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FREE TIBET WORLD TOUR: MAN PLUS BIKE TO SAVE TIBET IN 8 MONTHS A Tibetan American Goes Solo, Leaves Job, Family, to Alert World of his People's Plight

At 40, Lhakpa has never been to Tibet. As he brushes his teeth, photos of escaped prisoners, their flesh rotten, race through his mind. Despite protests over human rights, China was awarded the honor of hosting the Olympics. It is sports, many said, not politics. Remind you of 1936 Olympics in Germany, anyone? So he left his job and family to ride his motorcycle from the UN in New York on March 10, around the world on a shoestring, modern nomad style to talk about Tibet, hoping pressure changes China's behavior. He plans to return by 2011.

With the unceasing carnage in the Middle East, nonviolence is attractive. At Cairo University Obama asked Palestine stop the violence against Israel. Gandhi's nonviolence hurled India towards Independence from Britain. So Tibetans still have hope, even as the Chinese government treats them as terrorists.

In 1959 the International Commission of Jurists reported to the United Nations that "the Chinese were determined to use all methods at their disposal to eliminate religious belief and to substitute Communist doctrines." Tourists in Tibet are not allowed to travel outside of special permit areas. What's outside? Army bases, nuclear dumps, and political prisoner camps (most "crimes" are peaceful protests). If you get a visa, stroll through Lhasa: you will see Chinese army trucks and Tibetan amputees. Or so Tibetan refugees and Western travelers tell Lhakpa; he's never been. "The people smile," reports one student, "but you can see their fear through lack of communication." "They are forbidden to congregate," says another, "and more than 3 are a congregation. I saw the police beat them when they tried to talk to us."

Lhakpa was born in exile in India. His mom, pregnant while crossing the Himalayan Mountains, died shortly after his birth. She went to the bathroom and never came back. One child died during the trip to exile; the remaining 7 were "donated" to Tibetan Children's Village school because their dad couldn't feed them. He died some time later. 30 years after seeing a Westerner on a bike, Lhakpa is ready to ride for Tibet. He already dipped into his retirement savings, but he will work once he is back, he says, in his second exile—NYC.

Lhakpa's route is at <http://freetibetworldtour.com/> His wife is a refugee from the Former Soviet Union. They have a child and plan to adopt an orphan. Her main concern is his safety. His main concern is the safety of his people.

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If you'd like more information about this topic, or to schedule an interview with Lhakpa, please call Julia Gutman at 646/642-8622 or email Julia at mind4work@yahoo.com