

## **A Letter from a Tibetan Student in Tibet**

By Email[Monday, October 13, 2008 10:48]

Dear All,

1. Tibetans are a peace-loving people, and despite the terrible oppression we are currently undergoing at the hands of the Chinese government, that commitment will not diminish at all. As the whole world knows, it is a fact that the common people of Tibet staged a 'peaceful uprising' in Lhasa, center of the land of snows on March 14th 2008, yet out of keeping with the actual reality, the Chinese government has presented this 'peaceful uprising' to the world as an outbreak of 'beating, smashing, looting and burning', trying to shift the blame from themselves as far as possible through various allegations such as that it was a 'conspiracy' mounted by the 'Dalai clique' aimed at 'splitting the unity of nationalities'. As a Tibetan student dedicated to the cherished goals of freedom, justice, equality and truth for our people, unable to bear sight of the Tibetan people being bullied to an extreme by the Chinese government, and wishing to expressly refute the Chinese government's practice of turning truth into falsehood, I would like to put a short statement of the truth of our history before the world, by honestly relating my own perceptions and ideas.

2. Following the uprising in Lhasa on March 14th, events of a similar nature spread through all regions of Tibet like the unfurling of a wave or a forest fire. It was the heartfelt cry of a people enslaved and oppressed for over fifty years calling for freedom and democracy, and yet the Chinese government presented it as a vicious act of 'separatism' and 'terrorism', and used the occasion to visit fearsome reprisals and massacres on the Tibetan people. (The Chinese government's CCTV news showed 'separatists' beating and looting innocent Chinese, and setting shops on fire, vehicles and public facilities, but did not show the Chinese army savagely beating Tibetans, opening fire on crowds of civilians, arresting them regardless of their involvement in protest and terrorizing them with weapons and so forth). On the other hand, it is well known to many Tibetans who were in Lhasa at the time that the incidents of 'Beating, smashing, looting and burning' were orchestrated by members of the PLA, and there are many who even saw this happen. You may think that this is said out of blind loyalty to our own people, but in fact that is what actually happened. As soon as the trouble broke out in Lhasa on March 14th, the Lhasa government had 10 soldiers dressed in monks' robes instigate the 'Beating, smashing, looting and burning' (Lhasa people claim that there were over 30 soldiers dressed as monks, and pictures of them can still be seen on the internet. They are said to have included mostly Chinese members of the armed forces, and some Hui Muslims. This claim may be considered false, but the instigators of these deeds were undeniably Chinese). For the government, this was an excellent diversion, and means of falsely representing events to the outside world. A fellow from my native region, a monk, who was in Lhasa at the time said, "Before the troubles on March 14th, people were peacefully demonstrating and marching, not smashing or looting property, and the soldiers although armed were just watching from a distance, not attacking people. But around 9'o clock, a group of ten or more monks and some laypeople came from who

knows where and started to destroy things in front of the Jokhang temple. Then people went to join them, and this incident came about. The extraordinary thing is that at that time there were no soldiers in sight, and a few soldiers in civilian clothes were shooting us with video cameras. From 9 until around 12, the government left us to do whatever we pleased. At 12 the Chinese soldiers surrounded us and two Lhasa youths around 20 years old were shot dead. I was outside Ramoche temple, where (I saw) an old woman beaten to death by soldiers, and they also shot dead an old couple, selling meat there. So it goes without saying that Tibetans were beaten and arrested (during the subsequent crackdown).”

The Tibetan public present there were unaware of the government’s secret strategy and were thus deceived. In response to the beating and murder of ordinary people, the monks of Drepung, Ganden and Sera rose up one after the other, and 500 or 600 monks were arrested and subjected to fierce beatings. (Drepung monks [from my native Amdo region] like Tsultrim Tendzin and Gepel, and 500 or 600 monks including those from Sera and Ganden were arrested, and we have heard that most are still in the custody of the Xining [Qinghai provincial] Peoples Court).

