

Press Release 30 March 2008

**OLYMPIC TORCH ARRIVES IN BEIJING AS CRACKDOWN IN TIBET INTENSIFIES
THOUSANDS WILL BE DEMANDING "NO TORCH RELAY THROUGH TIBET" IN GLOBAL
DAY OF ACTION**

Protests, vigils, and marches will be taking place in dozens of cities around the globe on Monday 31 March, stepping up demands for the Olympic Torch not to be carried through Tibet on its five-month relay. The day has been declared "**Global Day of Action**" and events are timed to coincide with the arrival of the Olympic Torch for the first time in Beijing and reflect growing momentum for Tibetan areas to be removed from the Torch Relay. Friends of Tibet Wellington and the Tibetan Solidarity Network believe that there should be no torch relay through Tibet. If the torch does pass through Tibet they are concerned that this could contribute to the current unrest and provoke further protests. Those who protest in Tibet are imprisoned and this could lead to the torture and possible further loss of life of Tibetans.

One hundred and forty Tibetans have died and more than a thousand Tibetans have been detained since the uprising began with peaceful protests on 10 March. The crackdown in Tibet is intensifying. News on the protests in greater Tibet (including Tibetan areas of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan) is chilling. Food and water supplies at the three major monasteries around Lhasa were reportedly cut off on March 11 and lay people have been denied access to the monasteries to provide food and water. The Wellington Tibetan community has received news of the first death of an elderly lama. There are reports of several hundred Tibetans being removed from Lhasa by train to an unknown destination, and "truckloads" of Tibetans being rounded up and detained through house to house searches. Those detained include former political prisoners and Tibetans who have studied in India. The International Campaign for Tibet reports that this is reminiscent of "the purges after 1959 and beyond when so many Tibetans were taken to labour camps and prisons in Gansu and Qinghai. Some of them were never heard of again." (ICT article attached)

There are 2 events planned for Wellington to raise awareness of the Global Day of Action that there be no torch relay through Tibet and to highlight this community's concern for the welfare and human rights of those in prisons and those locked down in their monasteries.

7.30am – 8.30am Monday 31 March

Human Rights protest opposite the Chinese Embassy in Glenmore Street. Protestors will be dressed in white, roped together and to an "official" carrying an Olympic torch, labelled with indicative charges eg 'Imprisoned for owning a Tibetan Flag' on placards around their necks and wearing orange armbands (marking support for Tibet). Supporters will be holding flags and placards. Two flyers will be distributed. One flyer with facts on the historical and current situation in Tibet and a second flyer advertising the Human Rights "Rally for Tibet" planned for Saturday 5 April midday at Frank Kitts Park.

12.30pm -1.30pm Monday 31 March

Parade by Human Rights protestors along the pavements of central Wellington streets starting at 12.30pm at the Bucket Fountain in Cuba Mall. The parade will be "street theatre" and progress down Willis St and along Lambton Quay to Midland Park. (No speeches). Supporters will be carrying flags and placards and distributing 2 flyers.

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Article

Jokhang monks' peaceful protest changes course of Beijing propaganda offensive

International Campaign for Tibet March 27, 2008

<http://www.savetibet.org/news/index.php>

There are serious fears for the welfare and whereabouts of a group of monks at the Jokhang Temple in central Lhasa who spoke out to journalists on a tightly controlled media trip to Tibet today. Images of the young monks gathering around press and calling for Tibetan freedom and in support of the Dalai Lama, with one monk breaking down in tears, were broadcast all over the world today on international networks. Chinese officials assured press afterwards that they would not be punished for their 'outburst'. The monks' peaceful protest shattered the authorities' plans to convey an image that the situation in Lhasa was under control after recent demonstrations and rioting, which Beijing says was instigated by the Dalai Lama.

The three major monasteries in Lhasa, Ganden, Sera, and Drepung, remained under lockdown today and journalists on the official trip were not allowed to visit, despite repeated requests. The Ramoche temple in central Lhasa was also closed to the press group and after the Jokhang protest, the area was also closed to outside observers. Reliable reports from the city indicate that the water has been cut off at Ganden, Sera and Drepung, and monks are running out of food. Sources said that local people are not allowed to take food in for the monks, and one Tibetan source said that monks who tried to leave Sera were forced to go back after they had guns pointed to their heads.

Further reports reached ICT over the past few days of mass arrests of Tibetans in Lhasa, including in particular Tibetans from the Kham and Amdo areas of Tibet; Tibetans known to have studied in exile in India, base of the Dalai Lama, and former political prisoners. Some sources said that during house to house searches, Tibetans had been taken away at gunpoint. In scenes reminiscent to some observers of the Cultural Revolution, officials are searching for images of the Dalai Lama as well as taking Tibetans away. One source close to the monastic community in Lhasa expressed their fears for Tibetans in custody, saying that they had been told by two Tibetans released from temporary detention that Tibetans in custody were "beaten terribly", and that none had enough water or food.

