

## **Media release:**

### **Tibetan filmmaker Dhondup Wangchen sentenced to six years' imprisonment - Dhondup Wangchen needs a legal representative of his own choosing, says family of Dhondup Wangchen**

Zurich, 6. January 2010. Dhondup Wangchen, the Tibetan filmmaker who is currently in Chinese detention, has been sentenced to six years' imprisonment by the provincial court in Xining (capital of Qinghai province). His arrest in March 2008 came shortly after completion of filming for his documentary film «Leaving Fear Behind» in which Tibetans spoke out about their lives in Tibet.

The sentencing took place on 28 December 2009 but his relatives in Xining were neither informed about the trial nor the verdict. According to reliable information, Dhondup Wangchen will appeal the sentence but the appeal period will expire on Thursday, 7 January 2010. Furthermore, Dhondup Wangchen has no access to independent legal assistance. The lawyer originally hired by his family was barred from representing him by the Chinese government.

His wife Lhamo Tso, who is together with her children on pilgrimage in Bodh Gaya/India, said today: «I appeal to the court in Xining to allow my husband to have a legal representative of his own choosing. My children and I feel desperate about the prospect of not being able to see him for so many years. We call on the Chinese authorities to show humanity by releasing him. My husband is not a criminal, he just tried to show the truth.»

«The fact that my cousin Dhondup Wangchen has to enter the appeal process without legal assistance shows how human rights are trampled upon by the Chinese government in Tibet» said Gyaljong Tsetrin, co-producer of «Leaving Fear Behind», «I am also greatly concerned about Dhondup Wangchen's health as he has contracted Hepatitis B through the poor conditions and torture he has endured in prison and is not receiving medical treatment. I ask myself how he will survive in prison for six years.»

Dhondup Wangchen was born on 17 October 1974 in Bayen, Tsoshar area of Amdo in northeastern Tibet (Chin: Hualong, Haidong, Qinghai). He comes from a poor farming family without formal education. As a young man, he travelled to Lhasa and also to India. After his return to Tibet he was determined to document the true situation in his country and tell the outside world. Out of concern for his family, he escorted his wife and four children to India in 2006 before commencing filming the documentary.

«Leaving Fear Behind» has been screened in over 30 countries around the world.

For further information

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