



## An Interview with Nyima Lhamo



TIBET WATCH  
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## An Interview with Nyima Lhamo

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## Introduction

On 24 July 2016, 26-year-old Nyima Lhamo, niece of deceased Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, arrived in Dharamsala, northern India, to the safety of exile. She had undertaken a risky and dangerous journey escaping from Tibet in order to tell her story and reveal the truth about her uncle's death.

Born in 1950, Tenzin Delek Rinpoche was a highly revered and respected lama of eastern Tibet who was known, in particular, for community building and his projects such as orphanages, schools and old people's homes. Tenzin Delek Rinpoche was arrested at his monastery, along with several associates, on 7 April 2002, on false charges of being involved in bomb blasts in Chengdu. On 2 December 2002, the Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture Intermediate People's Court in Sichuan province sentenced Tenzin Delek Rinpoche to death, suspended for two years, on charges of "terrorism and inciting separatism". His helper and distant relative, Lobsang Dondrup, was also found guilty and executed on 26 January 2003.

Throughout his initial detention period, Tenzin Delek Rinpoche maintained his innocence in several letters and voice recordings. Tenzin Delek Rinpoche's death sentence prompted an international outcry and it was commuted to life imprisonment in January 2005. However, Tenzin Delek Rinpoche endured years of maltreatment in prison and subsequently suffered from critically ill health. The authorities did not respond to appeals by the family over the years for medical parole. Regular prison visits which prisoners, according to Chinese law, have the right to on a monthly basis, were also denied to the family.

Tenzin Delek Rinpoche died in prison on 12 July 2015. According to authorities, Tenzin Delek Rinpoche died of cardiac arrest. This report gives a detailed account in Nyima Lhamo's words of the chaotic days immediately following his death.

Despite being very young when Tenzin Delek Rinpoche was arrested, Nyima Lhamo took brave actions on his behalf and on behalf of her family upon hearing of his death in prison. As Nyima Lhamo says in this interview, she was 13 years old the last time she saw her uncle alive.

According to the monks who washed Tenzin Delek's Rinpoche's body and changed his clothes before his cremation, his fingernails, toenails and lips were black and his head had a hollow at the back. This led the monks and the family to believe that Tenzin Delek Rinpoche had been poisoned and killed. To date, it has not been possible to conclusively verify whether these symptoms resulted from poison or from illness arising from the conditions of his imprisonment.

Nyima Lhamo's intention in escaping to exile was to urge the international community to pressure China to conduct a thorough investigation into Tenzin Delek Rinpoche's death. Furthermore, it is the family's main concern that China will interfere in the search for Tenzin Delek Rinpoche's reincarnation. It is the wish of Nyima Lhamo and family that the search be conducted according to tradition and without interference from the state.

Tibet Watch is very grateful to Nyima Lhamo for sharing her story with us<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The main section of this report is compiled from transcripts of interviews with Nyima Lhamo carried out by Tibet Watch researchers in Dharamsala, India, in August 2016. The transcripts have been translated from Tibetan by the Tibet Watch research team.

## Timeline

30 June 2015	The Justice Department of Lithang County tells Nyima Lhamo, her mother Dolkar Lhamo and her aunt that they can visit Tenzin Delek Rinpoche.
1 July 2015	Tenzin Delek Rinpoche's two sisters are called to Chengdu by authorities.
12 July 2015	Death of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche; according to authorities, from a heart attack. Nyima Lhamo is called by her mother, who tells her about Rinpoche's death and she decides to go to Chengdu.
13 July 2015	300 people gather in Lithang, protests begin. Nine people are allowed to travel to Chengdu to see Rinpoche's body.
13-14 July 2015	Nyima Lhamo travels from Dekyi to Orthok; some monks take her to Nyagchuka.
14 July 2015	Nyima Lhamo arrives in Chengdu during the night.
15 July 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nyima Lhamo attempts suicide at the prison gates, Dolkar Lhamo hits her head against the wall in protest. Protests start outside the prison.</li> <li>• Tenzin Delek Rinpoche's sisters and Nyima Lhamo write an appeal letter to authorities and submit it the night of 15 July.</li> <li>• Two hours later, authorities say the cremation will be done the next day.</li> </ul>
16 July 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early morning, a group of monks and nuns, Nyima Lhamo and her mother are taken in vehicles and allowed access to Tenzin Delek Rinpoche's body.</li> <li>• 5am - Monks are admitted to wash the body and change Tenzin Delek Rinpoche's clothes from prison uniform into monk robes. They notice his fingernails are black and suspect poisoning.</li> <li>• 7am - Nyima Lhamo and her mother are permitted to pay their last respects.</li> <li>• A sit-in protest outside the prison disperses after police warnings.</li> </ul>
17 July 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nyima Lhamo and her mother Dolkar Lhamo are detained.</li> <li>• The same day they are transferred to Ya'an, where they are detained for eight to nine days in a hotel room.</li> </ul>
July 2015, between 17 and 30 (exact dates unclear)	Nyima Lhamo and Dolkar Lhamo transferred to Lithang, where they are detained for over a week.
30 July 2015	Nyima Lhamo and Dolkar Lhamo released and taken home.
2016	Nyima Lhamo decides to flee to India.
24 July 2016	Nyima Lhamo arrives in Dharamsala.

