

# Brief Biography

## Early Life

My name is Jampa Monlam (a.k.a Jampel Monlam). I was born in Lhasa, Tibet, in 1968. At the age of six, I joined the local Government primary school and went on to do Middle School, spending a total of 11 years at school. I learnt to read and write Tibetan and Chinese. In 1985, I joined Drepung Monastery to learn the traditional buddhist teachings. I was 16 years old that time.



The monasteries of Tibet form the basis of Tibetan tradition and culture making it the very embodiment of Tibet. In the wake of Chinese aggression on our homeland (1949-1959) and also during the turbulent Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), Tibet underwent the most tragic phase in history in terms of loss of lives, destruction of traditional culture and religion, and “socialist transformation” in the name of “peaceful liberation”. With the death of Mao Tse Tung in 1976, Tibet witnessed a brief period of liberalisation policy whereby a modicum of religious freedom was permitted. However, Tibet by 1976 has become a barren and repressed region bereft of its rich cultural tradition and any remnants of the “old society” scarred irreparably. Tibetans lack freedom of speech and are denied every fundamental human rights. But nobody dare express their dissent to China.

## Pro-independence activities

On 27 September 1987, along with 20 other monks from my monastery, I participated in a peaceful demonstration at Lhasa Barkhor (central circumambulation and market area around the Jokhang temple), calling for Tibet's independence. It was the first ever demonstration to be held in Tibet since the March 1959 uprising against China's occupation of Tibet. Initially we were only 21 demonstrators, but as we circled around Barkhor, the number grew to more than a thousand people who called out for freedom slogans. As a result, Chinese Public Security Bureau officers (PSB) arrested me along with the other monks in our group who initiated the demonstration. After repeated appeals by the late 10th Panchen Lama supported by thousands of Tibetans, we were released after four months of detention in Lhasa City PSB Detention Centre.

Upon release, I joined the Free Tibet Organization, a clandestine voluntary organisation consisting of ten monks from Drepung Monastery. Since then, I was actively involved in Tibetan freedom struggle movement and promotion of human rights for the Tibetan people. Our activities included printing and pasting pro-independence posters and leaflets on the walls of Lhasa City and government offices. We also distributed United Nations documents such as Universal Declaration of Human Rights to the general masses throughout Tibet. Only an iota of the actual situation inside Tibet could reach the outside world that time. We somehow managed to pass the information collected about systematic human rights abuses inside Tibet to the world at the risk of our life; a life that was as good dead without recognition as a dignified human being.

In January 1989, a ceremony was held in Shigatse to commemorate the erection of a memorial tomb for the late Panchen Lama. During the ceremony, Shigatse PSB officers

arrested me with another monk from Drepung Monastery on alleged charges of involvement in political activities. Despite having no evidence against us, we were held in Shigatse Nyari Detention Centre for more than a month. During our detention, we were subjected to severe beatings and interrogation sessions. I was even thrown from the first floor of a building, which landed me flat on my face. I was unconscious for some time. When I gained my consciousness, I was hit on the chin with a rifle butt, which caused serious injuries to my jaw. When the police failed to find evidence against us, we were released and ordered to leave Shigatse at once.

We reached Lhasa in early March to participate in one of the biggest demonstrations in Lhasa that took place from 5-7 March 1989. On the evening of 7 March 1989 at 4 p.m, Beijing Central Government imposed Martial Law in Lhasa City. The People's Liberation Army (PLA), People's Armed Police (PAP) and Public Security Bureau (PSB) officials swarmed through Lhasa, fired on the demonstrators and went in search of Tibetans "culprits" in every nook and corner. Hundreds of Tibetans died on that day, thousands more were arrested, and several of those arrested subsequently died from torture while in detention. For the next year, restrictions were imposed on movement within Lhasa, with a mandatory requirement that everybody had to possess travel permit.

