



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

**Candlelight Vigil to Remember Tibetan Prisoners of Conscience**

*Toronto – December 10, 2009* – The continued violation of human rights in Tibet will be remembered by the Toronto community on Human Rights Day, Dec. 10<sup>th</sup> in a candlelight vigil in front of the Chinese consulate at 240 St. George St. from 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm.

The vigil, co-organized by the Canada Tibet Committee and Students for a Free Tibet Canada, will bring attention to China's poor human rights record, and its treatment of the Tibetan people. Basic human rights such as the freedoms of expression, thought and religion are consistently withheld in Tibet, despite China having promised to improve its human rights conditions leading up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

The candlelight vigil will also be emphasizing the case of a Tibetan filmmaker, Dhondup Wangchen, who was detained by China in March 2008 for developing the documentary *Leaving Fear Behind* in which Tibetans express their views on the Dalai Lama, the Beijing Olympics, and China's policies on Tibet. Since being detained Wangchen has been charged with "inciting separatism", and is being held in Xining (Qinghai Province) waiting to be put on trial. A petition calling for his release will be circulated during the vigil.

"We must recognize and condemn the constant violation of human rights inside Tibet, and speak on behalf of those who risk their own lives for simply expressing themselves, like Dhondup Wangchen." said Dasey Wangkhang Silva, co-president of the Toronto branch of the Canada Tibet Committee.

Another recent incident involved two Tibetans, Lobsang Gyaltzen and Loyak, who were sentenced to death and executed October 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009 in connection with protests in Tibet's capital on March 14th, 2008. These death sentences were the first handed down in Tibet since 2002, and their trials failed to meet even minimal international judicial standards.

"These unfair trials and executions are clearly politically motivated," remarked Tenzin Lobsang Wangkhang, National Director of Students for a Free Tibet Canada. "These travesties of justice show that China will use all and any methods to intimidate Tibetans and crush all perceived opposition to its illegal occupation of Tibet."

This year marks the 61<sup>st</sup> Human Rights Day, and is an annual international celebration that commemorates the United Nations General Assembly's adoption and proclamation on Dec. 10, 1948 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the first global enunciation of human rights.

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