## Nyima Lhamo's Story

### Nyima Lhamo's life in Tibet

When Tenzin Delek Rinpoche was arrested, I was about 13 years old. I am 26 now. At the time, I thought that he would be let out soon enough. I didn't realise how grave his situation had become. Everyone stood in support of my uncle and did whatever it was possible to do for my uncle's release. But we are few compared to a nation like China so it was all in vain.

I didn't realise that they were keeping him in prison for so long. Even murderers and other criminals were released from prison – quite quickly in some cases – so I expected my uncle, who worked for the good of the community, would definitely be sent back home.

When I was growing up I knew that my uncle was revered as a spiritual leader, a root guru for many. He advised people on many things, whenever they needed help, and even helped married couples with relationship counselling. He established old age homes, kindergartens, schools, he has done a lot of work. In our own local area, he worked on the preservation of forests and stopped tree cutting projects and everyone respected him even before he was put in jail.

I think I was about 20 years old when I started to fully understand his work. Along with my mother, we planted trees, doing all these things his work had made us aware of.

My uncle was first arrested in Nyagchuka (Ch: Yajiang)<sup>2</sup>. He had lost his mother recently and had in his possession RMB 30,000<sup>3</sup>, which he intended to spend on Dolma (Tara) prayers to be said at the ritual for after his mother's passing. They took that money from him and a small ivory prayer trinket which he had on him was also taken.

My family had many problems when I was growing up because of our connection to Tenzin Delek Rinpoche. We were not allowed to ask questions, make enquiries, or discuss anything regarding my uncle being in jail or his conditions. We were not allowed to do anything to help my uncle – plain and simple. They always created stress for us. We made many appeals. Sometimes, after a long tiring journey (to the prison), they would simply send us back home and say, come back some other time. Or they would say that there were too many of us, only a few of us are allowed, like five people, so we would follow their protocol and only five of us would go. Then they would refuse to allow us to appeal. For example, my mother, who is Rinpoche's sister, they would threaten her saying that she had visited more than twice or three times at the prison where Rinpoche was held. They never kept their word – always made up different stories and different rules.

I never visited my uncle in prison. They didn't allow me to visit even once. According to their rules and policies, only my uncle's parents or his siblings could visit him in jail. Since his parents were no longer alive, his two sisters – my mother one of them – and his uncle and aunt could visit him, but not nephews, nieces, cousins, relatives or anyone else who wished to see him. We made many requests but none of the others had the chance to visit. I didn't see him at all until after he died. I don't remember exactly what date my mother and aunt were called to Chengdu but it was 12 July when my uncle died so I guess it must have been around 1 July.

The day before my mother and aunt went to Chengdu, the Justice Department of Lithang County called us and told us to visit their office. My mother and I went to their office and they told us that

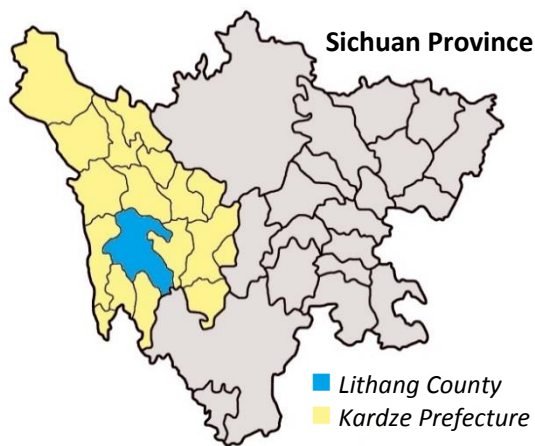
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<sup>2</sup> Nyagchuka (Ch: Yajiang) County, Kardze (Ch: Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan Province

