



Driru County: The New Hub of Tibetan Resistance

Tibet Watch Thematic Report
April 2014

Driru County: The New Hub of Tibetan Resistance

Thematic report commissioned by Free Tibet
Copyright © 2014 Tibet Watch
All rights reserved.



Tibet Watch works to promote the human rights of the Tibetan people through monitoring, research and advocacy. We are a UK registered charity (no. 1114404) with an office in London and a field office in Dharamsala, India. We believe in the power of bearing witness, the power of truth.

www.tibetwatch.org

Contents

Executive Summary	1
Calendar of events in Driru (September 2013 to January 2014).....	2
Background	3
Peaceful protests and military crackdown	5
Arbitrary arrests	7
Religious institutions targeted.....	11
Torture and deaths in custody	12
Increasingly harsh sentencing	13
Appendix 1: English translation of the notification statement in Chinese	15
Appendix 2: Current status of all detainees	16

Executive summary

During the past year, Driru County has become one of the focal points of Tibetan resistance to the Chinese occupation. The repercussions have been severe and reprisals against individuals are still being reported. Driru County was the site of a mass uprising in 1969, which was brutally repressed, but since then the area has been relatively quiet. Despite the county having no recent history of resistance, the Chinese authorities are concerned about the current unrest spreading to other areas of the Tibet Autonomous Region and are making every effort to suppress the protests and also news of the protests as quickly as possible.

One of the key triggers for the current situation has been environmental exploitation by Chinese companies, particularly of the sacred Naglha Dzamba mountain, which the Tibetan people believe is home to their local deity. There were protests against extraction work on the mountain in 2010 and again in May 2013. Many of the recent arrests have targeted people believed to have played a leading role in the May protests, despite the local authorities promising at the time that no-one would be punished.

Another trigger has been the local government's attempt to impose political re-education on the area and, in particular, the attempt to force Tibetans to fly Chinese flags on the roofs of their houses in advance of Chinese National Day. The imposition of Chinese flags was the final straw and, towards the end of September 2013, there were large scale protests. The flags were also dumped in the river. The authorities over-reacted and brought in armed security forces. The area was already tense due to the political re-education campaign and the intensity of the Chinese presence but after this crackdown the tension rose considerably. Over the next couple of weeks there was a succession of incidents with protests against the crackdown triggering further repression which led to further protest and yet more repression.

As the mass protests started to die down, the number of individual arrests increased. The authorities started targeting people who had been involved in the earlier environmental protests as well as the more recent events. Some of those arrested were popular writers, singers and religious leaders. The authorities seemed to be keen to remove people with cultural influence. They also targeted people they suspected of spreading information about what was happening in Driru.

The Chinese government is well known for seeking to control the narrative in any context and arresting those who might contribute to an alternative version of events is a common tactic. The authorities also put measures in place to prevent the flow of information. This ranged from imposing travel restrictions to monitoring and, in some cases, shutting down phone and internet communications.

Monitoring and reporting the human rights violations taking place in Driru County during the past few months has been incredibly difficult due to the restrictions and surveillance in place. The residents of Driru have demonstrated considerable bravery and determination in continuing to pass on information, whatever the cost.

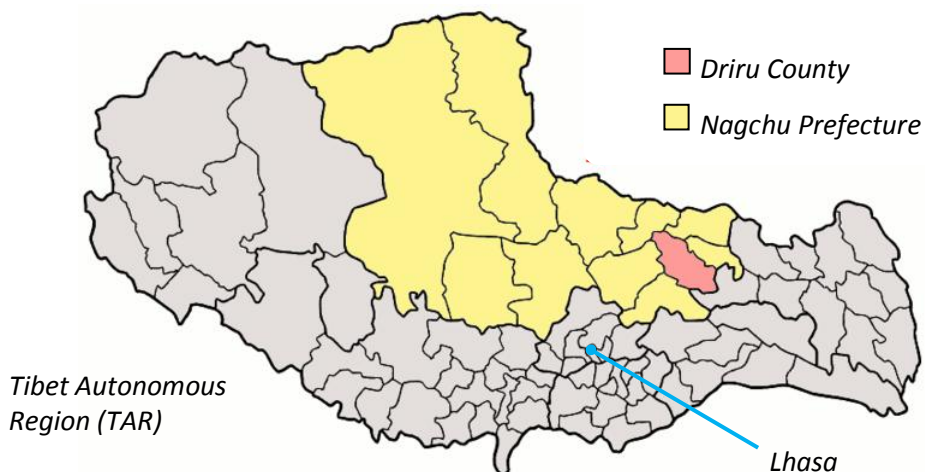
For some the cost has certainly been high. The first prison sentence handed down was two and a half years but as the situation has continued the sentences have become increasingly harsh and lengthy. The most recent sentence reported to Tibet Watch was 18 years. There have also been two confirmed deaths in custody. This is unusual as political prisoners whose health reaches a critical condition are often released to avoid the embarrassment of them dying in prison. In both of the Driru cases the bodies were returned to the families bearing signs of torture. It is not clear whether the deaths were accidental or part of a deliberate tactic. However, the threats made to each of the families that they would be executed if they spoke about what had happened suggest the deaths were most likely not intentional.

The following pages provide a timeline of events in Driru and an account of all the incidents reported to Tibet Watch. An update on the current status of all reported detainees is also provided in Appendix 2.

