

The situation of prisons in Tibet & China and the Laogai

Under Authoritarian regimes, there is no possibility for the existence of the light of justice and freedom for any human being. And there is even less in its prisons.

The number of prisons and prisoners under the authoritarian Chinese communist system, is very difficult to gather. It is said that not including the detention centers, there are about 50 million prisoners. These prisoners in the Laogai are put to work every day, at about 7:00am, after finishing the morning exercise until 6:00pm in the evening. Those who are put to extra work will have to work from 7:00 am until 9:45pm.

The prisoners are given two meals everyday that is not enough to fill one's stomach. Generally speaking the budget established by the government for one prisoner's monthly food is 78 Chinese Yuan (equivalent to \$9.50). But it seems that most of the prisons do not spend this money on food.

Likewise if the prisons cannot finish the assign monthly job quota, the people in charge will beat and chain the prisoners. They will also put one in solitary confinement in dark cells for a year, month or weeks.

In some of the prisons, if prisoners break any labor equipment, they are made to replenish or repair the equipment or tools from their own money.

In some bigger prisons and labor camps, under the pretext of medical examination, doctors draw blood from the prisoners. And in cases, I have heard that prison doctors perform surgery for minor ailments, so that they can remove the kidneys to sell in the organ market. There are also cases where prisoners who don't have any family or relatives to take care of them, or ones of weak constitution, are drugged with various injections and then their kidneys are removed.

Prisoners who are from minority nationalities, or from low class family or poor family, suffer the worst as the head of the prisons will beat them randomly and whenever they want like there are no rules. They will be forced to do labor and they have not even a trace of any right or freedom.

- A. In the Tibet Autonomous Region, there are three prisons – Drapchi Prison, Chushur Prison, and Lhasa Prison. The city of Lhasa and the six prefectures in the TAR, have three prisons and seven detention centers. Likewise in the 72 prefectures, there are 72 detention centers. In total, in all of the TAR, there are three prisons and 82 detention centers. Most of the Tibetan political prisoners under labor reform are placed in the three prisons mentioned above. Likewise, Tramog detention center, Shigatse detention center, Lhasa City National Security Detention Center, Lhasa City detention center are the main detention centers for political prisoners.
- B. Tibetan areas in Qinghai province have two cities and six autonomous prefectures, one general prefecture and 37 counties, which contain the following: Chenshi Prison,

Xining Women's prison, Xining Eastern Brick factory, Xining North Brick factory, Gormo Prison, Tsadam Shong Prison, Tsolho Prison, Thang Karmo Prison, Beemdo Prison, and Xining Hydro-electric Station Prison and 37 counties have 37 detention centers. These are the centers for the Tibetan political prisoners from the Amdo Kokonor region.

- C. In the four autonomous prefectures and 38 counties in the Tibetan areas of Kansu Province, Sichuan Province and Yunnan Province have six prisons and 42 detention centers. These are the main areas where Tibetans are imprisoned. Most of the Tibetan political prisoners in these prisons and detention centers continue to be transferred to prisons in neighboring Chinese areas. Most of the prisons mentioned above in the Tibetan areas are in the form of factories for labor reform prisoners.

The Tibetan political prisoners who only participated in peaceful protests are treated inhumanely and forcefully. It is common practice for these prisoners to have their blood drawn in the pretext of medical treatment. The prison officials use all kinds of electric rods and other kinds of modern equipment to give them countless beatings, and unimaginable amount of cruelty. Because of all these conditions and the poor facilities in the prisons, every year there are countless deaths of prisoners by unnatural causes, and increasing number of diseases and malnutrition cases.

The bigger prisons use the prisoners for production of goods. For example, in Kachu prison where I was imprisoned, there is a metal melting foundry, carpet weaving, carpentry and woodwork, making sections and body parts of cars and boats, glove and wool processing units. They have special sections for making machine parts in iron. All the workers are prisoners. If a prisoner doesn't finish their monthly work assignment, there are repercussions - they are beaten, or their work score is reduced. The way that the prison officials oppress the prisoners is worse than serfdom.

The current heightened situation in Tibet and the cause of the self-immolation movement:

Since the sad incident of the passing of the Panchen Rinpoche in 1989, the situation in Tibet started getting worse. First, the cities and towns in Central Tibet slowly spreading to the countryside, the Chinese language classes increased. More recently, in other regions of Tibet, besides the Tibetan language classes, all other classes were made mandatory to be taught in Chinese.

