



## INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

### **Three Tibetan monks in Ngaba hold peaceful protests in a resurgence of solitary demonstrations**

<https://www.savetibet.org/three-tibetan-monks-in-ngaba-hold-peaceful-protests-in-a-resurgence-of-solitary-demonstrations>

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- Three monks in Ngaba, where the wave of self-immolations began in Tibet, have staged solo protests this month, that became prominent in 2014-5.
- Some of those monks sentenced for the same solo protests, which have often involved the demonstrator carrying a photograph of the Dalai Lama, are now being released. But according to two Kirti monks in exile, village police stations are then taking them back into detention for a week or so for 're-education'.

On September 5 (2018), Dorje Rabten, aged about 23, staged a public protest in Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) county town, shouting pro-Tibet slogans, according to Kanyag Tsering and Lobsang Yeshe, from the Kirti Monastery in Dharamsala, India. Dorjee Rabten, a monk of Kirti Monastery in Tibet, was arrested by police and is now in detention. He is from Me'uruma township.

The next day, September 6, another monk of Kirti Monastery, 18 year-old Tenzin Gelek, staged a similar protest in the county town, calling for freedom in Tibet, according to the same sources. He was also immediately arrested and is now in detention. Tenzin Gelek, also from Me'uruma, appears to have posted two messages on social media before his protest, and is the author of many other posts under a pseudonym. It is not known where he is being detained.

There was a third protest in September by a monk in the county town, who was arrested, but the details are not yet known.

Incidents of one-person protests became a pattern in 2014-5 in the Ngaba, the same area where the wave of self-immolations began in 2009 when Kirti monk Tapey set himself on fire. There have also been a number of solo protests in Kardze (Chinese: Ganzi), also in Sichuan, where a number of self-immolations have occurred, demonstrating the continued determination of a young generation of Tibetan monks and laypeople.

Most of the solo protesters have called for freedom for Tibet and for the return of the Dalai Lama to Tibet, with many holding up images of the exiled Tibetan religious leader or clasping their hands together in prayer. Seven Kirti monks who carried out lone protests in 2015 were of the same generation as many of those who self-immolated, and may have known some of the self-immolators; two have family connections to Tibetans who are already in prison. Little information is known about

the fate of those who made the solo protests in 2014-5, but according to the Kirti monks in exile, some of them are now gradually being released after two or three year sentences. The exiled monks said in an email communication: “The village police stations are then taking them back into detention for a week or so, saying they need reeducation. For example, Kirti monk Losang Kelsang was released on September 17 [2018], and then detained by the Me’uruma police for five days. Kirti monk Jampal Gyatso was also released in September and then detained for a week by the Me’uruma police.”

The situation for released political prisoners is precarious and dangerous. In the case of protesters in Ngaba, many released political prisoners are summoned without notice by the State Security and Public Security offices in the county to be interrogated, they have to ask permission to travel outside the county, and it can be refused on a whim. The Kirti monks in exile said: “Even if they are university graduates, they face harassment getting employment in government offices or white collar jobs in the private sector, and when they need government permits for the running of a small business and so on, they face especially hostile treatment. When an incident of political protest occurs, everyone in the concerned monastery or village comes under suspicion. They cannot even apply for a passport, and their family members also face difficulties applying as a result. Thus, the basic rights of the entire community are denied, and these difficulties hang over the person for their entire life.”

The International Campaign for Tibet documented 14 solo protests in Ngaba between July and December 2015. The trend of solo protests led to an intensified security crackdown in the area; in Ngaba county town, internet service was cut from September 10 2015 for all except government offices, and surveillance stepped-up in an already oppressive atmosphere. (ICT report, ‘New solo protest by young man in Ngaba is part of emerging trend’, December 21, 2015, <https://www.savetibet.org/new-solo-protest-by-young-man-in-ngaba-is-part-of-emerging-trend/>).

Kanyag Tsering said: ‘Many of the self-immolators and solo protestors were born in the same areas and are of a similar age, mostly in their twenties. Often they studied at the same monasteries. Some of the solo protesters may have known those who self-immolated, even just as a passing acquaintance.’

A Tibetan from Ngaba who attended the funeral rites for Phuntsog, who set fire to himself on March 16, 2011, said: “These young Tibetans who have protested are so determined, and courageous, and it is so good to see that they are not harming themselves [by carrying out self-immolation.]”