



Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission Hearing

Tibet: Freedom of Religion

Panel I



Dr. Tenzin Dorjee is a Commissioner for the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF). He currently teaches as an Associate Professor at the Department of Human Communication Studies at California State University, Fullerton. Dr. Dorjee is a prominent translator who studied at Sera Jey Monastic University, South India, and the Institute of Buddhist Dialectics, Dharamsala, India, and worked in the Translation and Research Bureau of the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamsala for over 13 years. He is a published author of articles and translated works of Tibetan Buddhism and culture into English. He had the honor of translating for many preeminent Tibetan Buddhist professors including His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He served as Vice President and President of the Tibetan Association of Southern California (TASC) and has been involved in many other community-based committees. He has presented at many Tibetan institutes including the Tibet Policy Institute, Tibetan Children's Village, Institute of Buddhist Dialectics, and Tibetan Astro-Medical College in Dharamsala.

Panel II



Arjia Rinpoche is a senior Buddhist Lama and Abbot of Kumbum Monastery and director of the Tibetan Mongolian Buddhist Cultural Center in Bloomington, Indiana. He is the highest ranking official and one of the most prominent figures to have escaped from Tibet. Of Mongolian descent, Arjia Thubten Lobsang Rinpoche was born in 1950. At the age of two, he was recognized as the incarnation of the father of Lama Tsong Khapa, the great 13th century Buddhist reformer, and the throne holder and abbot of Kumbum Monastery. He studied for several years at Tashi Lhunpo Monastery in Shigatse, the monastery of the Panchen Lama, and has trained with lineage teachers such as the Dalai Lama and Gyayak Rinpoche. During the Cultural Revolution in Chinese controlled Tibet, Rinpoche was forced to attend Chinese schools, yet secretly continued to practice and study with his tutors. He was also forced to work in labor camps for 16 years. Following the death of Mao Tse Tung, Rinpoche was reinstated as abbot of Kumbum Monastery and rose to prominence by working with the Chinese authorities, eventually becoming the Vice-chairman of the Buddhist Association of China. But in 1998 he escaped into

exile as he felt he could no longer compromise his spiritual beliefs. Three years earlier China had abducted Gedhun Chokyi Nyima, a six year old boy recognized by the Dalai Lama as the 11th Panchen Lama. Arjia Rinpoche was due to become the tutor of China's own appointed Panchen Lama, a position which Rinpoche felt would be disloyal to the Dalai Lama, the Buddhist religion and the Tibetan people. Arjia Rinpoche now lives in the U.S. and has set up two centers dedicated to the preservation of Buddhist teachings, art and culture within and outside of Tibet and Mongolia.



Nyima Lhamo, 26, is a human rights advocate and the niece of the late Tulku Tenzin Delek Rinpoche, a highly revered reincarnate lama and a prominent Tibetan prisoner of conscience who died in a Chinese prison in July 2015. As a result of Nyima Lhamo's public questioning of the cause of Tenzin Delek's death and demands for an investigation, she was arbitrarily detained by Chinese authorities, along with her mother Dolkar Lhamo. She subsequently fled Tibet to India, leaving behind her mother and 6-year-old daughter, to seek justice for Tenzin Delek Rinpoche. In September 2016, she participated in a side event at the 33rd session of the Human Rights Council, briefed UN Special Procedures Offices and Diplomats, and visited several European countries to plead her case for Tenzin Delek Rinpoche. Nyima Lhamo's family has been harassed by the Chinese authorities, who threaten continued persecution of her family unless she stops her advocacy for the late Tenzin Delek Rinpoche. She is currently based in Dharamsala, Himachal Pradesh, India.



Todd Stein served from 2014 to 2017 as Senior Advisor to Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy and Human Rights Sarah Sewall, who served concurrently as Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues. He helped coordinate U.S. policy on Tibet across the Executive Branch, and was the main staff interlocutor with the Central Tibetan Administration. He also advised the Under Secretary on China and South and Central Asia, assisting in promoting priorities on countering violent extremism, human rights, refugees and human trafficking. Prior to joining the State Department, Mr. Stein was Director of Government Relations for the International Campaign for Tibet, working with the U.S. Congress on legislation and appropriations and with Executive Branch agencies on Tibet policy and programs. On Capitol Hill, he served as Deputy Chief of Staff and Legislative Director for Congressman Tom Allen, foreign and military policy advisor to Senator Paul Simon, and policy analyst at the bipartisan Arms Control and Foreign Policy Caucus. Mr. Stein received degrees from the University of California at Davis in International Relations and Spanish.