

New York: Protest For Religious Freedom Staged During Visit of Former Tibetan Exile Prime Minister Samdhong

QUEENS, NEW YORK, UNITED STATES, April 18, 2015 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Over a 100 people, including about 50 Tibetan Americans, staged an impassioned protest in Queens NY, asking for religious intolerance towards the Shugden community in New York and around the world to end.

The protest was held on Friday evening outside a talk by Former Tibetan Exile Prime Minister Samdhong to the Tibetan community of New York and New Jersey at the Sunnyside Community Hall, Queens. The protesters feared that this talk was to encourage the continuing of harassment and intolerance towards people of their peaceful and otherwise mainstream Buddhist faith living many of whom live in Queens.

When asked why they were protesting, spokesperson for the ISC, Rachael Jeffrey said "The Dalai Lama talks about peace and tolerance, but with the help of people like Former Prime Minister Samdhong, he has created an atmosphere of religious hatred within his own community. His community is now completely segregated. The people who choose to practice this prayer are banned from government positions, they are refused services in shops, restaurants and even in hospitals and medical facilities - they are not allowed in. We have pictures here [points] that show signs in shop windows and medical

clinics saying if you practice this you are not welcome and you will not be served. That is unacceptable in this day and age" (1).



Shugden Community Demonstrators in Queens, New York



Protest Against Religious Intolerance in Queens

Another protestor, Sonam Lama, a Tibetan-American business owner, said that he and his family have experienced this discrimination first-hand, even while living within the United States. "Other Tibetans tell their children not to socialize with my daughter because she's the child of a Shugden family," he said.

Lama referenced an October 2014 report by PRI's The World, in which a Tibetan-American Dalai Lama follower in his community compared a Shugden child to a rotten tooth that needed to be extracted (2).

Last year the Tibetan exile government, the CTA, passed a cabinet resolution criminalizing the Shugden faith (3). and then published the names, photographs, and personal information of people who participated in similarly held demonstrations, including that of some Tibetans living in Queens who were at the Sunnyside demonstration (4).

The protesters claim that Former Prime Minister Samdhong is the person most responsible for implementing the Dalai Lama's campaign of religious persecution against Shugden Buddhists in the Tibetan Exile community worldwide. In an Al Jazeera segment (1), the journalist shows Samdhong photographs of the signs of segregation barring Shugden people from stores and public facilities. Samdhong is heard responding that there is nothing wrong with this and that it should be the right of the business owners to apply this religious segregation. In 2014 Samdhong went into a school in India to explain to children that it is okay to practice religious segregation towards their fellow classmates from Shugden families (5).

Footnotes:

(1) Al Jazeera, 'The Devil Within' <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rqa2DeOIEQM>

(2) <http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/peopleandpower/2008/09/200893014344405483.html> (script).

(3) PRI's The World, Oct 31, 2014. "Breakaway Buddhists Take Aim at the Dalai Lama."

<http://www.pri.org/stories/2014-10-31/breakaway-buddhists-take-aim-dalai-lama>

(4) Central Tibet Administration, Resolution 3, <http://tibet.net/2014/03/20/tibetan-parliament-passes-resolution-concerning-dolgyal/>

Central Tibet Administration, "List of Dolgyal [Dorje Shugden] protestors," <http://tibet.net/dolgyal-shugden/list-of-dolgyal-protestors/>

(5) Justifying Segregation <http://www.arebuddhistsracist.com/suja.html>

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