<sup>3</sup> In April 2002, RMB 30,000 would have been equivalent to around USD 3,600

we could visit my uncle. We were told that we should not go anywhere because we might have to leave for Chengdu within a day or in a few days. They were awaiting orders from higher up. They said we had to go once the order was received. My mother asked them whether he was not well or whether there was a problem with my uncle's health but they said it was a normal arrangement to visit him. Further, we were told that we should not tell anyone about the visit.

The next day, the order was received and my mother and aunt went to Chengdu. Once they got there, my mother told me that the authorities were delaying and would not let them meet my uncle immediately. I assured them that if they were summoned for this purpose then they should be able to see him soon. I asked them to be patient and wait. I was staying at home in Dekyi Village, Lithang County at the time.



## 12 July: Nyima Lhamo hears of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche's death

When I received my mother's call telling me that my uncle had died, it was 12 July, the same day that it happened. My mother and aunt were already in Chengdu, they had been made to wait there for 10 days. It was like the big sky above was completely enveloped by dark clouds – that kind of finality is what I felt. The sense of loss was very strong. I felt that it was too soon for uncle to die. I was shocked. I found it hard to believe at first. I told my mother that it couldn't be true. My mother started crying then. I asked my mother to hand over the phone to the policeman near her and, when she did that, I spoke to the policeman and asked him if it was true. Then I asked him why they hadn't informed us earlier, why they had stalled my mother and sister for 10 days.

I told them that we, around six or seven people, would all come down to the prison to die. I told them that, as they had killed my uncle and didn't have good reasons to give for his death, we would all travel there to kill ourselves.

After my mother told me about the death of my uncle, I went to pass on the information to some concerned people around the village. I think they were around 300 people, I couldn't keep count. The different community heads said that they would go and pay their respects to his body on behalf of everyone, as so many people would not be a welcome sight for the authorities. In the end, even these community heads were not allowed to go and visit Rinpoche. The reason given was that Lithang was a different county to Kardze and that community heads only had the authority to act on behalf of the community in local matters. I became very distressed about all of this.

### **13 July: Nyima Lhamo leaves for Chengdu**

Orthok had already become chaotic and protests had started by now. No vehicles were being allowed on the roads except for two wheeled motorbikes. They had put up barricades on the roads. I requested a bike rider to take me on their bike. So that way I reached Orthok. From Orthok, I was accompanied by some monks to Nyagchuka. I had to act like I was not well so I pretended to be sick, since they wouldn't let anyone else pass through.

I lay down in the vehicle pretending to be unwell but they refused to let me through. Then my companions warned the police that if they didn't let the patient through and if she were to die because of that, would they be willing to take responsibility for her death? They said that if I was really unwell, then we would have to show them a prescription paper. Then we had to go back to Nyagchuka and, pretending to be sick, I saw a doctor and said that I had a headache. The doctor shone a torch in my eyes and mouth and after that I managed to get a prescription. I went back towards the point where I was stopped earlier and, on the way, I met three nuns who were on foot. I decided to go along with them but we were stopped again at another point beyond which the nuns were not allowed to pass but I got through because of the prescription I had with me.

Usually it takes around 14-15 hours to get to Chengdu from Lithang by car. This time, I left on the evening of 13 July and arrived the night of 14 July.

### **14 July: Nyima Lhamo arrives in Chengdu**

Before I arrived in Chengdu, my mother and aunt had already spoken to the police and accused them of killing my uncle. They told the police that he hadn't died of natural causes. The police response to that was to tell them that they could go and appeal wherever they wanted. They denied being responsible for his death. That broke my mother and aunt's hearts.

When I arrived and found out all this, I realised that I had to take a drastic step in order to get the answers we were seeking. We had some discussions amongst ourselves when we first met but we couldn't reach an agreement. There were doubts amongst us. Some of us were thinking that he might have been killed, some thought he might have died of natural causes. It was only the next day that we made any decisions.

