

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-4501**

For Immediate Release

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**House Passes Sanders Amendment Urging Release of Ngawang Choephel:  
Sanders says China Should be Denied Most Favored Nation Status  
Due to Its Continual Abuse of Human Rights**

One day after the passage of his amendment which calls for the release of Tibetan prisoner Ngawang Choephel, Rep. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., today urged Congress to go even further in saying that human rights abuses in China are not acceptable, by denying Most Favored Nation Status to that country.

Choephel studied ethnomusicology at Middlebury College as a Fulbright Scholar in 1992 and 1993. He was arrested by the Chinese government on espionage charges when he returned to Tibet in 1995 to make a nonpolitical documentary film about traditional Tibetan music and dance. He is now serving an 18 year prison sentence to be followed by an additional seven years of deprivation of political rights.

Sanders amendment states that Ngawang Choephel and other prisoners of conscience in Tibet and China should be released immediately; that the United States should seek Mr. Choephel's release; that the U.S. should promote access to Tibet for international human rights groups; that the State Department should advise Americans that Tibet is not a safe destination for American travelers; and that the U.S. should continue to promote a resolution at future meetings of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights addressing human rights in China and Tibet until the situation improves substantially.

Speaking on the House floor, Sanders said, "I am delighted that the House passed an amendment that I offered demanding that Ngawang Choephel be released immediately from a Chinese jail where he is being held on trumped up charges. Unfortunately, however, Ngawang Choephel is not alone as a political prisoner in China. In fact, there are millions of them."

Sanders continued, "According to the U.S. State Department's own human rights report released earlier this year, `All public dissent against the party and government was effectively silenced by intimidation, exile, the imposition of prison terms, administrative detention, or house arrest. No dissidents were known to be active at year's end.'"

Sanders concluded, "Congress should not be supporting Most Favored Nation Status with China when that country has absolutely no respect for civil liberties or the right of dissent. We should not be supporting Most Favored Nation Status with China when we have a \$39 billion dollar trade deficit, and when corporate America is throwing tens of thousands of American workers out on the street as they move their factories to China and hire workers there for 20 or 30 cents an hour. Let us say yes to freedom for Ngawang Choephel and no to MFN with China."

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