3. In Kham and in Tso-ngön (Qinghai), knowing the despicable deceit and cruel strategies of the Chinese government, they used ‘peace marches’ to express for once their deep longing for freedom and democracy, but even so, the government still branded them as ‘separatists’ and ‘terrorists’, and many Tibetan brothers and sisters were savagely beaten, and are in jail even now. (In the Kandze region of Kham, many nuns were severely beaten up and some lost their precious lives after being assaulted by Chinese soldiers). Many Tibetans, including children, the elderly, youth, women and so on, gave up their lives for the freedom of their people, or for the sake of the future generation. According to one Tibetan who was released from prison, “The means used by the Chinese government to implement this suppression are unspeakably cruel. Those used on Tibetans languishing in dark prison cells are even more terrible. When I was in prison, the soldiers beat and killed Tibetans indiscriminately, some were used for martial arts practice, some were stabbed, some were pissed on, kicked in the face, and then put to death, many shot.” And such sad tales of cruel suppression and horrific maltreatments are what one consistently hears from those who have been released.

On March 16th, the Tibetan public, both monks and laypeople, in areas of Qinghai like Rebkong, Chentsa and so on, staged ‘peace marches’ and many other activities within the law, which the government put a stop to by various means. Does it not say in the state constitution that all power in the Peoples Republic of China rest with the people, and that the people are to exercise that power?

It is clear that the recent uprising was a peaceful protest, in which the Tibetan people expressed support for freedom, democracy and respect for human rights in both word and deed, and protested against the corruption of a government that tramples on these values and turns it’s back on justice. In revulsion against a government that turns white into black and truth into lies, the people of Ngaba rose up in protest on March 16th, and although the people of Ngaba shouted their protest ‘peacefully and in the name of His

Holiness', the government claimed that this was 'Nothing other than beating, smashing, looting and burning', 'Opposing the Party' and 'Against the law of the PRC', and pointed their guns at the people. More than 20 lost their lives. This includes the student Lhundrup Kyi who was shot by soldiers on her way to school, Tashi who took his own life, and so on, altogether 20 young people, men and women. Many Ngaba people were beaten savagely by the armed police, and many were wounded in the firing, and later lost their lives because the hospital would not treat their wounds. The Chinese government told the world that it was 'resolving the situation sensitively, but their 'sensitive resolution' amounted to beating, murder and detention for us. They were ready to deceive those with the highest respect for the human values of freedom and democracy, peace and equality, to attack and reject the righteousness of adhering to the truth.

People being beaten to death is something that should not even be heard of in the 21st century, something reminiscent of the 'Democratic Reform' era [ie; the Communist terror of the late 1950s], but not only are Tibetans inside Tibet still subject to exactly the same oppression, exploitation and abuse as during 'Democratic Reform', they are even subject to the kind of beatings and horrific torture associated with the 'Cultural Revolution'. Such is the 'highest concern' and 'ties of fraternal love with the Tibetan masses' of which the Party speaks. According to the article "What rights do we really have?", 'A man in his 40s from the Shikalo household in Charo Xiang, Ngaba county, was beaten so badly, on false charges, that he died. Two Kirti monks, Tösam and Jinpa, resolved to kill themselves in prison rather than suffer the brutality of the security forces.' We hear that they left last testimonies, but far from being shown these documents, their family and friends were not even shown their corpses.

4. Likewise there were peaceful marches calling for Tibetan freedom on a large scale in Golok prefecture, in Taktsang Lhamo and Tangkor in Ngaba, in Achi, Jam-mé, Chungchu, Zungchu, Dzamtang, Kandze, Labrang, Amchok and Tsoe and so on, but the government responded by branding them as incidents of 'Beating, smashing, looting and burning', and responded by attacking the Tibetan people and falsely accusing them. 19 monks from Taktsang Lhamo, including 16 year old Söpa, were arrested in a single day, the monastery primary school was closed down and religious activities stopped. 3 monks from Jam-mé monastery in Dzoegé, over 60 monks and laypeople from Tangkor and all the monks and villagers of Achi were arrested. In Chungchu county over 20 students and 30 monks and laypeople were detained, while in Ngaba 20 or so people were killed and most of the population was arrested. These are the figures recorded by witness accounts, not to mention incidents which have gone unrecorded. In places like Labrang, Amchok and Tsoe, the state responded by firing tear gas into the middle of crowds of peaceful demonstrators, and threatening them with armed troops.