Calendar of events in Driru (September 2013 to January 2014)

SEPTEMBER	Tues 3 rd	Tues 10 th	Sat 28 th									
	Chinese cultural event ... protest by Dayang ... Dayang arrested	troops arrive in Driru for patriotic re-education	Chinese flags in Mowu and Monchen villages thrown into river ... 40 people arrested ... 1,000 gather to protest									
OCTOBER	Thurs 3 rd	Sun 6 th	Tues 8 th	Fri 11 th	Sat 12 th	Sun 13 th	Tues 15 th	Thurs 17 th	Fri 18 th	Sat 19 th	Sun 20 th	Mon 28 th
	Dorjee Daktal arrested	protest for Dorjee Daktal's release, 60 injured	surveillance ordered in Lhasa	Tsultrim Gyaltsen arrested	Yugyal arrested ... Kalsang Choethar arrested	flag raising order given in Chentsa County ... Kalsang arrested	Dawa Lhundup and Jampa arrested	Jampa Lakshay and Kalnam arrested	Tenzin Rangdol arrested	protest for Tenzin Rangdol's release, 10 arrested	remaining protestors arrested but later released	Tobden arrested
NOVEMBER	exact date unknown		Sun 3 rd	Mon 4 th	Tues 12 th	Mon 18 th	Tues 19 th	Wed 20 th	Sat 23 rd	Sun 24 th	Sat 30 th	
	Kelsang Dhondup and Drongna monks arrested ... Drongna monastery closed ... Zhom Lhaga's sentence extended ... Kalsang Choethar, Dawa Lhundup, Jampa, Kalnam and Jampa Lakshay released		Tsopan, Sarkyi and Yangkyil appeal for release of Tsultrim Gyaltsen and Yugyal, all 3 arrested ... 13 youths arrested	security force arrives in Dangkar village ... Gabuk arrested	Trinley Phelmo arrested ... Tsering Gyal arrested	Kunchok Choephel arrested	Yangkyil and 13 youths released	Trinley Tsekar arrested	Tarmoe monastery raided ... Ngawang Jamyang, Kelsang Choklang and one other monk arrested	Ngangtak and Rigsal arrested	Tenzin Rangdol, Kunchok Choephel and Tobden sentenced ... Gonpo Tenzin arrested in Lhasa	
DECEMBER	exact date unknown		Tues 17 th	Thurs 19 th		exact date unknown		Tuesday 14 th				
	Tsultrim Nyandrak arrested ... Thardhod Gyaltsen arrested ... Kunchok Drokpa arrested (body later returned to family)		Ngawang Jamyang's body returned to family	Trinley Tsekar, Choechap and Tselha sentenced		Kelsang Choklang, Dorjee Daktal, Tsultrim Gyaltsen and Yugyal sentenced		Ngangtak, Rigsal and Trigyal sentenced				
						JANUARY						

Background



Driru (Ch: Biru) is one of the eastern counties in Nagchu (Ch: Naqu) Prefecture within the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). The area is predominantly rural, with a traditionally nomadic population, and rich in natural resources, including a broad range of minerals. The Gyalmo Ngulchu river, which is known as Nu Jiang in Chinese and better known to many as the Salween river, flows through the county and passes through the foothills of Naglha Dzamba. Dams on the Nu/Salween river have been the source of much controversy and campaigning over the years but at least one has already been completed in Driru.

Acts of protest and repression in Driru both peaked in October/November 2013 but the current situation is closely linked to events which took place in May 2013. A Chinese government-affiliated company arrived in the county and started work on Naglha Dzamba mountain. They claimed they were working on a road and hydroelectric power construction project. For the locals, it was reminiscent of what happened in 2010.



1 - Naglha Dzamba mountain in Driru

At that time, a large Chinese workforce arrived and told the local Tibetans they were going to build a dam on the Gyalmo Ngulchu. The work went on continuously, through day and night. After observing the activities for a while, local Tibetans noticed that trucks of stone from the holy mountain were being driven away under cover of night. This gave rise to suspicion that the Chinese workers were constructing a mine - either in addition to the dam or instead of the dam - and locals gathered at the site to protest.

They were told by the Driru county head that the dam was being built for the benefit of local people and that if they couldn't accept that then the army would be brought in to ensure the work continued. Locals responded that there were already three dams on the river, none of which benefitted the local community. They reiterated their commitment to protecting the environment and, especially, their sacred mountain. After a protracted period of negotiation and argument, the Chinese authorities agreed to halt the work and instructed the extraction company to pay compensation for the minerals which had been removed.

Fearing that the latest construction project was, like the dam, a cover for mining activity, locals responded quickly to protect their sacred mountain. On Friday 24 May, an estimated 3,500 Tibetans converged on the site, while more gathered in the local town.



2 - Protestors gathering near Naglha Dzamba mountain

In addition to protesting, local people filed petitions with various Chinese government offices asking them to stop the mining. Eventually, the authorities agreed to halt the work. Furthermore, they declared that Naglha Dzamba mountain had been recognized as part of a cultural and environmental preservation area.



3 - ICH Certificate for Naglha Dzamba

In January 2013, prior to the protest, a certificate was issued confirming the mountain's status.

*Naglha Dzamba Mountain ICH Certificate
List of Intangible Cultural Heritages of Autonomous
Regional Level
Naglha Dzamba Holy Mountain Belief and Customs
Declared by People's Government of Tibetan
Autonomous Region Issued by Department of Cultural
Affairs of Tibetan Autonomous Region
22 January 2013*

They also promised that none of the protestors would be punished.

“But Chinese authorities didn't keep their words. Later they arrested these three Tibetans and given sentences to them who participated in last year's anti-mining protest. An unconfirmed information spreading around is, all those Tibetans who participated in last year's anti-mining protest would be arrested. Therefore, local Tibetans are living in tense and fear to get arbitrary arrests.”¹

Initially, it seemed that the authorities had indeed kept to their word. After the work on the mountain stopped things were relatively quiet over the summer. At the beginning of August 2013, Yu Zhengsheng, Chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), visited Nagchu Prefecture as part of his Tibet inspection tour, preaching Beijing's message of harmony and stability. His visit passed without any reported incidents.

