering in Tibetan language contradicted with the Chinese version which was shown on CCTV to the outside world. It clearly shows that the evidences against the Tibetan prisoners are fabricated. The family members of the self-immolators are also sentenced on the basis of fabricated evidences and denied legal representation. I, therefore, appeal to the international community to urgently take an action to save these Tibetans who are prosecuted without any evidence of wrongdoing.

As there is a saying in Tibetan that 'deer is the target of arrow whether it is standing or lying down', similarly in front of the Chinese government, Tibetan people and its religion and culture are the object of disregard and suppression irrespective of whether it is at false or not.

With the Chinese government's policy of population transfer and irreparable environmental destruction in Tibet, today many Asian countries and particularly Tibet's neighbouring countries such as India, Nepal, China, Bhutan, Burma and Thailand are at risk of serious repercussion. The rapid melting of Tibet's glaciers will have adverse impact on the livelihoods of thousands of farmers and nomads living in the neighbouring countries. The construction of dams on delicate Himalayan ranges will deplete the flow of rivers originating from Tibet such as River Ganges, which will adversely affect millions of lives in downstream countries.

Tibet's northern plains *Changtang* have become a restricted area for the past sixty years because of which it is difficult to know how many military bases and secret airfields have been set up in these areas. The Chinese government is carrying out large-scale military activities and set up destructive weapons in the Indo-Tibetan border areas and pastoral region of *Changtang*, posing serious threat to neighbouring

countries. Therefore, the world has the responsibility to stop militarization of Tibet so as to ensure peace and stability.

The time has come for the European Parliament to put a meaningful pressure on the Chinese government to accept the following proposals to resolve the crisis in Tibet:

1. The European Parliament should pass a resolution in support of the genuine aspirations of the Tibetans both in and outside Tibet for the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Tibet and freedom for Tibetans.
2. There must be an immediate end to the repressive policies and withdrawal of the security forces from the Tibetan areas, which are the root causes leading to tragic self-immolations by Tibetans.
3. All those Tibetans, who are suffering imprisonment under false charges for their alleged role in the self-immolations, must be immediately released. Respecting the international norms, the Chinese government must compensate those Tibetans executed in prison, killed or injured in police firing, and those political prisoners who have suffered physical and mental torture in the prison.
4. The European Parliament must urge the Chinese government to provide the United Nations and European Parliament and other independent fact-finding organisations and the media unfettered access into Tibetan areas to assess the real situation and conditions of Tibetans.

These four points are the genuine aspirations of the Tibetan people. I am submitting this to you with a fervent hope that the European Parliament will urgently act on our four-point appeal to bring an immediate resolution to the crisis in Tibet.

With assurances of my highest regards.

Yours sincerely,

Kirti Rinpoche
Head of Kirti Monastery