### **15 July: Nyima Lhamo in Chengdu**

Orthok, Golok, Nyagchuka and a lot of other places were already in turmoil by 15 July. On 15 July, when my mother and I went to the police station, there were no protests, it was only after we came out that people started their protests. It started with only six of us at first but then many people came and joined in.

The authorities' argument was that they didn't kill Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, that they brought him to the hospital for treatment. We demanded to know which hospital it was, who the doctor was and to see the reports and prescriptions to prove their story. Their response was to keep saying that it wasn't possible to show all that, that they had no authority to show that. We said that we would bring reporters and journalists to investigate and their response was a nonchalant "do whatever you want".

I realised that being inside the police station wasn't good enough, especially as we were surrounded by policemen. Outside there was a wooden structure so I went outside and took off my scarf. I tried to hang myself with it. My mother was also beating her head against the wall to get them to listen



to our pleas. It was only when the police saw that I was serious about hanging and killing myself that they paid attention to us. Otherwise, they were completely ready to shrug us off and not listen to all our pleadings and requests and appeals.

They called us back into the station and, since I couldn't walk on my own at that point, they lifted me up and took me inside.

After all the noise we made, they told us to come back after two hours in order to see the prescriptions and medical proof. Only my mother and aunt were allowed to go that time, nobody else. When they did go back to talk to them, they had a prescription paper which they claimed could not be handed over to us but which would be read out to them. They tried to get my mother and aunt to stamp and sign a form confirming the witnessing of the medical proof but they were completely against it as it also claimed that Rinpoche had died of natural causes and that he hadn't been killed by the police.

My mother fainted due to all the exhaustion and excitement and she tried to reach out to a policeman for support.

I had been sending information about all these events to Geshe Nyima in India<sup>4</sup> with the expectation that he could give that information to our Sikyong (Prime Minister) and Sikyong might do something about the case. Rinpoche had spent his entire life working for the sake of the Tibetan people and Sikyong is responsible for taking care of Tibetan people. So I hoped that he might do something for Rinpoche's case. Other than that, I was not really aware of the international attention and support at the time.



*Dolkar Lhamo showing the appeal letter*

On the evening of 15 July, my mother and I submitted a five-point appeal letter<sup>5</sup> to the authorities. The first point was that the authorities should provide my mother and I with copies of the death certificate documents that they had read out to us. Second, we asked for the reason why the body

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<sup>4</sup> Geshe Nyima is Tenzin Delek Rinpoche's cousin based in exile in India. At the time of these events, Geshe Nyima was the main source of information to the outside world.

<sup>5</sup> Appeal letter translated in full by International Campaign for Tibet: <https://www.savetibet.org/body-of-revered-tibetan-lama-tenzin-delek-rinpoche-cremated-in-remote-high-security-prison-facility/>

could not return home. Third, we demanded an investigation into my uncle's death. The fourth point we made was that there were inconsistencies with the information they had given to us, one version of the time of my uncle's death was 2pm and another said 4pm. Lastly, we appealed for the cremation to take place only after the cause of death had been determined.

Two hours after our letter was submitted they informed the monks that the cremation was to be done the next day. It was a strict order for the cremation to be carried out, whether we consented to it or not. The orders were from Kardze head office. We first thought that we would oppose it but when we saw that they would go ahead with the cremation despite anything we said or did, we went ahead and agreed to the cremation the next day.

## **16 July: Nyima Lhamo Pays Last Respects to Tenzin Delek Rinpoche**

Since there had been a lot of people from different places gathered outside the prison, they made an announcement on 16 July to warn people that the police from their respective hometowns, with jurisdictional authority, had all been summoned and would be set upon them to make arrests if they did not disperse. There was also a rumour doing the rounds that my mother had died as a result of police violence. So some protesters dispersed on 16 July. Some had already dispersed on 15 July.

It was early morning of 16 July when we were finally allowed to go and see my uncle's body. The police took us there by car. I can't say exactly where his body was kept but it took four-five hours to get there.

It seemed like a cliff at first, at a very great altitude, and surrounded by police on all sides. A little away from the cliff, there were two houses and one of the houses had my uncle's body in it. So it was clear my uncle wasn't kept at the prison. They had picked an isolated place and that's where they kept him. When my mother went to see him, they would bring my uncle to a meeting place and no-one had known exactly where he was being kept imprisoned.