However, as autumn came around the local authorities decided to follow-up on Yu's visit by launching a political re-education campaign. Events over the following few months would prove this to have been a spectacularly counter-productive idea.

¹ Quote from Tibet Watch source - identity withheld. Quote obtained once the reprisals had started.

Peaceful protests and military crackdown

On 3 September a cultural performance troupe and political propaganda team arrived in Tsachu township in Driru. There was to be a cultural show that evening - one of many events arranged across Driru with the aim of promulgating Chinese political and ideological propaganda among Tibetans. During the show, a 68-year-old local man named Dayang held up a white khadag² and then shouted a number of slogans calling for Tibetan independence and the long life of the Dalai Lama. Later that evening, around midnight, Public Security Bureau forces broke into Dayang's home, covered his wife's head with a piece of cloth, arrested him and took him away. Over the next few days he was held incommunicado until his family learned that he had been admitted to the county People's Hospital. He was being treated for injuries which he had not had prior to his detention.

Following the incident in Tsachu, the political re-education campaign intensified. Starting on 10 September, there was a huge influx of troops and government officials into the area, who were drawn from across Nagchu Prefecture and also other regions of TAR. As part of this new drive, Tibetans across Driru were ordered to fly Chinese flags on the roofs of their houses.

On 28 September, villagers from Mowa and Monchen villages in Driru township decided that they had had enough. They gathered up the flags and threw them into a nearby river. The Chinese authorities responded by sending in armed forces and police. The ensuing clash lasted around three hours and involved the use of gunfire by Chinese forces. However, Tibet Watch was unable to verify whether the troops were deliberately firing at unarmed Tibetans or whether they were firing into the air in an attempt to control the crowd.



4 - Security forces preparing for deployment in Driru

The same day a contingent of 40 villagers from Taglhay village, Tsachu township, Waro village, Taring township, and Nishoe village attempted to make an appeal to the authorities against the severity of the response but the whole group was arrested. By evening, approximately 1,000 local residents had gathered in front of the Driru County Administrative Centre to demand the release of the 40 villagers. Deputy party secretary of TAR, Wu Ying Jie, and Nagchu county party secretary, Dothog, eventually arrived and the villagers were released after they had all been photographed and finger-printed. Many of them had also sustained injuries to their heads and bodies.

Although no-one was kept in detention, there were further reprisals. Villagers who had been injured during the initial clash or subsequent protests were prohibited from seeking hospital treatment. In addition, everyone who had been involved in the events of 28 September – and their families - lost their right to pick Yartsa Gunpu (a caterpillar fungus which is one of the primary income sources in the area). The children of those involved were also expelled from school. In an act of solidarity, many other students withdrew from school and one of the main schools in Driru saw its student body drop from around 4,000 to just 60, most of whom were the children of school or government officials. A military camp was constructed in Mowa

² Khadag (or khatak) - a ceremonial, white scarf symbolising purity and compassion. If someone holds up a khadag during a social event or function, it indicates that it is their turn to sing or speak. If someone holds up a khatak during a conflict, it is intended for making peace. Dayang's use of the khadag was intended to get people's attention first and to show that his action was peaceful.

town, with additional smaller camps and check-posts constructed around Monchen and Neshoe. Troops were drawn in from Lhasa, Shigatse and Lhoka Prefectures.

“In some villages, every house is strictly monitored by seven to ten soldiers followed by random arrest every day since last week.”

“It seems like Chinese Cultural Revolution has restarted in Kham Driru -these days”³

On the evening of 3 October, Dorjee Daktal from Yangthang village, Dathang township, was arrested. Many people believe he was arrested because of his participation in the May protests and news of his detention spread. On 6 October a large group gathered at the local government office to appeal for his release. The authorities reacted harshly and sent in armed security forces which used tear gas, guns and batons on the crowd. Around 60 people were injured, mostly by beating. At least one man, Lobsang Wangchen, was injured by gun shot. The tear gas also left many people unconscious.



5 - Security forces gathering and preparing for deployment in Driru

That same evening the authorities imposed restrictions on movement in or out of Driru county. Many residents who were staying in Lhasa or other parts of Nagchu Prefecture at that time were unable to return home. There were also further reports of injured protestors being denied access to medical treatment.

On 8 October a notice was issued to all police stations and security checkpoints in Lhasa by the Old Lhasa Neighbourhood Headquarters. The notice instructed all police and security personnel to “observe the movements of Tibetans from Nagchu and increasingly interrogate the suspicious people from Nagchu”. The notice also provided details of the monitoring procedures and the code language to be used. All Tibetans from Driru were to be referred to as “tourists”. Driru was defined as “A Sector”, with additional sector codes given to certain other counties within the prefecture. Personnel who observed Nagchu Tibetans moving from their area into that of the next station or checkpoint were to advise their colleagues via two way radio using the terminology: “...tourists from A sector entered your area, please extend hospitality”. A full copy of the translation of the notice is available in Appendix 1.

After this wave of mass protests had been put down, the individual arrests started. Some of these targeted the suspected ringleaders of recent and previous protests; many others were motivated by a desperate attempt to control information and prevent news of the situation spreading.

³ Quotes from Tibet Watch sources - identities withheld.

