

## TIBETAN POLITICAL PRISONER TASHI WANGCHUK RELEASED AFTER FIVE-YEAR SENTENCE



Tashi Wangchuk speaking to the New York Times about his advocacy efforts. (Photo: NYT screenshot).

**AT THE END OF JANUARY CHINA RELEASED PROMINENT TIBETAN HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER TASHI WANGCHUK, WHO HAD COMPLETED A FIVE-YEAR PRISON SENTENCE FOR HIS EFFORTS TO PROTECT THE TIBETAN LANGUAGE.**

Chinese authorities first detained Tashi Wangchuk in January 2016, just days after [he spoke to the New York Times](#) about his efforts to protect the right of Tibetans to speak and learn their mother tongue. [Sentenced to five years in prison in May 2018](#) on false charges of ‘inciting separatism’, he had in fact done nothing more than defend rights protected under the Chinese constitution and international law. His sentence was a clear violation of his right to freedom of opinion and expression. According to his lawyers, who were [denied access to him](#) on several occasions, he was also [subjected to torture in detention – a claim that China did not deny](#). China committed all of these abuses against

Tashi despite efforts by governments and parliamentarians around the world to speak out against his prosecution and imprisonment. Some of them have since reacted to his release, including the European Union, who [called](#) on the Chinese authorities to conduct a “thorough investigation” into allegations of torture while he was in detention.

Although Tashi has now been released, the International Campaign for Tibet remains worried about his long-term well-being. Like many former Tibetan political prisoners, he faces curtailment of his rights as well as surveillance, harassment and possible re-arrest by Chinese authorities.



### IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 Tibetan political prisoner Tashi Wangchuk released after five-year sentence
- 2 US adopts key legislation supporting Tibetans rights
- 3 Despite criticism, EU concludes negotiations on investment agreement with China
- 4 Two more deaths of Tibetans following torture in detention
- 5 National security programming for China’s new generation
- 6 Tibetans in exile conduct first round of elections for president and parliament
- 7 Political Prisoner Focus
- 8 Reading Suggestion
- 9 Upcoming Events



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## US ADOPTS KEY LEGISLATION SUPPORTING TIBETANS RIGHTS

ON 27 DECEMBER 2020, FORMER US PRESIDENT TRUMP SIGNED INTO LAW THE TIBETAN POLICY AND SUPPORT ACT (TPSA), LEGISLATION THAT DRAMATICALLY UPGRADES US SUPPORT FOR TIBETANS IN KEY AREAS AND CHALLENGES CHINA'S CONTINUING REPRESSION OF THE TIBETAN PEOPLE.

Introduced with bipartisan support in the US House of Representatives and in the Senate in September 2019, the legislation had been passed by the Congress a few days earlier, on 21 December.

Building on the landmark Tibetan Policy Act of 2002, the TPSA will mainly:

- Make it official US policy that the selection of Tibetan Buddhist leaders, including a future Dalai Lama, should follow the instructions of the current Dalai Lama—who is now 85—and the desires of the Tibetan Buddhist community with no interference from the Chinese government and sanction Chinese officials if they carry out their plans to [appoint their own Dalai Lama in the future](#);
- Address water security and climate change in Tibet;
- Strengthen diplomatic efforts to push for a negotiated solution

between the Chinese government and the representatives of the Dalai Lama;

- Formalize funding for humanitarian projects for Tibetans inside and outside Tibet until at least 2025.

The TPSA now needs to be implemented by the new Biden administration – which in its first substantive statements to the media on Tibet [has come out strongly in committing to support the Tibetan people](#). Now that it has been adopted in the US, ICT will seek to advance similar legislation in other countries.

[Click here to read the full text of the Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020.](#)

## DESPITE CRITICISM, EU CONCLUDES NEGOTIATIONS ON INVESTMENT AGREEMENT WITH CHINA

AT THE END OF LAST YEAR, THE EUROPEAN UNION AND CHINA CONCLUDED NEGOTIATIONS FOR A COMPREHENSIVE AGREEMENT ON INVESTMENT (CAI), DESPITE STRONG CONCERNS ABOUT THE DEAL'S HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS.