Where my uncle was kept was definitely also a prison. It was on a very high mountain top. The area was very steep and dangerous. The prison was on one side and the body was kept in the other building. It had one storey, I think. Yes, where my uncle was kept was a single storey building. When we went in we were thoroughly frisked and they took away everything of ours, phones and everything.

At 5am, 18 monks were allowed into the room to wash and change Tenzin Delek Rinpoche's clothes. Two were Rinpoche's students and the rest were monks from the different monastic institutions he was associated with. I think they were in total about 23 monks and nuns all together but only the monks went in to wash the body, not the nuns. The 18 monks who helped had been in Chengdu since 14 July.

At 7am, my mother, aunt and 11 others who had travelled with us were allowed to enter the room too. The body itself was kept on a cement platform. The time I was allowed there was about 10-15 minutes. I went and circumambulated the body three times, prostrated to it once and then they took me away.

What struck me most was seeing my uncle's lips. The lips were black. That's what I noticed when I circumambulated the body. I didn't think about analysing that fact until later. I thought that maybe he had committed suicide. It didn't seem possible though, since he was surrounded by police all the time.

The elder monks said that it's best not to create too much of a disturbance since Rinpoche was entering into the phase of passing over<sup>6</sup>.

Then, later, the monks revealed that when they had been changing the clothes on the body, they noticed the nails were also black. He had been poisoned, they said. That's when it struck me, the memory of the black lips came to mind and I realised they were right.

I had received a call from someone who claimed to be a reporter calling from Beijing. I called them back and told them that my uncle had been killed, poisoned, and I asked them to spread this news as widely as possible.

After I paid my respects, the body was kept at the same place. They had called five of us at first, saying that we would be allowed to be present during the last rites and cremation but later they went back on this.

After viewing the body, they asked us to wait somewhere else, which was short distance away. Our group were only allowed to view and pay respects to the body, none of us were allowed to be present during the cremation. I think it was done at the same venue. They only came to us later saying that the cremation had been done. Another group of five were permitted to be present at the time of the cremation, although they were made to wait in a different room next to where the cremation took place and did not actually witness it with their own eyes. Afterwards the ashes were handed over to them.

## **17 July: Nyima Lhamo and Dolkar Lhamo detained**

My mother and I were detained the morning of 17 July on our way back to Lithang. Actually, we had had an accident in the vehicle we were travelling in. The vehicle needed some repair work and a monk had sustained some injuries which needed attention so the vehicle was sent to the mechanic while we rested at another uncle's place in Chengdu.

In Chengdu, those people who knew my uncle and had travelled with us to see his body all stood up for my mother and me when the police announced that both of us had to be arrested. They said that we had come here together and we would return the same way, or they would have to be arrested along with us and the police refused to do so. So I went to the bathroom after giving an excuse and informed Geshe Nyima about our arrests by phone.

The reason given for our detention was that my mother had shared a photo of a document with contacts outside of Tibet and this was a very serious matter. This was an order from the top. We were told that this was a political offence and that we were being charged accordingly.

Then the Lithang County officials requested to have custody of us and we were handed over to them. The police arrested us in Chengdu and escorted us all the way to Lithang County.

My mother wasn't well; she had bruises and blue marks on her body from when she had been banging her head against the wall outside the prison. They first took us to a hospital to take care of her bruises. My mother was very ill though and she even started vomiting blood. The doctors there gave my mother a check-up and gave her some medicine. My mother said the medicine was helpful as she felt much better after taking it whenever pain arose. Later we learnt that the medicine

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<sup>6</sup> In Tibetan Buddhism there is a 49-day period after death that is the intermediate state between death and rebirth. This period is considered to be very important affecting rebirth.

administered to my mother was a kind of anaesthetic. After our release, we tried to consult a Tibetan doctor but the doctor was told by the authorities that he wasn't allowed to give her any clarifications regarding her illness.

They didn't keep us there at the hospital for long. After finishing the check-up and administering medicine, they took us to a hotel where they detained us for half a day.

Then they took us to a city called Ya'an, around two hours from Chengdu. It was not a prison or detention centre. It looked like a hotel but I am not sure. They didn't interrogate or beat us when we were in Ya'an. When we asked the security guards why they had arrested us and why they were keeping us there, they didn't say anything. But they took my mother several times to hospital as her illness had worsened.