Arbitrary arrests

On 11 October, a well-known writer was arrested from his home in Dangkar village, Shamchu township. Tsultrim Gyaltzen, 27, was known to many by his pen-name Shog Dril, which means Morning Bell in English. He was charged with engagement in separatist activities, disruption of social stability and disseminating news about the Driru unrest. His computer, mobile phone and books were confiscated. The following morning, 12 October, a friend of Tsultrim Gyaltzen, named Yugyal, was also arrested. Yugyal had previously been a police officer and came from the same village. He was arrested on similar charges.



6 - Kalsang and two of her daughters

The following day, 13 October, a Tibetan woman named Kalsang was arrested while standing outside the Dejang hotel at around 11:00 a.m. Kalsang is from Tsala township and has three young daughters. She was charged with expressing anti-Chinese opinions on the social networking application Wechat and with having banned photos of the Dalai Lama and Tibetan political songs on her mobile phone. Her family went to the local police station to ask about her but were told that they could not have any information until the head office had made a decision in her case.⁴

Around this time Tibet Watch also received news of protests against political re-education campaigning in neighbouring areas of TAR. Villagers in Tsogan Kig village in Tso Drik township in Chentsa County had received the same instructions as the residents of Driru regarding the flying of

Chinese national flags on top of their houses. Out of 300 households only 15 complied with the order and reports suggest that these households may have been coerced.

“Aw, flags (Chinese) were hoisted atop of a few houses in my village. It is disgraceful to our nationality. I feel sad and disappointed. I pray for not taking rebirth in such an environment again.”

“I will never raise the flag atop of my house, even at the cost of my life”.⁵

Meanwhile, in Driru, more arrests were taking place. On 15 October a young Tibetan man, Dawa Lhundup, 19, and a nun, Jampa, 20, from Yar Dang village of Shamchu township were arrested. It was alleged that they had been involved in disseminating information about the crackdown in Driru and “revealing state secrets” via mobile phone and other communication methods. The village head and other senior members of the community went to the county police station to petition for their release, but to no avail. Family members were also forbidden from seeing the detainees.⁶

Two days later, 17 October, two Tibetan monks, Jampa Lakshay, 20, and Kalnam, 25, from Shug Dang monastery were arrested while in Lhasa. They were similarly charged with “leaking state secrets” and disseminating information to contacts outside of Tibet.⁷

The following day, 18 October, 34-year-old Tenzin Rangdol was arrested while returning home from Nagchu's main city. He had been to the prefecture capital to enrol his three children in school there. The day after his arrest, around 40 people from Tenzin's village, Gochu village no.4 in Shagchu town, gathered outside the local government office to protest against his detention. They were joined by people from neighbouring villages and the crowd swelled to over 100 people.

⁴ Tibet Watch recently learned that Kalsang has been released but has not been able to confirm the exact date.

⁵ Quotes from Tibet Watch sources - identities withheld.

⁶ Dawa Lhundup and Jampa were released around the end of October / beginning of November.

⁷ Both monks were released around the end of October / beginning of November.

In addition to calling for Tenzin's release, they told the local authorities: "Please don't wrong people merely in the name of law, without any ground for expressing justice and truth. We are not here for any gifts or shopping. We are here to appeal the government (local) to keep the rule of law honestly." They also expressed their resentment at being labelled as 'splittists', saying: "Release innocent Tenzin Rangdol. Don't put splittists hats on us. We are being confined into a situation which allows no room for reason."⁸



7 - Troops protecting the local government office in Shagchu town

The protesters spent the night of 19 October sleeping outside the premises of the local government office in Shagchu town and their presence there led to the arrest of ten Tibetans, mainly consisting of Tenzin's family and relatives. Those arrested included Shodhar, Dorgyal, Lhamo, Kalsang Namdol and Mengyal, who are all from Gochu village. In the morning of 20 October, a large number of Chinese troops arrived and arrested the remaining protestors. The Deputy Party Secretary of Nagchu rebuked and threatened the local Tibetan protesters, saying, "You are like eggs being banged upon a mountain...we will put you in the same situation like in 1959 and 1969."⁹

They were released later that same day after their mobile phones had been checked and they had all been photographed and fingerprinted. However, it was to be several weeks before anyone heard anything more about Tenzin Rangdol.

After the unrest in Shagchu town, Chinese authorities intensified the surveillance and security measures in the region, including stationing thousands of military troops, shutting down communication and internet availability and restricting movement between villages. Special surveillance measures were put in place for mobile phones and social networking applications, especially Wechat, to prevent photos and information from leaking outside.

Later the same month, on 28 October, Tobden, a 30-year-old nomad and father of three, from Gochu village no.4 in Shagchu township, was arrested. He had previously participated in the protest against Tenzin Rangdol's detention. Tobden is also a writer, who uses the pen-name Gho Gangga, which means 'loving snow mountain' in English. Prior to his arrest he wrote a poem titled Sad Song of Driru, in which he expressed his grief at the tragic events taking place under Chinese rule.

⁸ Quotes from Tibet Watch source - identity withheld.

⁹ Quote from Tibet Watch source - identity withheld.

Sad Song of Diru

In the year 2012

For the sake of Tibet

Many heroes like Gudrub

Sacrificed life with fire

When the Tibetan heroes

Standing in the red flames

Six million fellow Tibetans

Shed sad tears

The truth-tellers of this land

Who is knowledgeable and clear-minded

Are denied freedom of body, speech and mind

Through arrest and detention

Action of terror is more than these

Naglha Mountain is on the verge of destruction

The inhabits of villages are massacred

And monasteries are nearly deserted

In the year 2013

Elderly Dayang

Who called the name of his spiritual lama¹⁰

End up being tortured by repressive law

Discarding the appeals of truth

Hundred of people were beaten up

This body doesn't have freedom

This land doesn't have democracy

Many heroes like Dodrak

Were sentenced into prison

Without having freedom to express few words

Is there any misfortune worse than this?