At the same time, in the monasteries, where study of Buddhism takes place, the Chinese government interfered in the system of recognition of re-incarnate Lamas. Work teams are sent with the purpose of enforcing patriotic education campaigns, and forceful denunciation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Various rules and regulations have been made to control the number of monks at monasteries and where they come from. Religious freedom and education is something in name only. Security offices and branches of criminal affairs offices have been established in the monasteries. Even branches of communist party office, women's association office have been established

there. The four generations of leaders of the communist party have to be displayed in all monasteries and the five star Chinese national flag has to be raised. Security cameras have been placed on top of the assembly rooms, and the main temples, to monitor activities of the monks and the lay community who come there. Monks and nuns are interrogated if they don't carry all the required identity papers. This type of hard policies and regulations placed on the religious community imposed by the Chinese government is the main reason for the conflict between the Tibetan people and the Chinese government. But the Chinese propaganda media have another way of explaining this.

During the Chinese government's rule of Tibet for more than 50 years, the first generation of Tibetans' struggle continued into the 80's, the second generation of Tibetans' continued from the 80's to the 90's, now the third generation has taken over the struggle. The one view and action taken by the Chinese government is inaction. The common people's requests are never considered, but instead cracked down with military force, torture and arrest. There has been no change for over half a century.

Currently in all areas of Tibet, there is a campaign called "Sending Cadres to Support Tibet" through which, more and more ethnic Chinese communist party cadres are being chosen and deployed into all Tibetan prefectures, counties and townships, and Tibetans cadres are being left in the sidelines. These Chinese cadres not only hold all the political powers but also bring with them many Chinese migrant workers, technicians and business people from their own hometowns in China to migrate to Tibet. These migrant Chinese are encouraged through special job opportunities, special school options for children, and other incentives like increased pay and grade.

Furthermore, Tibetans are being forcefully removed from the places where they lived for countless generations. Mining and other kinds of random destruction of natural resources is taking place. Deforestation, killing of wildlife, and the damming of the major rivers, are all adding to the complete destruction of Tibet's natural environment.

The Ngaba Tibetan Prefecture, where there have been constant Tibetan protests since 2008, has 14 officials in the Prefectural level standing committee of the communist party and among them, only 5 are Tibetans. In the last few years, among the 600 cadres that got promoted, only 20 are bilingual Tibetans. The situation is also similar in other so-called Tibetan prefectures. Like this, most prefectures and township level governments impose similar policies to increase the number of Chinese cadres in government positions.

Like wise, this year on February 14, when Chinese Premier Wen Jiabo met with European leaders, he told the media that the self immolations in Tibetan areas are extreme actions. The Chinese government considers Tibetans who commit self-immolation as terrorists.

Just before this year's session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, Jia Qinglin, the Chair, said that the protests inside Tibet are all orchestrated by the Dalai clique.

During the 2008 widespread Tibet protests, the Chinese Premier loudly told the International media in Beijing that not one bullet was fired at Tibetan protestors. But even before his words dispersed, the images of sixteen Tibetans who were shot spread across the world. Regarding the allegations that the protests were incited by Dalai Clique, His Holiness the Dalai Lama has repeatedly urged the Chinese government to come to Dharamsala and search through all the documents to find out if the exile Tibetan administration had anything to do with the protest inside Tibet.

Earlier this year in February, Chen Qianguo, the Party Secretary of TAR, made an important speech, where he said, “The struggle between us and the Dalai Clique is a long and complicated one and sometimes it gets very serious and we must acknowledge this. Every cadre and member of party in all the departments and sections from the whole of TAR, must act definitively as if at war, to protect the stability and struggle to control the separatist without any distraction or diversion. Protection of stability work needs to become more detailed in order for it to become a reality.”

Through the establishment of so called “Checkpoints for the Benefit of the People,” monasteries, towns and villages alike are being monitored. In addition, imposition of a policy called “One Six” is being used to control and oversee monks and nuns in monasteries in all kinds of ways.

Currently, all the major towns, cities and townships in Tibetan areas, are sprawling with undercover police and police in uniform. This has become a common sight. In some areas, around the time of major anniversaries observed by Tibetans in exile such as the Anniversary of the March 10 commemoration, His Holiness the Dalai Lama’s birthday, Tibetan Democracy Day, Nobel Peace Prize Celebration Day, the authorities undertake processions of marching soldiers and tanks etc, in order to create fear.

The self-immolation movement from recent Tibetan history, first started in 1997 during a hunger strike undertaken by the Tibetan Youth Congress in the Indian Capital of New Delhi by the hero, Thubten Ngodup. Inside Tibet, the first of the self immolations started with the self immolation of Tapey, a 20 yr old monk from Kirti monastery in Ngaba, on 27 February, 2009. Since then, there have been 37 more Tibetans who committed self-immolation in protest of Chinese rule in Tibet. Their main demands have been “Long live His Holiness the Dalai Lama,” “Return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Tibet,” “Freedom in Tibet,” “Freedom of Tibetan Language,” and so on. These demands would only benefit the unification of China. But the Chinese Communist party has not answered any of these demands. In future, there could be a time when change for the better is the only option for the Party.

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Dolkar Kyap