They kept us in a room there for about a week, with 12 security personnel keeping watch till we were transferred to a prison in Lithang County.

## **Nyima Lhamo and Dolkar Lhamo transferred to Lithang**

*[The exact dates for this section are unclear. Nyima Lhamo was under a lot of stress and pressure by this time and her memory is less clear as a result. This is common in people who have experienced this kind of stress and trauma.]*

After about a week in that room in Ya'an, we were transferred to a prison in Lithang County and kept there for more than a week.

The head of the county told us that we had committed serious crimes and that we should expect to face life imprisonment for it. His allegations were that a photo of my mother holding a petition letter had been circulating outside and they accused me of sending that information about my uncle's death to the outside world. He added that he was the one who had saved us from life-imprisonment by giving his guarantee to the county authorities. That was the reason we had been taken from Kardze Prefecture to Lithang County.

There were two parts to the charge against us. First, the photo of my mother holding the petition letter was leaked outside and, second, the information about my uncle's death was sent outside. They said these were terrible crimes that we had committed. County authorities said our crimes were being handled directly from the provincial level. Later I found out that the group carrying Rinpoche's ashes were stopped on provincial orders, due to our unforgivable crimes.

After the cremation this group had been given permission to take Rinpoche's ashes back home. However, they were stopped on the way and informed of the serious charges against my mother and I. The authorities took the ashes and said that they would throw them into some water nearby. Nobody saw it happen with their eyes though.

During my interrogation, the authorities made clearly to us that whether we had actually sent out the picture or the information didn't matter. They would still state this as our crime for arrest and detention charges. We never once had access to a lawyer. The family members and local Tibetans didn't know what had happened to us or our whereabouts. For them, we had simply disappeared since they arrested us in Chengdu. My mother and I were under their control and it was not possible to contact anyone from where we were kept.

We weren't tortured but they asked me whether I gave information about Rinpoche's death to the outside world and also told me that I had contacts outside. I replied that I had contacted a Chinese journalist via phone. He had called me before and told me he was a journalist from Beijing but I had never met him in person. Following my visit to my uncle's body, I called him and requested him to publicise my uncle's death through poisoning and I assured him that I could prove my uncle was killed by poison.

The head of the county told us that he had brought back a blanket that belonged to my uncle just because we were his family, but my uncle's money and other belongings had been confiscated. He insisted that we had to sign a document stating that the facts mentioned there regarding my uncle's death were true. My mother and I replied that we could not sign the document as my uncle wasn't just a small time Lama, but a Lama followed by a lot of people worldwide. So we had no authority to sign the document.

He told us that they only needed a thumbprint. The document had three points:

- 1) We will not share any information about Rinpoche to others
- 2) We will not share any information or discuss Rinpoche's death at any public gathering or with the outside world
- 3) We will not make any accusations against the Chinese authorities that Rinpoche died of poisoning.

Unless we signed or gave our thumbprints, we wouldn't be allowed to leave. If my mother or I, or my younger brother, did anything unlawful, then all of us would bear equal consequences.

My mother refused, saying that she could not read but if the document was about Rinpoche then she would not sign it, even under gun point. We apologised to him, told him not to get angry but explained we wouldn't be able to sign anything. The man asked me, "You are so young, why do you want to end your life?" I replied that I am like any other being who can feel pain, even if it's just a single prick of a pin, but, for my uncle, I can kill myself. I went on telling him about the pain my uncle had borne at their hands, but they stopped me and did not let me speak anymore.

They appealed to the local community and asked if anyone was willing to sign but no one responded. An elderly person eventually signed, taking it upon himself that if either my mother or I did something, then he would take responsibility. After this we were let go. We thanked the man.

### **30 July: Nyima Lhamo and mother released**

I strongly felt that I didn't want to leave the detention centre at all as we had not been able to achieve anything for my uncle. However, my mother was so ill and needed treatment that I had no option.

We were instructed about the three conditions in the document and told that we would have to strictly follow them after we were released. We were also instructed that we had to report to the authorities whenever we went somewhere. Then they dropped us back home during the night.

### **Life upon returning home**

I was not allowed to visit my uncle's monastery once I got home. I was even prohibited from contacting the monastery. For instance, once I spoke with a monk who was in the monastery and we discussed the possibilities of setting ourselves on fire. Then that monk was arrested.