Chinese president Xi Jinping and EU leaders during the videoconference on 30 December. (Photo: European Commission Audiovisual Service)

The CAI, [concluded in principle on 30 December](#), is expected to replace the existing bilateral investment treaties between China and EU Member States, and to help European companies to better compete on the Chinese market. However, in recent weeks it has met strong criticism from China experts and human rights activists, including over the lack of commitment from China on its use of forced labour. According to the deal, China will make “continued and sustained efforts” to ratify two International Labour Organisation’ conventions against forced labor – a weak commitment considering China’s growing disregard for multilateral agreements.

Last December, the European Parliament, with an overwhelming majority, reiterated its strong condemnation following new reports on the use of forced labour in its [resolution on forced labour and the situation of the Uyghurs in the Xinjiang Uyghur](#)

> CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



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[Autonomous Region](#). In October 2020, several Members of the European Parliament also [raised concerns over a report revealing China's large-scale programme of coercive labour in the Tibet Autonomous Region](#) with already over half a million rural Tibetans forced off their land into military-style training centres.

In this context, a coalition of 36 civil society organisations including the International Campaign for Tibet addressed a [joint appeal to the](#)

[European Institutions calling for the inclusion of enforceable human rights clauses in the CAI](#). At the end of January, ICT also had the opportunity to raise concerns about the lack of space for human rights in the agreement [during a civil society consultation](#) organized by the Directorate General for Trade of the European Commission.

The agreement in principle now needs to be approved by the EU Council and the European Parliament - where it also already faces strong criticism.

## TWO MORE DEATHS OF TIBETANS FOLLOWING TORTURE IN DETENTION

IN THE LATEST CASES IN A SERIES OF DEATHS OF TIBETANS RESULTING FROM TORTURE AND MISTREATMENT SUSTAINED IN CUSTODY, A YOUNG TIBETAN MONK AND A TOUR GUIDE DIED AT THE BEGINNING OF THIS YEAR.



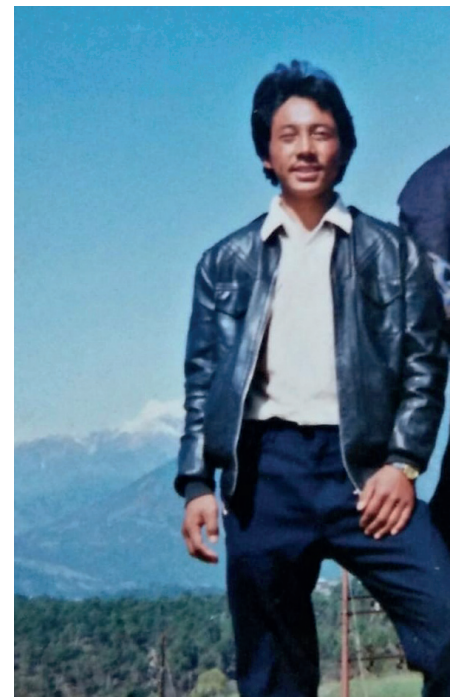
Tenzin Nyima

[Tenzin Nyima](#), a 19-year-old Tibetan monk died recently from injuries sustained from torture while in Chinese custody. Nyima had previously been detained for six months for advocating for Tibet's independence with three fellow monks. When he publicised news of his arrest, Nyima was re-arrested. In October 2020, after two months under arbitrary detention, Nyima was released to his family due to poor health. Hospital records show Nyima was paralysed and unconscious. Due to the severe nature of his condition, Nyima was discharged from two hospitals and died soon after on 19 January.

On 6 February, [Kunchok Jinpa](#), a 51-year-old Tibetan tour guide, also died apparently

from injuries sustained from torture and mistreatment in prison. Jinpa, who was serving a 21-year sentence for talking to foreign media about protests in his native area of Driru (Biru, in Chinese) in 2013, had reportedly suffered a brain hemorrhage and was paralyzed. He succumbed to his injuries in a hospital in Lhasa, where he had been transferred from custody without his family's knowledge.

Nyima and Jinpa's cases are not unique: China has a pattern of turning arbitrary detention into death sentences, for which it has faced minimal scrutiny. These cases also expose the Chinese authorities' habit of releasing dying prisoners as a result of the torture and ill treatment they have suffered,



Kunchok Jinpa

in order to avoid responsibility for their deaths in detention.

