

Rinpoche and accept the government imposed lottery. In November, 1995, a lottery was organized by the Chinese government and a boy selected. Religious leaders in Tibet, as well as ordinary monks and nuns, have been obligated to accept the choice or risk punishment. Virtually no Tibetans recognize the boy selected by the Chinese government lottery as the Panchen Lama.

Accepting the boy selected by the lottery and denouncing the boy confirmed by the Dalai Lama have become an additional test of loyalty to the Chinese government in the reeducation campaign going on throughout Tibet. Failure to comply has had drastic consequences. To cite just two examples. In July, 1997, at Jonang monastery in Shigatse prefecture, the 70 year-old abbot was imprisoned for several months and religious statues looted by government officials after the monks refused to comply with the conditions of the work team. In November 1997, 100 armed soldiers were called in to force the nuns of Rakhor monastery near Lhasa to submit to patriotic education. The nuns were sent home after refusing to comply and the nunnery has now reportedly been destroyed except for the main assembly hall. These are monasteries and nunneries that have not been involved in protest before. The arrival of the work team and armed troops and the forced reeducation provoke resistance – which in turn leads to a confrontation.

In two other recent cases from the spring of 1998 practitioners in retreat in mountain hermitages have been evicted and their dwellings destroyed on the grounds that the residents – mostly Buddhist nuns – had not received the requisite registration and permits from the authorities. These two hermitages – Drag Yerpa near Lhasa and Chimpu near Samye -- have been in regular use by meditators for 1,200 years and were rebuilt and occupied over the last 15 years.

A number of deaths have been reported while in custody following arrests. We continue to receive reports of monks and nuns dying in prison from beatings and torture – or sometimes shortly after their release from injuries received while in custody.

One of the most disturbing incidents occurred last spring in Drapchi prison, in the northern suburb of Lhasa, where many monks and nuns are serving sentences. At least 10 monks and nuns died as a result of attempting to stage demonstrations inside the prison on the 1st and 4th of May, 1998. The prisoners hoped to attract the attention of an official European Union delegation to Tibet making a visit to the prison. Several of the monks and nuns were shot and the remainder died from beatings. The delegation were unaware of the demonstration at the time and details of the incident did not come out until several days after the visit. To her credit, Mary Robinson, the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights refused a visit to Drapchi prison during her visit to Tibet. Nevertheless, two Drepung monks were detained in September, 1998, for preparing a letter to present to her.

These are just a few cases selected to illustrate the dimensions of religious persecution in Tibet. These are not isolated or local events – they are the result of the implementation of a religious policy formulated at the highest levels of the Chinese government. As this policy has become harsher and harsher in its conception and implementation, the situation