In June 1989, six members from our secret independence organisation got arrested on alleged charges of political activism. The remaining four members from our organisation, including myself, lived in constant fear for more than a month until "TAR" PSB officers re-arrested us on 18 July 1989. We were immediately taken to Sangyip Prison. All ten of us were beaten and tortured mercilessly in the course of interrogation with cattle prods, and other torture instruments. It is shocking that people have developed such sophisticated devices to inflict pain on others.

### **Prison Sentence, Prison Life**

On 28 November 1989, inside Lhasa City Government Hall, in front of a large gathering of 1,500 representatives of the "TAR" Government, Lhasa Intermediate Court declared all ten of us guilty and passed sentences of varying terms. I was sentenced to five years' imprisonment and subsequent two years' deprivation of political rights. I was only 20 years old at the time.

After the pronouncement of the sentence, on 14 January 1990 we were transferred to Drapchi - Tibet's most dreaded prison. At that time a new prison unit 5 was newly established and held only political prisoners. I was put together with the other political prisoners in Unit 5 for four years and then imprisoned for a fifth year with older political prisoners. Life in prison was horrible and the most difficult part of prison life was the forced labour.

Sometimes if the prison officials did not like us they would claim that we broke minor prison rules and used that as an excuse to punish us. Punishments would vary; sometimes we would be made to run barefoot at high speed on a gravel road, sometimes we would be handcuffed for several days. Beating and kicking are the most common occurrences in Chinese-administered Tibet's prisons. In brief, torture and inhuman treatment of the prisoners in particular were very common and the judicial procedure and prison sentence

given were unjust. On top of that it doesn't follow the usual judicial procedure and the 'crime' committed by us i.e. peaceful demonstrating are in total contradiction to the judgment given to us like crime of 'counter-revolutionary'.

### **Life after release**

On 17 July 1994, I was released from prison after completion of my five-year prison term. Life after release for all political prisoners is suffocating and prison-like. In fact, it was no better than being in a prison. I was expelled from my monastery at the order of the Chinese authorities and my ration card was transferred to my hometown. Despite being out of prison I continued to be under constant surveillance and targeted for strict observance. PSB officers frequently come to interrogate me.

The judiciary department had sent a letter to the local police concerning my case and gave strict instructions to observe me constantly. They said that I had a polluted mind and that I wasn't reformed completely and that they should hold me in contempt and suspicion. This gave the PSB all the more reason to scrutinise me. I had to report every day about what I had done the entire day.

In 1996 the PSB officers accused me of still working under cover waiting for an opportunity to initiate political activities. I was restricted from travelling outside Lhasa and ordered to report every ten days to the PSB Office. Whenever any political activity happened in Lhasa, I would be called for interrogation and detained for a day or two. My family members were also taken for interrogation. It was a dreadful existence.

In the night of January 1997, "TAR" police officers raided my house and took me to "TAR" PSB Detention Centre. I was detained for seven days and made to sign many documents pledging to report on my mental condition and to seek permission if I left Lhasa. I have lost my freedom and that of my family members also. The police threatened my family and asked me strange questions about my activities and that of my family.

### **In exile**

Even though nine years had passed since my release, I had found no solace and was left with no peace of mind. Completely frustrated with the unending harassment, I realised that I had no choice but to separate with my land and family and escape to India.

In January 1998 I fled Tibet, arriving in India on 9 February 1998. We were given food and shelter in a refugee reception-house set up in Kathmandu, by the Tibetan government in exile, India, for almost two weeks. I reached Tibetan Reception Centre in Dharamsala, North India and stayed there for three months. I am very fortunate to have a private audience with His Holiness the Dalai Lama upon my arrival and I consider this one of the best time and most fortunate in my life.

### **TCHRD**

On 1 May 1998, I joined the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, a non-governmental human rights organisation based in Dharamsala, India. The Centre monitors human rights situation inside Tibet and disseminates these information throughout the world. The Centre works towards protection and promotion of human rights and democratic principles within the exile Tibetan community.