*ICT is calling for independent investigations into the deaths of Nyima and Jinpa and has set up a petition urging the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to act to end this pattern of torture in Tibet, [which you can sign here](#).*



## NATIONAL SECURITY PROGRAMMING FOR CHINA'S NEW GENERATION

IN ITS LATEST BID TO ENTRENCH SECURITIZATION, THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT HAS RELEASED POLITICAL TRAINING GUIDELINES FOR A WHOLE NEW GENERATION OF VIGILANT GUARDS ACROSS CHINA.



A screen grab from the Hong Kong Education Bureau's national security video for primary school children.

[schools and Primary Schools,](#) seeks to systematically integrate national security education into the country's education system. Back in 2015, the National People's Congress had already designated 15 April as National Security Education Day.

The educational guidelines for students, among pages of warnings about hostile foreign

separatist activities.

By systematically integrating national security in the country's education system, the Chinese Communist Party seeks to instill a hostile mindset against Tibetans and Uyghurs as ethnic separatists in the minds of Chinese youth. The Guidelines depict so-called 'minority' groups such as Tibetans and Uyghurs as dangerous and untrustworthy. Furthermore, they are implied to be dangerous threats to homeland security that threaten territorial integrity, national unity, political stability, social order and the overthrow of the Communist regime by working with "separatist forces" in and outside China.

[Click here to read ICT's full analysis.](#)

Serving President Xi Jinping's use of China's national security as a justification for draconian security measures, in September 2020 the Ministry of Education issued national security education guidelines for implementation across the country. The 56-page ["Guidelines for National Security Education in Universities, Junior high](#)

and domestic threats, include the following issues: The situation of the anti-separatist struggle remains grim; The nature of the anti-separatist struggle is long-term, complex, and acute; Likewise the threats constituted by "Taiwan Independence," "Tibet Independence," "East Turkestan," "Hong Kong Independence," and other

## TIBETANS IN EXILE CONDUCT FIRST ROUND OF ELECTIONS FOR PRESIDENT AND PARLIAMENT

SEVERAL THOUSAND TIBETANS IN EXILE VOTED ON 3 JANUARY IN THE FIRST OF THE TWO ROUNDS OF THE ELECTIONS FOR THE SIKYONG (PRESIDENT) AND MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT OF THE CENTRAL TIBETAN ADMINISTRATION.

On 8 February, the electoral commission of the Central Tibetan Administration [announced the official results of this first round.](#) According to the commission head, Wangdu Tsering, over 60,000 Tibetans took part in the elections in 26 countries around the world. Former speaker of the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile, Penpa Tsering, came first, with 24,488 votes. The second highest number of votes (14,544) went to Kelsang Dorjee Aukatsang, followed by Gyari Dolma (13,363). The final electoral list with the two remaining candidates for the office of the new Sikyong and 90 candidates for the 45 seats in the Tibetan parliament in exile is expected to be published on 21 March.

The high turn out in the first ballot shows once again how important democratic processes are for the exiled Tibetan community. Despite the adversities of life in exile and the dispersal of the refugee population in many different countries, it has succeeded in building a functioning democracy in exile over the past 60 years.

After the second ballot on 11 April, votes will be counted locally from 13 to 19 April, and the overall results will be announced on 20 May. The swearing-in of the newly elected parliamentarians is scheduled for 28 May, while the new Sikyong's swearing-in is expected a few days later.



Tibetans cast their votes in the Netherlands on 3 January. (Photo: ICT)

# TIBET BRIEF

FEBRUARY 2021

A REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

## POLITICAL PRISONER FOCUS

### LHUNDUP DORJE

A TIBETAN MAN NAMED LHUNDUP DORJE WAS HANDED A ONE YEAR PRISON SENTENCE LAST DECEMBER FOR POSTING PHOTOS AND TEACHINGS OF TIBET'S EXILED SPIRITUAL LEADER THE DALAI LAMA ON SOCIAL MEDIA.



