

URGENT ACTION

TIBETAN MONK HELD INCOMMUNICADO FOR 2 YEARS

Tibetan monk Rinchen Tsultrim was sentenced to four years and six months' imprisonment in a secret trial for "inciting secession" after expressing political views on his WeChat account. Held incommunicado since 1 August 2019, his family members only learned of the trial, his crime and whereabouts through a response from the Chinese authorities to the United Nations human rights experts in August 2021. According to international human rights law and standards, no one should be imprisoned solely for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression. Without access to family and legal representation, there are grave concerns for Rinchen Tsultrim's condition and wellbeing.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Director Chen Zhilin

Sichuan Province Prison Administration Bureau
No. 1, Binjiangzhong Lu, Chengdu
610020 Sichuan Province
People's Republic of China

Dear Director Chen,

I am writing to express my concern about **Rinchen Tsultrim (仁青持真)**, a Tibetan Monk who was sentenced to four years and six months' imprisonment in November 2020 for "inciting secession" after a secret trial. His family members only learned of the trial, his crime and that he is held in Aba Prison in Sichuan Province through a response from the Chinese authorities to four United Nations human rights experts in August 2021.

It is distressing to learn that Rinchen Tsultrim is imprisoned because of his expression of his political views on his WeChat account. According to international human rights law and standards, no one should be imprisoned solely for peacefully exercising their right to freedom of expression.

I am alarmed to learn that Rinchen Tsultrim has been held incommunicado since he was arrested on 1 August 2019. No official information about his condition has been directly shared with his family to date. Without regular access to family and legal representation of his choice, I am gravely concerned about his condition and wellbeing.

I therefore call on you to:

- **Immediately release Rinchen Tsultrim unless there is sufficient, credible and admissible evidence that he committed an internationally recognized offence and is granted a fair trial in line with international standards;**
- **Pending his release, ensure that he has regular, unrestricted access to his family and lawyers of his choice and is not subjected to torture or other ill-treatment.**

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Rinchen Tsultrim, age 29, was a monk at the Nangshig monastery in the Aba Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture of Sichuan Province. After a wave of Tibetan unrest in 2008, he began expressing his views through WeChat and a personal website titled “Scepticism on Tibet” (in Tibetan). In 2018, the local public security bureau twice warned him to stop expressing opinions critical of Chinese policies online. He was closely monitored, and his personal website was shut down.

Rinchen Tsultrim was arrested on 1 August 2019. In March 2020 his family received official information that he was suspected of “inciting separatism”. The Aba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture Public Security Bureau informed his family in March 2021 that he was in a prison in Chengdu without further information. His family was aware of his trial, crime and whereabouts only after the Chinese authorities’ response to a letter from four UN human rights experts was publicized. Severe and wide-ranging restrictions on and repression of ethnic minorities has been carried out under the pretence of “anti-separatism”, “anti-extremism” and “counter-terrorism” in Tibetan-populated areas and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (Xinjiang). Access to and from Tibetan-populated areas remains highly restricted, particularly for journalists, academics and human rights organizations, making it extremely difficult to investigate and document the human rights situation in the region.

In June 2020, 50 independent UN human rights experts strongly criticized China for the repression of religious and ethnic minorities in Xinjiang and Tibet, among others. On 6 October 2020, 39 UN member states issued a joint statement expressing grave concerns about the human rights situation in Tibet, Xinjiang and other regions. 44 UN member states issued another joint statement expressing the same grave concerns on 21 June 2021.

Regulations, effective as of 1 February 2020, stipulated that religious groups must “follow the leadership of the Communist Party of China... persist in the direction of sinicization of religion, and practise core socialist values”. The government seeks to bring religious teachings and practices in line with state ideology and to comprehensively strengthen control over both state-approved and unregistered religious groups. Reports have documented the destruction of thousands of cultural and religious sites in recent years, particularly in the north-west of China. The state’s repression of religion in Xinjiang and Tibet remains severe. People continue to be arbitrarily detained for ordinary religious practices.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: Chinese, English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 26 January 2022

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PRONOUN: Rinchen Tsultrim (he, him)

LINK TO PREVIOUS UA: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa17/4339/2021/en/>