

Confirmation of Nyima Choedon's release

The Dui Hua Foundation in San Francisco have received confirmation that Nyima Choedon (Chin: Nima Quzhen), who was detained with her husband Bangri Chogtrul Rinpoche Jigme Tenzin Nyima (Chin: Jinmei Danzeng Nima) on 26 August 1999 in connection with the closing of the Gyatso Children's Home in Lhasa, was released from the TAR Prison (formerly known as Drapchi Prison) on 26 February 2006. The remaining year of her sentence was commuted. Nyima Choedon was the last known female political prisoner in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR).

Nyima Choedron, a former nun, was born in 1968 in Nyemo, near Lhasa. In the mid-1990s, she married Bangri Rinpoche with whom she ran the Gyatso Children's Home, a privately-funded orphanage and school which she reportedly founded. On 26 August 1999, during the national minorities games, Tashi Tsering, a builder engaged in a contract with the orphanage, failed in an attempt to blow himself up as he tried to replace a Chinese flag with a Tibetan flag in front of the Potala Palace. Bangri Rinpoche and Nyima Choedron were linked by the Chinese authorities to the incident and arrested on the same day by the PSB. The home was closed by the authorities. Bangri Rinpoche and Nyima Choedron have a seven-year old daughter, born just before the couple's arrest.

Nyima Choedon was sentenced to ten years imprisonment, and Bangri Rinpoche to life imprisonment by the Lhasa Intermediate People's Court on 26 September for 'endangering state security'. They were sent to TAR Prison (Drapchi). Nyima Choedon received an 18 month sentence reduction in 2002, and a one year reduction in February 2004.

Dui Hua asked China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs for an update on the case of Nyima Choedron on 14 June 2006. An email response from Beijing which reached Dui Hua two days later confirmed her release. According to Dui Hua, a source close to the family also confirmed that Nyima Choedron has been released and that she is with her children. She visited Bangri Rinpoche at the TAR's Chushur Prison, where he is currently held.

Bangri Rinpoche's life sentence has been commuted to a 19-year fixed-term imprisonment in July 2003, he received a further one-year reduction in November 2005. Jigme Tenzin's sentence is now due to expire on July 30, 2021.

© 2008 TibetInfoNet (Reg.Nr. BN8490, Germany). All rights reserved.

TibetInfoNet is an independent information service that provides news and analysis of the current political, economic, social, environmental and human rights situation in Tibet.

Website: www.tibetinfonet.net
Phone: +44 (0) 20 300 206 33
Fax: +49 (0) 2238 9494466
Email: tin@tibetinfonet.net