

= Dhondup Wangchen =

Dhondup Wangchen (born 17 October 1974) is a Tibetan filmmaker imprisoned by the Chinese government in 2008 on charges related to his documentary Leaving Fear Behind . Made with senior Tibetan monk Jigme Gyatso , the documentary consists of interviews with ordinary Tibetan people discussing the 14th Dalai Lama , the Chinese government , the 2008 Beijing Olympics , and Han Chinese migrants to the region . After smuggling the tapes of the interviews out of Tibet , however , Dhondup Wangchen and Jigme Gyatso were detained during the 2008 Tibetan unrest .

Dhondup Wangchen was sentenced to six years ' imprisonment for subversion . Numerous international human rights organizations protested his detention , including Amnesty International , which named him a prisoner of conscience . In 2012 , he was awarded the International Press Freedom Award of the US @-@ based Committee to Protect Journalists .

He served his full six @-@ year sentence and was released from prison on 5 June 2014 .

= = Early life = =

Dhondup Wangchen was born in 1974 , in Bayen in the Tsoshar region of Amdo . His family were farmers . He later moved to the capital of Lhasa . There Dhondup Wangchen witnessed a pro @-@ independence demonstration repressed by security authorities , an experience that a relative would later describe as critical to his " political awareness " . In 1993 , he and a cousin crossed the Himalayas into India to receive the blessing of Tibet 's exiled spiritual leader , the Dalai Lama . Dhondup returned to Tibet shortly after to act as an activist for the Tibetan cause .

= = Leaving Fear Behind = =

In 2006 , Dhondup Wangchen and friend Jigme Gyatso , a senior Tibetan monk , conceived of a documentary interviewing ordinary Tibetan people on their views of the Dalai Lama and the Chinese government in the year leading up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics . The documentary was to be called Leaving Fear Behind . The pair coordinated their efforts with a Dhondup Wangchen 's cousin Gyaljong Tsetrin , who remained in Switzerland . In preparation for likely reprisals by the Chinese government , Dhondup Wangchen moved his wife , Llam Tso , and their four children to Dharamsala , India .

Between August 2007 to March 2008 , Dhondup Wangchen and Jigme Gyatso gathered interviews from 108 Tibetan individuals discussing the political situation , all of whom agreed to have their faces shown on camera . The pair gathered 40 hours of interview footage shot by a single camera . They had completed filming and just smuggled the tapes out of Lhasa , the Tibetan capital , when riots erupted and began to spread through Tibetan @-@ majority areas of China . As part of the government response that followed , both Jigme Gyatso and Dhondup Wangchen were detained on 28 March in Tong De , Qinghai Province .

The footage were taken to Switzerland , where colleagues at Dhondup Wangchen 's production company , Filming for Tibet , assembled it into Leaving Fear Behind . The 25 @-@ minute documentary constructed from Dhondup Wangchen and Jigme Gyatso 's footage showed ethnic Tibetans criticizing the choice of China to host the 2008 Summer Olympics , praising the Dalai Lama , and expressing dislike of ethnic Han migrants . The result was described by The New York Times as " an unadorned indictment of the Chinese government " . Dhondup Wangchen states in the documentary that " My aim for this film is not to make a famous or particularly entertaining film . This film is about the plight of the Tibetan people ? helpless and frustrated . " The film premiered on the opening day of the Olympics and was clandestinely screened for foreign reporters in Beijing .

= = Trial and imprisonment = =

Following Dhondup Wangchen 's March 2008 arrest , he was held for several days in unofficial detention at Gonshang Hotel . Amnesty International reported that while there , Chinese security

forces beat him and deprived him of food , water , and sleep .

He was later moved to Xining City No. 1 Detention Centre , where he was held incommunicado until April 2009 , when he was allowed to meet with his lawyer , Li Dunyong . Three months later , however , Li Dunyong dropped his case , reporting that he had been ordered to do so by judicial authorities . Another lawyer was reportedly threatened with the closing of his law firm if he chose to defend Dhondup Wangchen .

On 28 December 2009 , Dhondup Wangchen was sentenced to six year 's imprisonment for subversion , following a secret trial in Xining . On 7 January 2010 , Filming for Tibet reported that he had been unable to appeal his sentence because he had been denied access to his lawyer until his right to appeal expired .

His family stated that he has contracted Hepatitis B while imprisoned , and his health was said to be failing . In April 2010 , he was transferred to Xichuan Labour Camp in Qinghai Province , where prisoners ' work reportedly includes the manufacture of bricks , concrete , and aluminum @-@ alloy windows . On 6 April 2012 , Amnesty International issued another appeal on Wangchen 's behalf warning that he was being denied needed medical treatment .

= = International response = =

Jigme Gyatso and Dhondup Wangchen 's arrests were condemned by numerous human rights groups . Amnesty International protested the arrests of both men , noting Jigme Gyatso to be at risk of further torture and naming Dhondup Wangchen a prisoner of conscience . Human Rights Watch , Front Line , The Committee to Protect Journalists , Reporters Without Borders , and the Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy also advocated on Dhondup Wangchen 's behalf .

On 10 March 2011 , former Speaker of the United States House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi called for Dhondup Wangchen 's release in honor of Tibetan Uprising Day . Also in early 2011 , Boston 's American Repertory Theater and System of a Down 's Serj Tankian dedicated their production of Prometheus Bound to him and seven other activists , stating in program notes that " by singing the story of Prometheus , the God who defied the tyrant Zeus by giving the human race both fire and art , this production hopes to give a voice to those currently being silenced or endangered by modern @-@ day oppressors " .

A coalition of human rights and Tibetan activist groups calling for Dhondup Wangchen 's release held a rally in New York City 's Times Square on 9 March 2012 , the day before Tibetan Uprising Day . Speakers included Dhondup Wangchen 's wife Lhamo Tso as well as poet @-@ activist Tenzin Tsundue . Excerpts from Leaving Fear Behind were shown on a twelve @-@ foot video screen beneath the Xinhua Jumbotron .

In 2012 , Dhondup Wangchen won the International Press Freedom Award of the Committee to Protect Journalists . The award recognizes journalists who show courage in defending press freedom despite facing attacks , threats , or imprisonment . He was honored in absentia at the organization 's November 2012 banquet due to his ongoing imprisonment .

In 2014 , he receives the Václav Havel Prize for Creative Dissent .