As the oppression and abuse of the Tibetan people by the Chinese government worsened day by day, the students of the Northwest Nationalities Institute, unable to bear the government turning truth into falsity and arresting, beating and killing innocent Tibetans, staged a demonstration under the banner 'Solidarity with the Tibetan people, for Democracy and respect for life', mourning those massacred, beaten to death or shot for the sake of the cause, and carried out a hunger strike for a day and a half. At the same

opposing the lord of peace, love and truth is insurmountably difficult. From another point of view, isn't denunciation of the Dalai Lama, highest representative of peace and human rights, a rejection by the Chinese government of these cherished human values? Isn't it trampling on the lives and rights of human beings?

However, in our country, people do not have the right to even say the Dalai Lama's name, and anyone who does is not representing the real thoughts of the Tibetan people but seeking to enrich himself or prove his loyal subordination to the Chinese government.

From a young age, we have to study official Chinese history, and this history casts Japan as the enemy. This seems to be the ultimate objective of getting young Tibetans to study this version of history, to instill in the young generation of Han in particular, and 5 or 6 other nationalities, resentment against Japan for having committed oppression, exploitation and massacre in our land. But despite using all methods to encourage this idea in us since childhood, we have always had a very positive view of Japan and admired its courage and strong cultural identity. Despite the best efforts of the Chinese state, we young generations of the 5 or 6 non-Han nationalities in China have associated 'imperialism' not with Japan, but with the Han nationality.

In the histories of many of the world's peoples, there have been great figures who have sacrificed their lives for the cause of freedom, human rights and equality, and also many who have opposed the struggle for peace and truth. If we cannot forget these great figures who accomplished just deeds, how can we forget those who opposed and tried to confound them? Their great deeds are recorded in the pages of history as if engraved in stone. Also in Tibetan history there is a host of unforgettable greats, as well as many who eschewed the rights and interests of the Tibetan people (Many regional leaders and heads, religious figures and various state officials, such as the present Jamyang Zhepa incarnation, member of the NPC standing committee, vice chairman of the Chinese Buddhist Association, principal of the China Tibetan Buddhist Institute for Higher Studies, vice chair of the standing committee of the provincial Peoples' Congress and chair of the provincial Buddhist Association; Ngapo Ngawang Jikme, vice chair of the national CPPCC; Drongbu Tsering Dorje, member of the TAR CPPCC, director of research at the TAR Academy of Social Science; Gotseko, chairman of the Sichuan provincial disciplinary committee and Tsepa Chap, vice-governor of Gansu province are responsible for perpetrating the most heinous deceptions on the Tibetan people during the current suppression and for subjecting them to fearsome beatings and detention). Such people are exactly those who might defend the interests of the Tibetan people, so why are they not among those Tibetan representatives speaking frankly on their peoples' behalf? It is at such crucial moments that we can clearly see how much they care for the unique Tibetan culture and the welfare of its people. We realize the actual depth of their usual lip service about 'Tibet'. While men of strong constitution have given themselves to the cause of their people with sincerity and dignity, we can also not forget those who slandered and undermined them, the supposed representatives of the Tibetan people who only rub salt on their wounds. How can we, the new generation, forget how you, while serving as the Tibetan peoples' representatives, unjustly vilify your own people at the beck and call of the government, when they make their true feelings known? History will

not forget how you brought intolerable aggression and false accusations against your own people.