At the outset I have worked with full dedication in the capacity of a Field Officer. I interview new refugees arriving in India from Tibet and collect their personal testimonies. I write press releases and news brief in Tibetan language on issues that need immediate media attention, and undertake research work on specific human rights issues. Being a former political prisoner and having experienced the situation inside Tibet first hand, I have become sort of conduit for information verification and confirmation in the Centre.

Over these years, I was promoted to the post of Centre's Researcher in March 2002. As a researcher, my job includes monitoring news and information on Chinese and Tibetan websites; and to draft press releases on important information. My job also includes researching and writing special reports and annual report of the Centre. I am also the media contact for Tibetan and Chinese language newspapers, radio and websites. I also visit schools, institutions and settlements to give talks and lectures on the human rights situation in Tibet. In recognition and appreciation of my dedicated and sincere service to the Centre for nine years, I was promoted to the post of Assistant Director in March 2006. I have been working as a researcher at the same time in the Centre so far.

### **Professional Experience**

In my early days in India as an ex-political prisoner and also during my ten years' service at TCHRD, interaction with people, students and media forms an important part of my job. I have briefed many visiting governmental delegations to Dharamsala, gave interviews to BBC twice and many times to local medias. During the September 2001 UN World Conference against Racism held in Durban, South Africa, and January 2002 Human Rights conference in Dublin, Ireland, I got the life-time opportunities to speak to the world audience of what I have experienced and what exactly is the true condition inside Tibet. In 2002, I got an opportunity to speak on the plight of Tibet, human rights situation with the Parliamentarians in London. In 2004, I participated in the World Social Forum held in Mumbai and spoke to large audience on the human rights situation in Tibet and my personal experience in Tibet. In 2005, under the financial assistance from Dublin based Human Rights Defenders, I had an opportunity to learn the basic English language and also got the opportunity to participate in the Frontline's 3rd Dublin Platform for Human Rights Defenders At Risk. I am proud that I was drafted as the member of Human Rights Defender. In 2007, I have participated in the 6th Session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. In May 2008, I have testified on the human rights situation in Tibet to the Madrid High Court in Spain in conjunction with the petition filed in the Spanish Court on "Cultural Genocide" in Tibet. In March 2011, during the 16<sup>th</sup> UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, I participated and talked on the situation of Human Rights in Tibet. Also had a seminar along with Human Rights Watch Asian Director on the situation on Tibet.

## **The Conditions of Human Rights in Tibet**

Since China joined the United Nations in 1945, China has signed onto many human rights resolutions. In 2009, China published the National Human Rights Action Plan of China for 2009 to 2010. In 2012, Chinese Communist Party joined the Human Rights Council within the United Nations. However, despite China signing onto many human rights resolutions, the inclusion of human rights protection within China's Constitution, and its propagation of a national human rights action plan, China's actions tell a different story.

Human rights conditions continue to deteriorate in Tibet. The Chinese Communist Party continues to commit many human rights violations against Tibetans. This is ironic considering how China's constitution has incorporated many laws and rules that promotes the protection of human rights. The Chinese government, in reality, has not implemented any plans to improve human rights. In other words, it does not practice what it preaches.

Now, I am going to talk about religious freedom and political freedom, the two most prominent areas which Tibetans are violated by the Chinese Communist Party. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations and China's own constitution both encourage the protection of human rights, and China is in violation of both these documents.

### Political freedom violations

- #1: Arbitrary arrest and detain of Tibetans
- #2: Reports of missing persons in Tibet, particularly those of political prisoners
- #3: Torture within prison
- #4: Unfair court sentences

### Religious rights violations:

- #1: The oppression and control of monastery by the Chinese Communist government
- #2: The carrying out of 'patriotic re-education' campaigns in Buddhist monasteries and nunneries
- #3: The implementation of harsh rules on religion, particular those regarding the management and registration of monasteries
- #4: Replacing religious official leaders with Chinese Communist Party officials

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