

Tibetan who survived more than 20 years imprisonment disappears after bold protest for peace

A Tibetan, who is a former prisoner who continued to protest while in prison despite being subjected to the most severe torture, has been detained again after apparently carrying out a solo demonstration outside the Potala Palace in Lhasa on January 28, 2018.

According to exile sources, Lodoe Gyatso, who has served over 20 years in prison and had a death sentence commuted, is again in detention after he released a video announcing his intention to carry out a peaceful protest. A video message by Lodoe Gyatso was posted by Voice of America Tibetan service showing Lodoe Gyatso (also known as Sogkar Lodoe based on his home county of Sog) dressed in pristine white Tibetan garment speaking to camera.¹

Lodoe announces in the video (an English translation of the message is included at the end of this report) his plan of staging a protest calling for world peace, describing his action as part of a long campaign of non-violent Tibetan protest. A Tibetan source told Radio Free Asia that Lodoe Gyatso is now being held in custody in his home county of Sog (Chinese: Suo) in Nagchu (Naqu) prefecture in the Tibet Autonomous Region.

Lodoe Gyatso, who is known for his mental and physical toughness, withstanding severe torture during over 20 years in prison, carried out his first protest in Lhasa's Drapchi prison in 1995. Lodoe Gyatso had been serving a 15-year prison term for killing a man who had attacked him in a fight, but during his incarceration met various political prisoners and was inspired to protest inside prison.

According to the Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy, on March 4, 1995, Lodoe Gyatso held a lone demonstration, shouting slogans such as "Tibet is independent!" "China should leave Tibet!" "Long live His Holiness the Dalai Lama!" "All the six million Tibetans are united!" He also distributed handwritten pamphlets and posters that read: "If His Holiness faced no obstacles in his 25th year, then he will become the ruler of all realms in his 60th year. Tibetans have been under Chinese rule for 36 years and on this day, to commemorate the Tibetan independence struggle, I represent the entire Tibetan people."²

The prison authorities tortured Lodoe Gyatso severely, with a Tibetan in exile telling Radio Free Asia that: "His cell was so small that he couldn't even raise his head, and at one point he was hung from a ceiling all night with nails driven through his thumbs."³

The news that the authorities had decided to sentence Lodoe Gyatso to death as a result was smuggled out by fellow inmates and attracted international attention. In May, 1995, the UN Special Rapporteur on Extra Judicial, Summary and Arbitrary Executions transmitted an urgent appeal to Chinese government. Following pressure from other international organizations, Lodoe's life imprisonment with six years reprieve was commuted to life and he was deprived of political rights for three years. His sentence term

¹ Voice of America Tibetan service <https://www.voatibetan.com/a/4241329.html>

² TCHRD stated that Lodoe Gyatso carried out his protest walking from Block (rukhang) no. 5 to 6, 4, 2 at Drapchi, concluding his protest march near the courtyard of Block 1. TCHRD report, May 31, 2016, <http://tchrd.org/former-tibetan-political-prisoner-released-from-prison-after-21-years-detained-again-three-years-later/>

³ Radio Free Asia report, May 31, 2016, <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/tibet/vanishes-05312016154810.html>

was increased to 21 years, and he was finally released in 2013, after his latter years of imprisonment were spent at Chushur (Qushui).

Just three years after his release from prison, on May 14 2016, Lodoe Gyatso was suddenly detained in Lhasa. The reason for his detention are still not known; he was released on July 19, 2016 once again in poor health.

Tibetans who know Lodoe Gyatso, now in his mid-fifties, pay tribute to his strength and resilience, with fellow prisoners describing him as a courageous person with a deep sense of pride in his identity and culture.

English Translation of Video Message by Lodoe Gyatso

The environment and society of our Land of Snows is a natural basis for world peace. The campaign for world peace by us the Tibetans has been there not just recently. Rather, for thousands of years, we have worked for world peace through peaceful means and middle way approach, based on the principle of interdependence and non-violent behavior, an example is the vision of Gyalwa Tenzin Gyatso [reference to the Dalai Lama]. Also, Thupten Ngodup and hundreds and thousands of other martyrs have committed self-immolation for the cause of world peace.

I, too, have been striving for world peace for 20 years. In particular, for 11 years, I have been spreading the message of world peace, and have devoted my body, mind and speech towards peace in the world, during seven years in prison I continued spreading the message. After coming out of prison and for four years, I had spread the message to all, regardless of their social status, gender, age, political and religious beliefs.

Now, on January 28, 2018, I will formally start the campaign for world peace.

Tashi Delek.