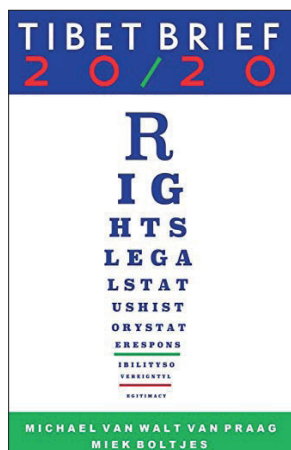
Lhundup Dorje during his trial at the Golog People's Intermediate Court on 14 December 2020. (Photo: Radio Free Asia)

According to [Radio Free Asia](#), the 30-year-old Tibetan nomad was convicted for so-called "separatism" by a Chinese court in the northeast Tibetan prefecture of Golog. He had been arrested last July and held in detention for five months before sentencing. RFA's source in Tibet said that his prison term is to be followed by a year-long deprivation of his political rights.

Dorje had attracted police attention after posting a New Year's greeting to Tibet's India-based exile government, the Central Tibetan Administration, on his Weibo account in February 2019. He had also posted a video clip of teachings by the Dalai Lama - whose images are banned by Chinese authorities in Tibetan areas - as well as slogans calling for Tibetan independence. All were listed separately in the indictment against him, the source said.

## READING SUGGESTION

### TIBET BRIEF 20/20, BY MICHAEL VAN WALT VAN PRAAG & MIEK BOLTJES



If you thought China's incorporation of Tibet is water under the bridge, think again. *Tibet Brief 20/20* is a wake-up call for governments to rethink their stance on Tibet, as their current policies enable Chinese hegemonistic behavior in the region. Devoid of the self-censorship often encountered in works on Tibet and China, the authors meticulously debunk Beijing's historical narrative and convincingly demonstrate that: 1. Tibet was historically never a part of China; 2. The PRC has not acquired sovereignty over Tibet since seizing the country; 3. Tibetans are wrongfully denied the exercise of their right to self-determination; and 4. The international community is failing in its legal obligations and responsibility to help end the Sino-Tibetan conflict.

### TSERING TSO

BECAUSE SHE EXPRESSED HER THOUGHTS ON THE POPULAR CHINESE SOCIAL MEDIA APP WECHAT, THE TRIKA (CHINESE: GUIDE) COUNTY PUBLIC SECURITY BUREAU [PLACED A TIBETAN WOMAN NAMED TSERING TSO \(CH: CAIREN CUO\) IN 10 DAYS OF ADMINISTRATIVE DETENTION LAST NOVEMBER.](#)



Tsering Tso during her hospitalization in 2017. (Photo: Radio Free Asia)

Although the content of her posts is not known, the County Public Security Bureau evoked Article 26 (4) of the Public Security Administration Punishment Law of the People's Republic of China. This allows a legal basis for her detention under the unspecified "other provocative acts" category. In addition to her arbitrary detention from 20 until 30 November she was also fined 1000 Yuan (around 125€).

This is not the first time the police have detained Tsering, [TCHRD reported](#). For her 2017 backing of the rights of Tibetans in Yulshul (Ch: Yushu) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Qinghai to apply for passports, local police took her away for detention. She claims that during interrogation she was kicked in the head, face, chest, and abdomen, leading to her hospitalization.

The International Campaign for Tibet urges the government of China to stop this harassment and imprisonment of Tsering Tso for simply expressing her thoughts and opinions.

*Tibet Brief 20/20* is a call to action, to course-correct. The result of ten years of collaborative research, and benefitting from the authors' intimate understanding of the Sino-Tibetan conflict and efforts to resolve it, it is a must read and indispensable reference for policymakers, civil society advocates and Asia specialists.

Click [here](#) to buy this book.

On 2 March, ICT Europe will host a new episode of *Tibet Talks Europe* with Michael van Walt van Praag, one of the authors of *Tibet Brief 20/20* (more info in the "Upcoming Events" section below).



# TIBET BRIEF

FEBRUARY 2021

A REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET



## UPCOMING EVENTS

- **2 MARCH:** Tibet Talks Europe #11 'Break the silence: Tibet was never part of China', conversation with Michael van Walt van Praag, author of *Tibet Brief 20/20*. (More details and registration: <https://www.facebook.com/events/3350727355033522/>)
- **10 MARCH:** 62<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of the Tibetan Uprising Day
- **11 APRIL:** 2<sup>nd</sup> and final round of the Tibetan elections in exile