

## **March for Tibet's Independence: we seek your support and solidarity**

Tibet was historically not only an independent nation, but also was one of the biggest empires in Central Asia during the seventh and eight centuries. During the reign of emperor Trisong Detsen, Tibetan troops invaded then Chinese Tang capital, Xian, and deposed the Chinese emperor. Similarly, Tibetan troops reached beyond the river Ganges in India and the Aksu river in Arabia. In ninth century, following the assassination of the emperor, Tri Darma, Tibetan empire collapsed, leading to the degeneration of Tibetan sovereignty and power. However, except falling under the Mongol empire in 13<sup>th</sup> century, Tibet continued to remain independent throughout the ages.

In 1913, Tibet and Mongolia signed a treaty recognizing each other's sovereign, independent status. In the same year, on 13 February, the 13<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama issued a decree to his subjects in Tibet declaring that from now on Tibet will be administered as an independent state. Thus, throughout history, Tibet remained an independent nation. In fact, in 1948 Tibetan trade delegates visited US and England representing the nation Tibet. Loy Henderson, then American ambassador in India, suggested to change America's policy on Tibet, stating if Chinese communists occupied whole of China, American must declare Tibet as an independent nation. This shows that in reality America didn't consider Tibet as part of China. Ambassador Loy Henderson's suggestion was taken up by the officials of the East Asia section of the State Department, stating Tibet is one of the few nations that is not communist in Asia. Unfortunately, the whole of China succumbed to the communist invasion, and in 1949 the newly established People's Republic of China sent its troops to Tibet; by 1959, the whole of Tibet was invaded by the communist Chinese.

Since then, the occupying forces have undertaken a campaign of massacre, torture and numerous violations of human rights in Tibet. Tibetan people, however, resisted against this total occupation, which culminated into the 10 March 1959 National Uprising. It was participated by more than 300,000 Tibetans in the capital Lhasa. The slogans raised during the uprising were: **China, leave Tibet; Tibet is an independent nation; Long Live His Holiness the Dalai Lama.** It's been sixty long years since that momentous uprising in the capital Lhasa, during which Tibetan people showed exemplary courage and sacrifice, declaring the sovereignty of the Tibetan nation.

To honor the sacrifices of those Tibetans, carrying placards and leaflets bearing the messages/slogans they raised during the uprising, some of us individuals have decided to participate in a Tibetan Independence March beginning from 3 March 2019. The

march for freedom will begin from Liberty Bell, Independence Hall, in the state of Philadelphia. This site is historically and symbolically significant, as it was here where 13 American colonies declared their independence from the British crown. Beginning from Philadelphia, the march will then travel via New Jersey and New York, in short covering three states. It will finally end in front of United Nations' headquarters in New York City. The principal goal of the march is restoration of Tibetan independence; and in reference to this, we have set upon the following few demands, which we hope you will extend your support:

- 1) **China must end its occupation of Tibet by returning sovereignty to the Tibetan people.**
- 2) **All Tibetan political prisoners, including the Panchen Lama, should be released. We request local, state and federal officials of the US to extend their support to our campaigns to restore freedom since March 1959.**
- 3) **We request US local, state and national governments and their congresses to review and study and extend support to all the demands and aspirations expressed by the Tibetan people since the first March 10 Uprising in 1959.**
- 4) **UN representatives and independent journalists should visit Tibet and investigate the ongoing human rights violations there, including the 164 self-immolations by Tibetans.**
- 5) **China continues to occupy formerly independent nations such as Tibet, Inner Mongolia, East Turkistan and Manchuria; through the use of internet, university students, business dealings, the Chinese government continue to steal the intellectual property rights of Americans, engage in espionage, interfere in domestic politics: in short posing threat to international security. The US government and citizens must be vigilant to and neutralize Chinese expansionist designs.**

We will launch a signature campaign seeking support to our declaration that Tibet is an occupied country that needs to be restored its independence.

*Our Slogans:*

- 1) **Free Tibet; 2) Long live His Holiness the Dalai Lama; 3) China, Leave Tibet.**

These were the three main slogans of the 10 March 1959 Uprising. These were the slogans or demands of the tens of thousands of Tibetans who sacrificed their lives. During our march, we will raise these slogans and demands once again, in front of the entire world population. The struggle of the Tibetan people is to restore the independence of our nation, and until this goal is achieved justice remains a far cry.

Without restoring independence, Tibetans shall have no future. We urge all freedom and justice loving people to support us. All of us marchers are staunch believers in the restoration of Tibetan independence; in the past, to demand independence for Tibet, we had sat on hunger strikes for more than a month in India and US. Moreover, we had marched for thousands of miles and led many other campaigns aimed at restoring Tibetan independence.

We are staunch believers in the freedom and sovereignty of American Republic. Some of us are citizens, while others are on way to becoming citizens; we request our leaders to take note of this petition.

Because of the Chinese occupation, His Holiness the Dalai Lama had to leave Tibet and arrive in India as refugee, where he reestablished the Tibetan government. It has been sixty long years since that momentous event. To commemorate sixty years of exile, Central Tibetan Administration in Dharamsala last year organized a series of "Thank You" events for India and Tibet's other supporting nations. We would like to take this opportunity to sincerely express our deep gratitude to India and the US and their citizens for supporting our struggle.

Despite tens of thousands of miles of distance between Lhasa and the North Atlantic Ocean, our thoughts are intertwined with our ancestral nation. We remember our ancestral homeland, we remember the snows that fall on our homeland, we remember the mountains and rivers of our homeland, we remember the sky and the white clouds of our homeland, we remember the black tents and yoghurt, the flowers and sheep of our homeland. From our exiled abodes, we remember our homeland, its summer and winters.

Embracing the snows that falls around us this winter, we talk to the snows about our yearnings. Although we have been exiled or were born in exile, our minds and thoughts remain in the laps of our ancestral land. Leaving our joy, love and hope in the hands of our brothers and sisters in Tibet, we continue to hold alive the expectations of restoring freedom in our country. We believe Tibetans in and outside Tibet will be reunited one day, and today's March for the restoration of Tibetan independence is in fact a dress rehearsal of sorts for that final reunification in the capital Lhasa. Since the United States is the leader of the free world, we hope it will extend its support to this effort of ours.

Sincerely yours,

Kunga Norbu, son of Dalai Lama's older brother, Taktser Rinpoche and Tibetan independence activist;

Tenzin Wangdue, executive member, Regional Tibetan Youth Congress, New York and Tibetan independence activist;

Sunny Sonam, social activist and organizer of the North American Miss Tibet;

Lobga Rangzen, executive member, Regional Tibetan Youth Congress, New York and Tibetan independence activist;

Samgha, dealer in antics and Tibetan independence activist;

Dhondup Lhadar, former executive member, Tibetan Youth Congress, Dharamsala; and Tibetan independence activist

For communication contact Tenzin Wangdue, mobile number: 6465919667