As the crackdown continues, other sources have reported seeing large numbers of Tibetans being herded into trucks, and in one instance, forced to board a train from Lhasa station and removed from the city. A Tibetan source, who is in exile but in close contact with Tibetans inside, reported hearing from an eyewitness that a group of several hundred Tibetans, escorted by armed security personnel, had boarded a train at Lhasa's new railway station. The source told ICT, "The eyewitness reported seeing large numbers of monks in the group, and said that many were not wearing shoes. The reports of the removal of prisoners from Lhasa are chilling for many older Tibetans, who remember the purges after 1959 and beyond when so many Tibetans were taken to labor camps and prisons in Gansu and Qinghai. Some of them were never heard of again. There are many families now in the situation of not knowing where their relatives are, or how long they will be in prison."

The journalists from international agencies who arrived in Lhasa this morning on a highly controlled press trip organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beijing questioned Chinese

officials tonight at an hour and a half long press conference about the Jokhang monks who had carried out the protests. Charles Hutzler of Associated Press reported Tibet Autonomous Region Vice Governor Baima Chilin [a Chinese transliteration of a Tibetan name] telling reporters: "We will never do anything to them. We will never detain anyone you met on the streets of Lhasa. I don't think any government would do such a thing." (Associated Press, March 27, 2008). The journalists also called upon the Chinese officials to provide evidence that the Dalai Lama had "instigated" the protests, as Beijing claims.

The Jokhang monks who protested today made the point that what has happened in Lhasa "has nothing to do with the Dalai Lama", according to journalists who witnessed the protest. During the protest, which lasted approximately 17 minutes, one monk said: "They want us to curse the Dalai Lama and that is not right." One monk is shown on camera bursting into tears during the protest. Others told the journalists that they knew that they would be arrested but were prepared to face the consequences.

Sources who have recently left Lhasa told ICT that many Tibetans are distressed by Chinese allegations that the Dalai Lama instigated violence. "They don't believe it," said one Western source who has spoken to many Tibetans in Lhasa over the past two weeks. "For them, the distinction between the Dalai Lama as a spiritual or a political leader made in the West matters little. For them, he is their leader, full stop." The same source said that searches are being made house to house by soldiers and armed police in every Tibetan neighborhood. "Often Tibetans are taken away in the middle of the night," the source told ICT after leaving Lhasa. "They are definitely taking people who they know have studied in India, including those who learnt English at exile schools. I saw truckloads of Tibetans being taken away. Friends watched guns being held to the head of Tibetans who were taken into custody."

This source, and others, referred to Tibetan distress too about some Tibetans resorting to violence against Chinese people and property after rioting broke out on the streets of Lhasa on March 14. A well-informed source from Lhasa commented by email to ICT on the reporting of violence by Tibetans against Chinese that has dominated the Chinese state media, saying: "Sadly, there is plenty of proof of Tibetan-instigated violence in Lhasa. This is so very sad for Tibetan people but shows just how desperate we are. Some stupid people could not see any other alternative. There is no doubt that Tibetan murderers and attackers should be punished under the law, but the hundreds and likely thousands of innocent Tibetans who are now being arrested should not be treated in the same way."

There is evidence that the authorities are also attempting to prevent Tibetans expressing their views in the West through intimidation of their families in Tibet. According to a reliable report from a Tibetan exile, families in some areas of the Tibetan region of Amdo who have relatives and children living in exile have been warned in recent days that they will face repercussions if these Tibetans participate in peaceful demonstrations outside China.

Various reports indicated that the conditions in Lhasa today were slightly less restricted earlier today immediately prior to the arrival of the foreign media. The website of one business in Lhasa reported: "We couldn't see any more patrolling along the Beijing East Road since yesterday, what a

fresh change! About four hours ago, it's almost 9.30 pm but there are still many people walking around, much better than the lonely spirit in the past few days". (Website of the Spinn café).

China's state media has reported that 280 people "turned themselves in" to police in Tibet's capital, while another 381 surrendered in southwest Sichuan province. Beijing also made the first known official acknowledgment of arrest for peaceful protest two days ago with a reference in Tibet Daily on March 25 of the detention of Tibetans in Lhasa for chanting "reactionary" slogans and displaying the Tibetan flag. In contrast, official statements in the past few days on detentions have described the offences as linked to burning, looting or acts of violence.

One of the foreign correspondents on the press trip commented today: "Everything we've been shown is isolated to fit a narrative that [the Chinese authorities] have constructed. We all came in here with our eyes open. We know there's an attempt to use us to convey a particular representation." Western media reports today from Lhasa, however, focused solely on the protest of the monks and their comments in defence of the Dalai Lama and against religious repression.