Yellow and dark armored vehicles

Parading in a neat line

Pointed the gun barrels

At helpless masses

Under the bloody red flag

With threatening siren sound

Hunted through the whole villages

And stole their happiness and peace

Taking three steps is illegal

Waking hands three times is crime

Speaking three words is misdeed

Which place is more miserable than this?

Alas, all wish fulfilling jewel

The saver Tenzin Gyatso¹¹

Please bless this land

A moment without tear and blood

Alas, Lobsang Sangay

The leader of Tibetan nation

With heroic strength and power

Cut the final chain of this suffering

In this big world

They say a fair law exist

If that law has any power

Please look at the fate of Snowland

Since Tsultrim Gyaltsen and Yugyal were arrested in mid-October, their family and neighbours had been making representations to the township and county authorities to request information about their whereabouts and condition. They were repeatedly turned away and warned that if they came in numbers greater than five they would be labelled as political offenders. They were also instructed to bring their petitions in writing although, when they did so, they still received no replies.

On 3 November, a 'work team'¹² came to Dangkar village in Shamchu township to carry out 'patriotic education' activities. During one event some people called for information about Tsultrim and Yugyal but still there was no response. That night, three Tibetan women, Tsopan, 47, Sarkyi, 49, and Yangkyil, 25, went to the office of the work team to complain about the unjustified arrest of Tsultrim and Yugyal. They demanded to know the exact article of law their fellow villagers had broken and what they had been charged with. The work team called police to arrest the three women and they were taken away, along with

¹⁰ A reference to the Dalai Lama

¹¹ The name of the Dalai Lama

¹² Permanent 'work teams', consisting of 2-3 Chinese and Tibetan authorities, are stationed in every village within TAR to supervise and monitor the activities of local people. The work teams are not comprised of police and security personnel.

13 village youths, including Sarkyi's two sons, who just happened to be assembled outside the office. Sarkyi's sons are Lamsang, 25, and Tsering Lhakyab, 19. The other youth detainees are: Tsering, 22, Tsering Phuntsok, 21, Tador, 21, Gengdrak, 17, Tsering Tenpa, 22, Thupchen, 27, Solta, 25, Tsering Shangchup, 21, Jigme Phuntsok, 23, Lamsang, 24, and Tsewang Kyab, 19.

On 4 November over one hundred military personnel came to Dangkar village and stationed themselves at the bay of the Gyalmo Ngulchu river, which runs near the village, in order to monitor local activities. A curfew was imposed and villagers were not allowed to go outside after dark, even to visit the village temple or Mani stones. Later that day a local man named Gabuk, 41, was taken into police custody.

On 12 November, at around 4:00 p.m. in the afternoon, a Tibetan woman named Trinley Phelmo, 32, from Gongshul village, Shamchu township, was arrested while visiting Diru's main city. She was taken to the detention center at the county police station for interrogation. No reason was given for the arrest. Tsering Gyal, a 21-year-old man from Dangkar village, Shamchu township, was also arrested the same day. He was released after one week and fined 1,000 Chinese Yuan.

Yangkyil, one of the women who were arrested on 3 November, and the 13 youths who were taken into custody at the same time were all released on 19 November. Each of the detainees was fined between 1,000 and 1,800 Chinese Yuan. They were also forced to sign, with their thumb prints, an undertaking not to be involved in any future protests or unrest. Sarkyi, Tsopan and Gabuk remain in detention and their families suspect they may have been transferred to another prison.

On 20 November a well-known singer, Trinley Tsekar, from Serkhang village, was arrested at a driving school where he was taking lessons. Trinley Tsekar is 22 and has one child. He is well known for expressing the hardship and suffering of the Tibetan people through song and is particularly popular amongst the younger generation. His recent DVD, Ring of Unity, contains songs about Tibetan identity, culture and language.

On 24 November Ngantak and Rigsal, two of the village leaders of Mokhyim village in Diru township were arrested. The elder of the two, Ngantak, 54, has been a village leader since 1980. Rigsal is 31 years old and became a village leader in 2007.

On 30 November another singer, Gonpo Tenzin, from Septa village, Shakchu township, was arrested. Gonpo Tenzin is 25 and a father to one child. His songs promote Tibetan culture, language and unity. His recent DVD is titled No Losar in Tibet. Gonpo Tenzin had left Diru a few months earlier in order to avoid arrest attempts but the police finally caught up with him in Lhasa.

Religious institutions targeted

A number of the monasteries in Tibet are well known for their political activism and adept at disseminating news about human rights violations. Buddhist monasteries also have a strong cultural role within their local communities. It is, therefore, no surprise that monks and monasteries were targeted as part of the crackdown on Diriu.



8 - Monks gathered to appeal for the release of Kalsang Choethar

On 12 October a monk named Kalsang Choethar was arrested in a bazaar near his monastery in Palyul County, Sichuan Province. He was originally from Sog County, which neighbours Diriu, and it is believed that his arrest was motivated by allegations of his involvement in spreading news about the situation in Diriu. When news of his arrest spread, 400 monks from his monastery gathered at the local police station around 3:00 p.m. to appeal for his release. By 5:00 p.m. a further 200 people, including local nuns, had joined the peaceful protest. They remained outside the police station until midnight when police informed them that Kalsang was not being held at that station. It is now believed he was taken to the provincial capital, Chengdu.¹³

Kunchok Choephel, a monk from Drongna monastery, was arrested on 18 November. He had previously participated in the protest against Tenzin Rangdol's detention and is reportedly a close relative.