7. Today is International Children's Day. In all areas of the city there are programs to mark the occasion, as well as mourning for those affected by the recent earthquake. The city's children are showing off their brightness on a stage dedicated to the whole world's children. I wonder whether the children from my native place are celebrating the occasion. For me, if all the children of our region could celebrate equally a day dedicated to all the children of the world, that would be just fine. Tibetan people have a high respect for life, and this extends to any people or nation in the world without distinction. Thus Tibetans genuinely sympathize with the relatives of the Chinese people killed in the Sichuan earthquake. Despite the history of antagonism and aggression between China and Tibet, we cannot blame ordinary people or lose respect for their human lives. Our children will participate in the mourning on International Children's Day. But the government has deprived us of any freedom of movement. Can there really be any connection between the incident of so-called 'Beating, smashing, looting and burning' and International Children's Day? Why should the city children be allowed to celebrate but the children of my native place not? Tibetan children will observe the mourning for earthquake victims, but they will not be allowed to mark International Children's Day. Children all over the world could well mark this as a day of mourning too – for the Chinese government's exploitation, oppression and destruction of International Children's Day, whether openly or concealed.

8. In these days before the start of the Olympic games, participants and ordinary people in countries around the world are looking forward to a great spectacle. They are all praying for success. Isn't the Olympics supposed to be a 'common platform' open to all for the pursuit of the innermost human values of freedom, democracy, peace and harmony? But for the oppressed Tibetan subjects under Chinese rule, the name 'Olympics' is a dead one. For the dwellers of our high plateau land, it is a distant promise. In these days we will continue to be downtrodden, abused and in pain, and will not see your wonderful spectacle. We are sorry. We will not see the glorious results of your sweat and toil. What we will see is cruel mistreatment and terrible punishment. Our country is surrounded by Chinese soldiers, and their guns and cannons are trained on us. Our only Olympic games will be arrests and killings. (Since the end of the March uprising, the PLA has been moved into Tibetan areas in order to 'punish criminals and protect the people' as they put it, but this actually means nothing other than beating and arresting ordinary innocent people. Golok, Rebkong and Chentsa in Qinghai, Labrang, Tsoe, Amchok and Luchu in Gansu, Ngaba, Chungchu, Dzoege and Taktsang Lhamo in Sichuan are full of soldiers, the movements of ordinary people are stringently checked, and monks in particular cannot move around except with permission from the local authorities. Due to this and the increased prices of everyday goods, ordinary life is very hard. It is the Tibetan custom to offer prayers on the mountaintop on the full moon of summer, and at the same time celebrate with horse races and other contests for 5 or 6 days, but this year these festivities have been cancelled in most parts of Qinghai. Instead, new official quarters have been established in many localities and the number of soldiers increased. Surveillance equipment has been installed to keep a closer watch on the

movements of Tibetans. Perhaps the world is unaware that the Tibetan plateau is seeing the greatest concentration of military since the end of the second world war. This is because of Mao's dictum that 'Power comes from the barrel of the gun' which is the real Chinese system, and shows the true face of 'Socialism with Chinese characteristics'. It is the realization of the Chinese state's ultimate objective of imposing feudal control on the six 'autonomous regions'.

The Chinese government is already imposing an oppression higher than the sky on Tibetan culture. It is squeezing the freedom to use the written language from all sides, most of those in leading positions inside Tibet do not have to learn it, and those who do learn have no occasion to use it these days. At least, the majority of Tibetans could be forgiven for thinking so, since although the government talks about minorities having the right to use their own languages, in fact those rights have been taken away. But no matter what, the Tibetan peoples' indomitable courage cannot be shaken. If they plunge us into darkness, that will be a way for us to find a gap through which the light shines in.

Forward, people of the world. We can be the masters of freedom, democracy and equality. In this darkness of oppression and exploitation, who else but us can light the torch of hope? We shall be the ones who welcome the dawn that follows the long night!

Thanks,

Rolang(Zor)

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Amdo, Tibet

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The above letter, originally in Tibetan, was written by a Tibetan student in the Amdo region of Tibet under the name Rolang or Zor, with the hope that it will be translated into English and distributed to international organizations, the UN and friends of Tibet around the world. Translated from thejmginal into English my M