



Today, March 10, 2009, is the 60th anniversary of the invasion of Tibet by the Red Army of Communist China. Today is the 50th anniversary of Tibet's national uprising.

In the 60 years since the invasion, Tibetans have been jailed, tortured, and killed. They have experienced human rights abuses and cultural and religious genocide. They have been forced to denounce His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Tibet's most precious spiritual leader, the inner treasure of Tibetans of every age.

The Chinese do not jail, torture, and kill Tibetans because Tibetans have harmed the Chinese or done something wrong to China. Rather, China continues these brutal, inhuman acts because China cannot digest Tibet, despite decades of attempting to do so.

The China now realize that they cannot eradicate Tibetan culture or religion because Tibetans continue to show their inner strength, loyalty, and devotion to His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

China has accrued too much power. The Chinese government has too much on its plate. Still, China reaches its greedy hands toward Nepal, Bhutan, Burma, and Taiwan because the Chinese government intends to dominate the world. These greedy hands reach into the U.S., too. China owns \$1 trillion of American debt, and Chinese real estate investors are buying up American foreclosures. Our economic collapse is due to our own leaders' focus on war and negligence at home. We must lessen our financial dealings and business ventures with China, the country that benefits mostly from our own economic decline.

World leaders should not visit China purely for enjoyment's sake; to eat their food, buy their silk or buy into their cunning and malicious lies. World leaders should oppose China's use of Tibet for its own economic, political, and military interests. World leaders should not visit China nor accept China's exploitation of Tibet for its economic, political, and military interests. World leaders should pressure China to change its policy toward Tibet and improve its disgraceful human rights record. Nations around the world must join in an effort to stop Chinese aggression and domination.

Throughout the world, Tibetans are not celebrating this year's Losar, the Tibetan New Year, traditionally their biggest holiday. There is no joy for Tibetans in the midst of Communist China's brutal oppression. Instead, Tibetans remember the millions killed by the Communist Chinese government since the 1950s, particularly Tibetans killed during last year's peaceful protest on March 10th.

Holding peaceful vigils, rather than Losar celebrations, demonstrate that Tibetans suffer under Chinese policies of torture, killing, and cultural genocide imposed by a heavy military presence. Tibetans under Chinese rule lack human rights and religious freedom, and those of us with rights and freedom should remember Tibetans at this time.

During this vigil we remember the peaceful protests across Tibet on March 10th, 2008:

219 died.

1,294 were seriously injured.

5,600 were jailed.

1,000 are missing with no trace of their whereabouts.

The bodies of the 219 Tibetans who died from gunshot wounds were not returned to their family members. The Chinese demanded 500 yen for the return of a body. These Tibetans did not receive the traditional sky burial.

The 1,294 Tibetans who were seriously injured were not provided medical treatment because the Chinese hoped the injured would die from their wounds.

The 5,600 who are jailed are locked away without a trial. Many were given sentences as long as 8 to 12 years, simply because they participated in protests.

The 1,000 who were missing remain missing.

I could stand before you right now and list these brutal atrocities being committed against the Tibetans.

So torturous,

So undignified,

So demeaning,

So inhumane in nature that they are almost unspeakable . It is like a razor on my tongue. However, I fear that this physical, psychological, and emotional suffering of our Tibetan brothers and sisters would be too much for you to comprehend or even bear.

Tibetans still living in Tibet must live in constant fear and anxiety. When will it be their turn to be jailed, tortured, or killed by the heartless Chinese? The current situation is very tense. A huge risk exists that more protests are coming, due to anger, resentment, intimidation, bullying, and discrimination. The Chinese have closed all Tibetan schools. The Chinese have shut down major monasteries; they disperse any small groups that gather. They have closed Tibet to international media and international tourists – indefinitely.

If we pay careful attention to news about what China does in Tibet, we know that the China openly and aggressively kill Tibetans like hunters kill deer or turkey during hunting season. If we pay careful attention to how the world deals with such inhuman behavior, we see that the world does not react. The world simply watches Tibetans being killed or tortured. The world is passive as long as China's money and purchasing power stabilize wealthy nations. World leaders talk about human rights, religious freedom, equality, even the rights of animals, but remain silent and passive when it comes to raising the issue of Tibetans' human rights, religious freedom, and equality. And so China remains the No. 1 worst nation in the world when it comes to human rights.