A few days later, 23 November, the abbot of Tarmoe monastery, Ngawang Jamyang, was arrested while in Lhasa, along with another Tarmoe monk, Kelsang Choklang. No reason was given for their arrests and their families were given no information about their detention. Unconfirmed reports suggest a third monk may also have been arrested at the same time. On the same day, a large number of armed forces and police raided Tarmoe monastery. They searched every room and confiscated two laptops from the abbot's room.

Also in November Tibet Watch received reports that the authorities had shut down Drongna monastery, one of the largest in the county, and arrested a number of monks as well as a language teacher named Kelsang Dhondup.¹⁴ There have been restrictions on Drongna monastery for some time already and, consequently, locals were unsure how many monks were living in the monastery at the time or how many were arrested.



9 - Images from Drongna monastery following the raid, showing rooms and halls taped off

¹³ Kalsang Choethar was released in November 2013.

¹⁴ Kelsang Dhondup was later released but we cannot confirm the date. There are no further details regarding the monks who were arrested during the raid.

During the raid the troops searched and sealed off the prayer assembly hall and at least some of the private rooms of monks. Tibet Watch could not confirm whether all rooms were sealed off. They also confiscated the money-box which had been set up as part of the Pure Tibetan Speaking Program¹⁵.

“Local Tibetans are suspecting that Chinese government is putting more restrictions on Drongna monastery and its monks with prevailing cases of arbitrary arrests and shutting down of the institution because the monks of Drongna monastery were active campaigns on preserving Tibetan culture and on protection of Tibetan identity and Tibetan language.”¹⁶

Following the raid on Drongna monastery in November, the monastery’s chant leader, Thardhod Gyaltzen, was arrested in December for political offences, including "inciting separatism". It was alleged that when police raided the monastery he was found to be storing banned pictures and recorded teachings of the Dalai Lama. Thardhod was also well known and respected for his contribution to the preservation of Tibetan culture and Buddhism among local Tibetans as well as among the monks of Drongna. Thardhod’s father, Jungney, was killed by Chinese police during the mass protest of 1969 in Diru.

Also during December Tibet Watch received reports that Tsultrim Nyandrak, a monk from Rabten monastery, had been detained by Chinese authorities. Tsultrim is from Tsachu township in Diru. His current whereabouts and condition are unknown.

Torture and deaths in custody

Kunchok Drakpa was detained by Chinese authorities at the beginning of December 2013 on suspicion of having played a leading role in the mining protests earlier in the year. Kunchok was in his mid-forties, came from Chamram village, Diru township, and had a wife and two young sons. He was known for his commitment to the environment and speaking out against the mining activities. His body was returned to his family towards the end of December. It was clear that he had been tortured. His family were threatened not to disclose any details about the incident.

On 17 December, abbot Ngawang Jamyang’s dead body was returned to his family by the authorities in Lhasa. Like Kunchok Drakpa, it was clear from the injuries that he had suffered greatly during his detention. Jamyang’s family were threatened with execution if they shared news of his death with anyone outside of Tibet. Despite these threats, they displayed the courage and defiance that has become characteristic of Diru and ensured that the news was passed on.

“It was clear from Jamyang's body that he was tortured and beaten to death in a secret detention center. He didn't have any health problems before and fine when leaving his monastery to Lhasa”.¹⁷

Ngawang Jamyang was born in 1968 in Totho village and became a monk at Tarmoe, his local monastery, in 1987. He had previously been imprisoned for two years in 2008 on charges of “having relations with outside”.



10 - Abbot Ngawang Jamyang

¹⁵ Anyone who speaks any language (mainly Chinese) other than Tibetan needs to voluntarily drop a certain amount of money into that box as a penalty. The rule is practised by Tibetans in many regions inside Tibet. Money stored in the box will be directed towards activities for the same purpose.

¹⁶ Quote from Tibet Watch source - identity withheld.

¹⁷ Quote from Tibet Watch source - identity withheld.

“Jamyang's death came as a huge shock to the residents of Diru, especially the monks of Tarmoe monastery. He was the most efficient administrator, teacher and a very conscientious person. Tarmoe would never be the same again without him, beside monastic excellent services, he was also well respected by the local community for his numerous social welfare activities such as helping to peacefully mediate disputes and helping local Tibetans to stop harmful habits such as gambling.”¹⁸

Ngawang Jamyang's family took his body to the traditional cremation ground near Sera monastery in Lhasa. The whereabouts and situation of Kelsang Choklang and the other monk who was arrested with Ngawang Jamyang remain unknown.

Increasingly harsh sentencing

During the first couple of months of the crackdown, Tibet Watch received only one or two reports of sentences being handed down to those who had been arrested. Dayang, the first protester named in our report, received a sentence of 2½ years for what he said at the propaganda event in September. Tibet Watch also received news that the sentence of an existing prisoner from Diru, Zom Lhaga, has been increased by one year as a result of the ongoing unrest. Zom Lhaga was sentenced to one year in prison following the self-immolation of Tsegye¹⁹ in November 2012. He is serving his sentence in Chushul (Ch: Qushui) prison near Lhasa.

On 30 November, two Tibetans who had been arrested in October and one other who had been arrested during November received prison sentences for their alleged links to the ‘Dalai clique’ and involvement in separatist activities. Tenzin Rangdol and Tobden were given sentences of five years each, while Kunchok Choephel was given six years.

As 2013 came to a close the number of arrests slowed down and Tibet Watch began to receive more reports of prison sentences. We also noted the sentences becoming increasingly harsh and lengthy. While some of those dealt with earlier in the year had received two, three or five years, sentences of over ten years now seem almost routine in Diru.

