

My name is Nyima Lhamo, and I thank you for this opportunity to testify before the Congressional-Executive Commission on China. The opening ceremony of the 2022 Beijing Olympics will take place tomorrow, which makes it quite urgent that we raise our voices today for those who have been silenced by the Chinese Communist Party.

I am the niece of late Trulku Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, who rose to prominence in Kham Lithang in eastern Tibet. Tenzin Delek was a highly respected lama in our area, where he was known for his philanthropic works and establishing schools, clinics, orphanages, and old-age homes. Out of respect, we often refer to him as 'rinpoche.'

But the respect he earned among the common people angered the Chinese authorities. After harassing him for years, they falsely accused him of serious crimes, and in 2002 they convicted him to life in prison.

When I heard the news of his arrest, the first thing that came to my mind was he would be released soon since he had not committed any crime. However, I was wrong. He was kept in prison until his sudden death in custody some thirteen years later.

After Rinpoche's death the Chinese authorities continued to dishonor his memory. Chinese state media claimed he was a fake lama, a criminal, and that he was a threat to so-called "social stability". My family and local Tibetans were not allowed to offer traditional butter lamps or organize public prayers in memory of Rinpoche, and pictures of Rinpoche were banned in Lithang.

My family was threatened as well, and eventually despite the difficulties and hardship I escaped Tibet in order to share the story of my late uncle. This meant leaving my six-year-old daughter behind. Last September the authorities took my mother, age 57, and two brothers in, and questioned them for days. They were kept in different places and asked about how I escaped from Tibet.

My mother was beaten, and they told her that they could easily kill her because as my mother, she was responsible for making me stop my advocacy. They wanted her to say that Trulku Tenzin Delek was a fake lama, and to say that I don't know anything about the situation inside Tibet, and that I'm being used by 'outside forces.'

When my mother became ill she tried to go to the Chengdu hospital, but at first the police didn't allow her to go. Even when they allowed her to go, the police followed her there and went from her hotel to the hospital and watched her the entire time.

I'm very worried about my family's safety, and they told my mom that if I continue to speak up out here, they'll beat, arrest, or even kill members of my family.

When my uncle was teaching Buddhism, the Chinese authorities would tell him not to mention His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and ordered him to stop building monasteries or schools, and warned him that if he didn't stop he would be arrested. Now they're giving the same threats, but about my advocacy.

Beijing is putting on a friendly face for the Olympics, but that isn't their real face. The Tibetan people have seen who they really are; we see it when they destroy our temples, when they beat and shoot us, when they make our religious leaders disappear, when they arrest and kill innocent people. Our language and culture are on the edge, facing the crushing weight of Chinese repression.

Tibetans don't have the freedom to speak the truth. The world should stand up for truth and justice, and support those who have the strength to speak the truth. Hearings like this help those who are inside Tibet. These hearings show that there are people around the world who care about them, and who hear their voices. These messages will reach them, and give them heart.

While growing up in Tibet it was common to hear such sad instances of Tibetans dying in Chinese prisons without justice being done to them. I know there are many other Tibetans who continue to face the same fate as my uncle. I want to bring the cases of four political prisoners to your attention.

The first is the Panchen Lama; he was taken away in 1995 at the age of six and has never been seen since. The second is Lhundup Dakpa, a singer who was given a six-year sentence for his songs opposing Chinese rule in Tibet. Third, Bonkho Kyi is a woman who helped arrange a small celebration of the Dalai Lama's birthday, and for that she was sentenced to seven years in prison. Lastly, please remember Lobsang Dhondup, a relative of mine who was arrested alongside Tenzin Delek Rinpoche and executed.

Finally, my mother's health has always been an issue, and I would like to ask if there is any way my mother can be brought out of Tibet for health reasons. My family has already lost so much; anything you can do to help her come here would be greatly appreciated. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak.