

TORTURE

“When I was first arrested, my hands and feet were shackled and I was tied hanging for 10 hours. Later, I experienced similar torture seven times, which often lasted between 2 to 5 hours. Even today I continue to have severe pain on the backbone and ribs and my knee dislocates whenever my body gets cold.”

– Golog Jigme, former political prisoner, Dharamsala, May 28, 2014



Tibetan monks are arrested after a peaceful protest in Eastern Tibet

Since the unrest in 2008 and crackdown in Tibet, the Chinese authorities have adopted a harsher approach to suppressing dissent and there has been a significant spike in the number of Tibetan

political prisoners taken in Tibetan areas of the PRC. There is also evidence that since 2008 torture has become more widespread and directed at a broader sector of society.¹

¹ See our report *Torture and Impunity – 29 Cases of Tibetan Political Prisoners* February 26, 2015. <http://www.savetibet.org/newsroom/torture-and-impunity-29-cases-of-tibetan-political-prisoners/>



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In the aftermath of the protests, China's repression intensified to a level not seen in Tibet since the Cultural Revolution, as authorities actively sought out those involved in the protests, detained thousands of Tibetans, executed harsh sentences without due process and inflicted torture methods to ensure the silence of those who dared speak out against the state.²

Peaceful protestors throughout Tibet who express political dissent or 'reactionary' views advocating 'splittism' are immediately met by Chinese security forces, as the Chinese government enacts an increasingly harsh and systematic approach to silencing Tibetans.

According to the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, reasons for arrest may include: printing and/or pasting political leaflets; forming 'counter-revolutionary' organizations endangering state security; espionage or divulging information to the 'Dalai clique'; shouting reactionary slogans; encouraging reactionary singing; possessing the banned Tibetan national flag; failing to reform; and participating in demonstrations, among others.

While the months following March 2008 have seen an uptick in cases of torture and imprisonment in Tibet, apart from their magnitude, the practices employed differ little from the Chinese imprisonment and torture tactics that have been in place since the Chinese government invaded Tibet in 1949.

Our report, "*Torture and Impunity – 29 Cases of Tibetan Political Prisoners*", released on February 26, 2015 documented the use of torture and mistreatment that continues to be widespread in Tibet. It detailed

cases of Tibetans, who have suffered from severe torture in prison, and a number of cases of Tibetans have recently been released who have suffered from torture and mistreatment and who have not received compensation, some of whom are in urgent need of medical treatment. The report also gave details about 29 cases of Tibetans, who died as a result of torture in custody.³

Although China officially prohibits torture, there are indications that there is a pattern of using torture in Tibet, a result both of China's emphasis on ensuring political 'stability' and a culture of impunity among paramilitary troops and security personnel. There is no indication of criminal investigations into these cases.

Chinese authorities' disregard for rule of law grossly diminishes the legal rights of the Tibetan detainees who often lack access to defense attorneys of their choosing, are forced to confess, and are often denied fair and open trials. Following their imprisonment, most detainees face torture by Chinese authorities in order to extract confessions, punish those who display political dissent, or to force prisoners to accept the Communist Party as the leading authority in Tibet. Tibetans suffer torture in prisons, detention centers and "reform through labor" camps. Torture during the pretrial period, when efforts are focused on eliciting satisfactory confessions, is often the most vigorous.

One of the cases, which ICT has recently been following closely, is the one of Dolma Kyab, a Tibetan man sentenced to death in August 2013 for "killing his wife and burning her body to make it look as if she had self-immolated". Chinese state-run

² For a full account of the events of March 2008 and the ensuing crackdown please see ICT reports: '*Tibet at a Turning Point and A Great Mountain Burned by Fire*' available at http://www.savetibet.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/ICT_A_Great_Mountain_Burned_by_Fire.pdf

³ *Torture and Impunity – 29 Cases of Tibetan Political Prisoners*, ICT, February 26, 2015. <http://www.savetibet.org/newsroom/torture-and-impunity-29-cases-of-tibetan-political-prisoners/>



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media reporting on this case made no mention of any evidence other than a ‘confession’ by Dolma Kyab. It is known that torture is frequently used to extract confessions in China. Given the secretive nature of the detention and trial of Dolma Kyab, it appears that he may not have received a fair trial and due process.⁴

Detainees experience both physical and psychological torture.⁵ Some of the most common methods include: electric shocks from cattle prods to areas including the mouth, eyes, and genitals; kicking and beatings; sleep and food deprivation; sexual assault; forced blood withdrawal; exposure to extreme heat or cold; stress positions; staring at the sun for long periods of time; and attacks by trained dogs. Forms of psychological torture include severe humiliation, death threats, solitary confinement, mock executions, and forcing the victim to watch other prisoners tortured.

After such torture, detainees are often left severely traumatized and in grave physical condition. The effects of torture remain with the victim long after release, and often result in lasting brain injury, deafness, paralysis, or chronic pain; while mental disorders such as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) are also common.⁶ If a victim dies in custody, authorities often cite illness or suicide in order to thwart accusations of mistreatment or wrongdoing, and officials will often release prisoners on the verge of death in order to deny culpability. Attempts to sustain a livelihood following release are difficult, as the status as a formal political prisoner often intimidates employers and the victim’s ability to work is hindered by disabilities resulting from torture.

⁴ *Death penalty for Tibetan after death of wife in Ngaba*, ICT, August 21, 2013. <http://www.savetibet.org/death-penalty-for-tibetan-after-death-of-wife-in-ngaba/>

⁵ *Ngawang Sangdrol testifies on human rights before US Congress*, ICT, March 10, 2004. <http://www.savetibet.org/ngawang-sangdrol-testifies-on-human-rights-before-us-congress/>

⁶ *Entering Exile: Trauma, Mental Health, and Coping Among Tibetan Refugees Arriving in Dharamsala, India*, *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, Vol. 21, No. 2, April 2008, pp. 199–208. <http://www.survivorsoftorture.org/old/pix/Sachs%20et%20al%202008%20Dsala%20JOTS.pdf>