Prison sentences for the singer Trinley Tsekar and two other Tibetans who had been arrested were handed down on 19 December by the County People’s Court in Diru. Choechap received 13 years, Trinley Tsekar received nine years and former policeman Tselha received three years.²⁰ All three were convicted on charges of (1) instigating the people's protest against mining at Naglha Dzamba mountain, (2) maintaining outside contacts and (3) attempting to 'split Chinese nation'. Choechap is from the same village as Trinley Tsekar, Serkhang village of Diru township, and Tselha belongs to Thupga village no. 5, Diru township.

On 14 January 2014 the Mokhyim village leaders, Rigstal and Ngangtak, were sentenced to ten years each. The charges against them included refusing to fly the Chinese national flag on their houses, participating in protests, specifically protesting against the closure of Drongna monastery and holding a secret meeting (with 17 other people) at Ngangtak's house. It is not clear whether trials were held before the sentences were handed down. The families are not aware of any trials having taken place and were simply informed of the sentences by the local authorities. Tibet Watch understands that another man from Mokhyim village, named Trigyal, has also been sentenced to 13 years imprisonment.

Also during January it was confirmed that Kelsang Choklang had been sentenced to 10 years imprisonment on charges of illegally gathering a crowd. Tibet Watch has been unable to confirm the exact date his

¹⁸ Quote from Tibet Watch source - identity withheld.

¹⁹ 27-year-old Tsegye carried out his self-immolation protests during the evening of 7 November 2012. He initially survived and was taken to a prison hospital where he survived for 11 days before succumbing to his injuries.

²⁰ We have not been able to confirm when Choechap or Tselha were arrested.

sentence was handed down, the location of his detention or any further specifics of the charges against him. Meanwhile, Dorjee Daktal was sentenced to 11 years in prison. He was given seven years for allegedly being one of the ringleaders of the May protest against Chinese mining activities, three years for lending money to others and one more year for disturbing the work of official permanent cadres stationed in Driru.

From the end of November there had been unconfirmed reports circulating that Tsultrim Gyaltzen and Yugyal, who were arrested in October 2013, had both received lengthy sentences. In March 2014 it was finally confirmed that Tsultrim Gyaltzen had been sentenced to 13 years and Yugyal to ten years imprisonment. They are currently being held in Chushul prison. Family members have actually been permitted to visit the detainees, although the visit was limited to ten minutes and restricted to phone communication while separated by a glass barrier.

The families were informed that the verdicts against the two men had been handed down by the People's Court of Tibet Autonomous Region. However, they have not been shown any documentary evidence, they were not informed about any trials at the time and it does not seem that either of the two had any legal representation at any stage.

Chushul prison was opened in April 2005 and is located in a rural area to the south-west of Lhasa. It has already been confirmed that Zom Lhaga, Tsultrim Gyaltzen and Yugyal are serving sentences in Chushul. It is quite possible that others from Driru will end up there, if they are not there already.

Dr Manfred Nowak visited Chushul prison on 27 November 2005 in his capacity as UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment. At the time Chushul was relatively new and he was informed that it was intended primarily for those who had been convicted of very serious crimes and were serving long sentences. A number of political prisoners had been transferred to Chushul from Drapchi during a reorganisation and Dr Nowak was able to interview three of them during his visit. From these interviews and his own observations, he concluded that conditions at Chushul were particularly bad, worse than at Drapchi, and unsuitable for long term prisoners. He raised his concerns in a subsequent report to the UN Commission on Human Rights.²¹

The Special Rapporteur's report remains a concern given the number of people from Driru who have been convicted of political offences and the pattern of increasingly lengthy sentences. Tibet Watch recently confirmed that Thardhod Gyaltzen, the chant leader of Drongna monastery, has received the longest sentence to date - eighteen years imprisonment - and is currently serving his sentence in a prison in the Lhasa area.

²¹ Report of the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, Manfred Nowak, on his mission to China (20 November to 2 December 2005), 10 March 2006

Appendix 1: English translation of the notification statement in Chinese

A notification for relaying information about Tibetans from Nagchu among the police stations.

To all the convenience police stations of the old Lhasa neighbourhood (Ch: Laochengqu).

Spirit of the conference (held in Lhasa) to thoroughly implement the maintenance of stability and to ensure stable and normal social order. Accordance with the detachment leadership's arrangements. Following the instructions to using codes for report Tibetans from three eastern counties in Nagchu Prefecture on two way radios.

Instructions for using the codes: Nagchu men (code: Male tourists), Nagchu women (code: Female tourists), Biru county (code: "A" Sector), Sou county (code: "B" Sector), Baqing county (code: "C" Sector). e.g. 89 station found three men from Nagchu enter into the area of 91 station. Describe in code on two way radios: "91 station, three male tourists from "A" sector entered your area, please extend hospitality".

First, The Barkhor street (Ch: Balang Jie) inner circle security checkpoints should monitoring the movements of Tibetans from Nagchu prefecture in the area and should inform the nearest police station through two way radios (using the codes) at their entering to the old Lhasa neighbourhood.

- The 89 police stations at the Jokhang Temple (Ch: Dazhaosi) Square should in charge of Tibetans from Nagchu entered through 1,2 security checkpoints to the old Lhasa neighbourhood.
- The 92 police stations at the ShaksarTsa (Ch:Xia Sasu) should in charge of Tibetans from Nagchu entering through 3 security checkpoint to the old Lhasa neighbourhood.
- The 93 police stations at the Barkhor Street North (Ch: Balang beijie) should in charge of Tibetans from Nagchu entered through 4 security checkpoint to the old Lhasa neighbourhood.
- The 94 police stations at the Tseten Khangsar (Ch: Ci dan Kangsa) should in charge of Tibetans from Nagchu entered through 5 security checkpoint to the old Lhasa neighbourhood.
- The 95 police stations at the Barkhor Street East (Ch: Balang Dongjie) should in charge of Tibetans from Nagchu entered through 6,7 security checkpoints to the old Lhasa neighbourhood.
- The 96 police station at the Barkhor Street South (Ch: Balang Nanjie) should in charge of Tibetans from Nagchu entered through 8 security checkpoint to the old Lhasa neighbourhood.
- The 97 Police station at the Jokhang Temple's North gate should in charge of Tibetans from Nagchu entered through 9,10 security checkpoints to the old Lhasa neighbourhood.