Peace, harmony, and normalcy cannot exist when basic human rights, religious freedom, equal opportunities, human dignity, and other natural birthrights, such as the right to be happy are neither respected nor protected. Peace, harmony, and normalcy do not exist where violence and cultural genocide are carried out with impunity. Since the invasion of Tibet on March 10, 1959, Tibetans have suffered tremendously from the deprivation of human rights and religious freedom. They have suffered torture, imprisonment, death, rape in prison, the frequent disappearance of young men and women. This all contributes to cultural genocide.

Despite these horrors and in the midst of high tension – including China building up military forces in every major Tibetan city since January 18, 2008 –U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton removed the issue of Tibetans' human rights from her long list of issues to discuss with Chinese leaders during her visit last month.

Tibetans and international human rights activists believe she delivered the wrong message. This is her biggest mistake as one of America's most powerful leaders. She should be ashamed of this poor decision. After her visit, Chinese officials said they were relieved the U.S. is no longer concerned about human rights issues in Tibet; they know the U.S. needs China's help to rebuild its ailing economy.

Tibetans the world over did not celebrate this Tibetan New Year, EARTH OX, as a way of respecting and mourning Tibetans who sacrificed their lives for the cause of Tibet. The Chinese government opposes this response, saying Tibetans under Chinese rule must demonstrate that they are happy. The Chinese Government announced a week-long national holiday, organizing free concerts, free admission to parks and zoos, distributing firecrackers, holding outdoor dances and music, horse race and archery competitions, even giving dozens of Tibetan families \$120 apiece to purchase groceries, while also threatening Tibetans who do not join in this celebration.

As March 10th nears, Tibetans have responded by organizing peaceful butter lamp offerings and peace prayers in various monasteries. This has angered the China government, which has arrested thousands of Tibetan monks and nuns on the charges of organizing peace prayers in the place of New Year celebrations. Ten monks, ages 23 to 30 years old, were shot to death. Two were beaten to death before the public's eyes. Many monks, including abbots of five monasteries in the eastern part of Tibet, have been missing since February 24, 2008.

Tibet's National Religious Festival (Monlam Chenmo) began right after the Tibetan New Year. The Festival's aim is for world peace, harmony, and prosperity. The tradition of the Monlam Chenmo festival was started by the great Tibetan Buddhist Master, Lama Tsongkhapa in the early 14th century. Recently, China aggressively banned this Tibetan religious Festival, which poses absolutely no threat to the government of China.

China frequently lies and manipulates without a sense of shame. Such behavior represses the truth and makes it possible for the world to believe China's lies and to want to be China's friends. This is how the world enters into the darkness of immorality, injustice, discrimination, bias, and self-centeredness; this is how a world produces endless terrorists.

I, Geshe Dakpa Topgyal, spiritual director of the Charleston Tibetan Society and the S.C. Dharma Group in Columbia, hope and pray that millions of young Tibetans, frustrated by China's repression and the world's silence, will not lose their hope, patience, and courage and be tempted to turn to violence and other extreme measures.

None of us is safe if the world's leaders continue to ignore the abuse of 6 million Tibetans.

Each and every one of us must act with moral and ethical principles. This is the only hope for and the real cause of world peace and harmony. We must all work for the creation of peace, harmony, and justice on the earth. We must all realize the only solutions we have are love, compassion, kindness, honesty, and the protection of the rights and well being of those living in the poorer and weaker countries of the world.

This evening's vigil, with candlelight offerings and peace prayers, has three purposes:

1. We pray for world peace in general
2. We pray particularly for Tibet and Tibetans
3. We pray for the end of a global economic crisis that causes millions fear, worry, anxiety, confusion, and, in some cases, suicide.

Now, I would like each of you to join in the candlelight offering and peace prayers, keeping the three purposes in your mind.