I was not allowed to go out of the village without permission. If I had to go somewhere then I first had to report to the authorities. My family and I were under surveillance. Chinese officials set up a CCTV camera at the gate of my home. Because of that, other people in the area felt fearful of visiting our home since they knew about the installation of the CCTV camera. Once I called a monk and handed over RMB 20,000 for some religious rituals for my uncle. Later that monk was arrested twice because they saw him on the CCTV camera. There was no reason to arrest him since he did nothing against the authorities.

The officials and security were often around my home after I returned from detention. They didn't do anything except simply stroll around and watch us. Mostly they parked their vehicles near our gate. Sometime I hit the vehicles and shouted at them saying they were responsible if my mother died of a heart attack. They used to say, "yes, yes". The security people wouldn't answer back.

I went to Chengdu several times without reporting myself because I felt like irritating them. They would ask my mother where I went and for what purpose, etc.

After my return, for almost five months, I was involved in religious rituals for my uncle and went to Chengdu as I mentioned earlier. Afterwards I went to harvest caterpillar fungus.

The reason why I finally left is because the authorities made things very difficult for us by circulating false stories about my uncle. So, with the intention of speaking the truth, I decided to leave.

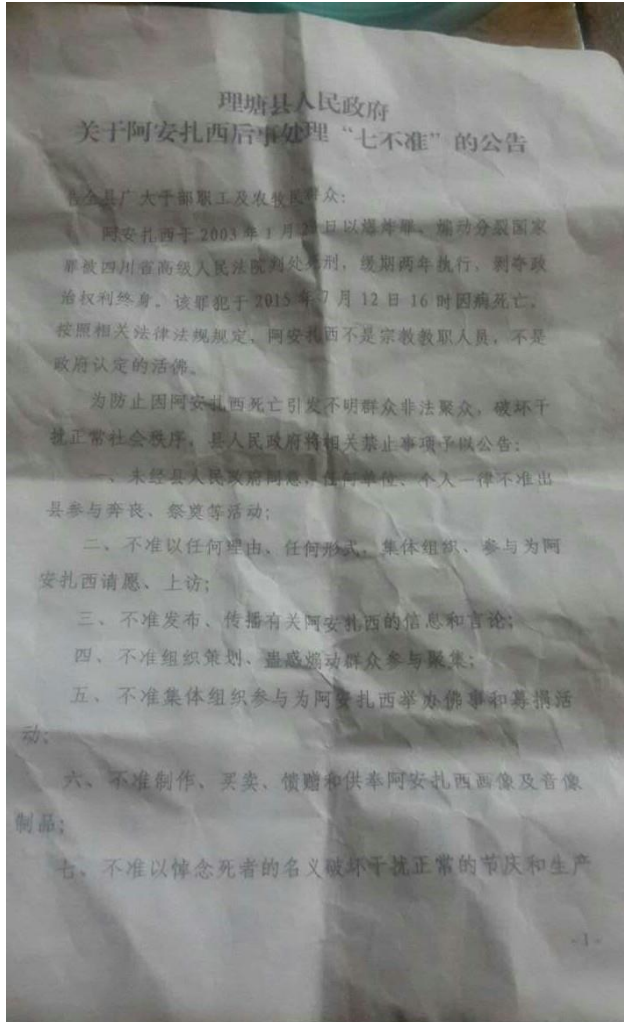
I had dreamt of coming to India to study since I was young but my father did not allow me to go since I was the only girl in the household. I married at the age of 19. I planned to come to India when my uncle was in prison. I thought I might be able to do something for his release from the outside but it did not happen. After his death, I was busy with religious rituals. Around five months after his death, I made up my mind to flee for India.

From Lithang, I think the journey took about 18 days. I can't recall the exact date, I didn't calculate it.

I have not had any contact with people back home since I left. I don't know anything about the current situation or about my mother, family, local community or the monastery.

## Appendix 1: The “7 Forbidden Activities”

The following document was circulated publicly by the Chinese authorities in the local area following Tenzin Delek Rinpoche’s death.