Second, the Barkhor street outer circle police stations should monitoring the movements of Tibetans from Nagchu prefecture when they receive the information from other police stations and should inform the nearest police station through two way radios (using the codes) at the time of their leaving from the area.

Third, strictly use the codes, observe the movements of Tibetans from Nagchu and increasingly interrogate the suspicious people from Nagchu.

By Old Lhasa Neighbourhood Headquarters, 8 October 2013.

Appendix 2: Current status of all detainees

Name	Age	Gender	Home	Occupation	Date Arrested	Current Status
Dayang	68	male	Tsachu township		03/09/2014	Sentenced to 2½ years - date of sentence unknown.
Dorjee Daktal		male	Yangthang village, Dathang township		03/10/2014	Sentenced to 11 years in January 2014.
Tsultrim Gyaltzen	27	male	Dangkar village, Shamchu township	writer (Shog Dril)	11/10/2014	Sentenced to 13 years, currently in Chushul prison in Lhasa.
Yugyal		male	Dangkar village, Shamchu township	former policeman	12/10/2014	Sentenced to 10 years, currently in Chushul prison in Lhasa.
Kalsang Choethar	30	male	Sog County	Monk	12/10/2014	Released in November 2013.
Kalsang		female	Tsala township	mother	13/10/2014	Released - date unknown.
Dawa Lhundup	19	male	Yar Dang village, Shamchu township		15/10/2014	Released end October / beginning November 2013.
Jampa	20	female	Yar Dang village, Shamchu township	Nun	15/10/2014	Released end October / beginning November 2013.
Jampa Lakshay	20	male	Shug Dan monastery	Monk	17/10/2014	Released end October / beginning November 2013.
Kalnam	25	male	Shug Dan monastery	Monk	17/10/2014	Released end October / beginning November 2013.
Tenzin Rangdol	34	male	Gochu village no.4, Shagchu town		18/10/2014	Sentenced to 5 years on 30 November 2013.
Tobden	30	mlae	Gochu village no.4, Shagchu town	nomad and writer (Gho Gangga)	28/10/2014	Sentenced to 5 years on 30 November 2013.
Sarkyi	49	female	Dangkar village, Shamchu township		03/11/2014	Current status unknown.
Tsopan	47	female	Dangkar village, Shamchu township		03/11/2014	Current status unknown.
Yangkyil	24	female	Dangkar village, Shamchu township		03/11/2014	Released 19 November 2013 with a fine of between 1,000 and 1,800 Yuan.
13 youths	19-27	male	Dangkar village, Shamchu township		03/11/2014	Released 19 November 2013 with a fine of between 1,000 and 1,800 Yuan each.
Gabuk	41	male	Dangkar village, Shamchu township		04/11/2014	Current status unknown.
Trinley Phelmo	32	female	Gongshul village, Shamchu township		12/11/2014	Current status unknown.
Tsering Gyal	21	male	Dangkar village, Shamchu township		12/11/2014	Released after one week with 1,000 Yuan fine.
Kunchok Choephel		male	Drongna monastery	monk	18/11/2014	Sentenced to 6 years on 30 November 2013.
Trinley Tsekar	22	male	Serkhang village, Driru township	singer	20/11/2014	Sentenced to 9 years on 19 December 2013.
Ngawang Jamyang	45	male	Totho village / Tarmoe monastery	Abbot	23/11/2014	Body returned to family 17 December 2013.

Driru County: The New Hub of Tibetan Resistance | Tibet Watch 2014

Kelsang Choklang		male	Tarmoe monastery	monk	23/11/2014	Sentenced to 10 years - date of sentence unknown.
name unknown		male	Tarmoe monastery	monk	23/11/2014	Current status unknown.
Ngangtak	54	male	Mokhyim village, Driru township	village leader	24/11/2014	Sentenced to 10 years on 14 January 2014.
Rigsal	31	male	Mokhyim village, Driru township	village leader	24/11/2014	Sentenced to 10 years on 14 January 2014.
Gonpo Tenzin	25	male	Septa village, Shakchu township	Singer	30/11/2014	Current status unknown.
Kelsang Dhondup		male		language teacher at Drongna monastery	November 2013	Released - date unknown.
Thardhod Gyaltzen		male	Drongna monastery	chant leader	December 2013	Sentenced to 18 years, currently in prison in Lhasa.
Tsultrim Nyandrak		male	Tsachu township / Rabten monastery	Monk	December 2013	Current status unknown.
Tselha		male	Thupga village no.5, Driru township	former policeman	date unknown	Sentenced to 3 years on 19 December 2013.
Choechap		male	Serkhang village, Driru township		date unknown	Sentenced to 13 years on 19 December.
Kunchok Drakpa	mid 40s	male	Chamram village, Driru township		December 2013	Body returned to family towards end of December.
Trigyal		male	Mokhyim village, Driru township		date unknown	Sentenced to 13 years on 14 January 2014.
Zom Lhaga		male			November 2012	Previously due for release in November 2013 - sentence extended by one year, currently in Chushul prison in Lhasa.