

IN LOVING MEMORY

Lobsang Palden

"Lobga Rangzen"

1974–2026 ● Tibetan Independence Activist

On Thursday, July 2, 2026, Tibetan independence activist Lobsang Palden — widely known as Lobga Rangzen — livestreamed his self-immolation in front of United Nations Headquarters in New York at 5:49 PM. He was taken to Bellevue Hospital, where he was pronounced dead at 7:04 PM EDT. He was 52 years old. He is the first Tibetan self-immolator on American soil, and the 170th known Tibetan self-immolator since 1998.

Born in 1974 in Kardze, Kham, Tibet, he was a longtime Queens, New York resident, an avid Gorshey (traditional Tibetan dance) dancer, and an active member of numerous local Tibetan organizations. Most recently, he served as President of the Tibetan National Congress of New York–New Jersey. He dedicated his life to nonviolent action against the Chinese occupation of Tibet, defending the Tibetan people's right to faith, language, freedom, and self-determination. According to his family, they bore the cost of resistance long before him. His three uncles fought as Chushi Gangdruk resistance fighters during China's invasion of Tibet in the 1950s–60s. They were killed in Chinese torture camps, and only their bodies were returned to the family.

In the 1990s, he fled Tibet as a stateless refugee and made his way to India, where he became a monk at Gaden Jangtse Monastery. After moving to the United States around 2006, he settled in New York, often risking his job and wages to take part in Tibetan activism. For two decades, he protested outside Chinese consulates, walked the halls of Congress, and led the Tibetan National Congress of New York.

On July 1, 2026, China enacted the "Ethnic Unity Law," which formalizes a brutal assimilation campaign against Tibetans: children forcibly removed from their families and placed in state-run boarding schools, monasteries emptied of monks, and the Tibetan language at risk of extinction. He was outside the UN that day, holding a sign in protest. The next afternoon, dressed in traditional Tibetan attire, he planted the Tibetan national flag outside UN headquarters and set himself on fire. Before the act, he recorded a six-minute video in Tibetan, warning that Chinese policies threatened the survival of Tibetan identity and language.

> *"Right now, we have not a single freedom in Tibet — neither human rights, nor freedom of speech, nor even the freedom to display a photo of His Holiness the Dalai Lama on the altar. I don't want you to mourn for me. I want you to continue the struggle for Tibetan independence, because the lack of independence is the root of all our problems. Bhod Gyalo, Bhod Rangzen Gyalo."*
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> **— LOBSANG PALDEN, IN HIS FINAL RECORDED MESSAGE (VICTORY TO TIBET, VICTORY TO TIBETAN INDEPENDENCE)**

Since news of his self-immolation, Tibetans around the world have taken to the streets — holding prayer and candlelight vigils and protests outside the United Nations and Chinese consulates — demanding justice and urging world leaders to speak out against human rights violations in Tibet.

We will continue to raise our voice for a Free Tibet.

BHOD GYALO ● BHOD RANGZEN GYALO