### The People’s Government of Lithang County

#### Communiqué about “7 Forbidden Activities” in Relation to A’an Zhaxi’s<sup>7</sup> Case

To the workers and nomads of the entire, vast county: on 26 January 2003, A’an Zhaxi was charged by Sichuan High Court for exploding a bomb and attempting to split national unity, and was sentenced to death. His death sentence was suspended for two years, and commuted into life imprisonment with deprivation of political rights. This criminal died of illness on 12 July 2015 at 4pm.

According to relevant laws and regulations, A’an Zhaxi is not a religious figure or teacher, and he is not a “Living Buddha” (Rinpoche) recognised by the government.

In order to avoid illegal gatherings of people initiated as a consequence of A’an Zhaxi’s death, disturbing the public social order, the county government is issuing the following communiqué:

- 1) Unless it has been approved by the county government, no work units or individuals can join funeral rites or hold a memorial ceremony.
- 2) It is forbidden for any reason, in any form, to form collectives, to present petitions or to apply for audiences with higher authorities.
- 3) It is forbidden to release and circulate any information regarding A’an Zhaxi.
- 4) It is forbidden to organize plans, to confuse people’s minds, and to instigate the masses to gather in assemblies.
- 5) It is forbidden to organise Buddhist activities for A’an Zhaxi or to raise funds for him.
- 6) It is forbidden to make, trade, give to others or worship A’an Zhaxi’s picture and audiovisual products.
- 7) [incomplete]

<sup>7</sup> This is Tenzin Delek Rinpoche’s name in Chinese, written in pinyin (the official Romanisation system of Standard Chinese)

## Appendix 2: China Daily Report

This is the Chinese government's official version of Tenzin Delek Rinpoche's story and the events surrounding his death, as published via state media in the China Daily<sup>8</sup>.

### Separatist leader's death not worthy of lament

Updated: 2015-07-19 21:46



If Tenzin Delek Rinpoche had really believed in Tibetan Buddhism he would not have incited assistant Lobsang Dhondup to stage five bombings in Sichuan province between 2000 and 2003, which killed one person and injured 11 others.

If he had really lived up to his words: "I have always been sincere and devoted to the interests and well-being of Tibetan people", he could not have been blind to the improvement in people's livelihood in the Tibetan area or deaf to the majority of Tibetan people's voices.

And if Tenzin Delek had really acted as a living Buddha - as the Dalai Lama recognized him in 1986 - he would have many opportunities to "develop social, medical, educational and religious institutions for Tibetan people, as well as protect the environment".

Instead, he instigated several separatist movements in China after he was recognized as a "living Buddha" and walked that road until the last day of his free life.

It is a pity that none of these "ifs" existed before the afternoon of July 12 when he died of sudden cardiac death, at 65, as a prisoner for life. It is a shame that he had used, and the clique behind him is still using, all these "ifs" as facts to criticize the Chinese government's unfair treatment of the "religious leader", while simply turning a blind eye to the irrefutable evidence that put him on the wrong side against the people and history.

If killing the innocent can be overlooked for a "religious leader", the questions that his supporters have to answer are what kind of religion the leader is preaching, and what the future would be like if

<sup>8</sup> [http://europe.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-07/19/content\\_21326675.htm](http://europe.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2015-07/19/content_21326675.htm)



he really became a leader. He was sentenced to death, suspended for two-years, for the two crimes on Jan 23, 2003 in Sichuan, with the penalty commuted to life imprisonment two years later. His trial was conducted according to Chinese laws. He was convicted of the bombings and splitting the state. Before entering his cell, he was diagnosed with high blood pressure, coronary heart disease and other illnesses.

According to Chinese laws, only criminals sentenced to a set term are entitled to medical parole. Tenzin Delek, a lifer, was not entitled to medical parole.

Despite this, the prison sent him 14 times for check-ups and treatment to the county hospital in Dazhu and once to the Center Hospital of Dazhou city. Doctors from local hospitals consulted about his condition 10 times but he refused treatment or to take medicine. His health was not stable. The authorities tried in vain to save him when a guard discovered him suffering from respiratory failure at 14:35 on July 12.

Tenzin Delek's pseudo identity as a "religious leader" does not make him any different from the others.

Instead of mourning his death, it is the innocent people killed and badly injured in the bombings he planned and his blindness and deafness to realities that are more worthwhile to lament for the human rights guardians while reviewing his life.



An Interview with Nyima Lhamo  
October 2016

[www.tibetwatch.org/reports](http://www.tibetwatch.org/reports)