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Edited by Christopher Simmons, senior news editor

OPEN LETTER FROM GESHE KELSANG GYATSO TO WESLEY PRUDEN, EDITOR IN CHIEF, THE WASHINGTON TIMES

PRESS STATEMENT --

Nov. 25, 2002 - LOS ANGELES, Calif. /PRnetwire.com/

I am writing to you concerning the article printed in your newspaper entitled Dalai Lama faced with death threats (23rd November 2002). The information given in this article is completely untrue; I have evidence to prove it is false information.

I believe you have given information publicly without first carefully checking the validity of the statements you printed. By publicly stating the New Kadampa Tradition (NKT) and myself have a connection with the recent death threats made to the Dalai Lama and with the previous Dharamsala murders, you have caused serious damage to the development of over 450 NKT Buddhist Centres throughout the world -- this is your responsibility. Saying such things may have some purpose for you but the development of this Buddhist Tradition, the NKT, will seriously suffer as a result.

The NKT is a Western Buddhist community which is completely independent from Shugden groups in India, Nepal and other countries; we have absolutely no political affiliations. We are not against the Dalai Lama personally and never have been but we previously simply requested him to stop his ban of Dorje Shugden worship; this was a request for the basic human right of religious freedom. At the same time we also publicly clarified what is the true nature and function of this popular Buddhist deity. However in October 1998 we decided to completely stop being involved in this Shugden issue because we realized that in reality this is a Tibetan political problem and not the problem of Buddhism in general or the NKT. We made our decision public at this time -- everyone knows the NKT and myself completely stopped being involved in this Shugden issue at all levels.

I can guarantee that the NKT and myself have never performed inappropriate actions and

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will never do so in the future, this is our determination. We simply concentrate on the flourishing of holy Buddhadharma throughout the world - we have no other aim. I hope people gradually understand our true nature and function.

Your correspondent, Shaikh Azizur Rahman, is clearly mistaken because: (1) since 1998 the NKT and myself have completely stopped being involved in the Shugden issue at any level, as explained above; (2) the BBC (November 16th Tibetan exiles fear increasing tensions) reports that police in Dharamsala are investigating an extremist Hindu group about these death threats; (3) "World Tibet Network News" (from the Canada Tibet Committee, October 16th) reports that the threatening posters were signed by an unknown group called the "Himachal Liberation Front".

We have two possibilities:

1. You can publicly apologize and withdraw your false statements and accusations and print an article which must be based on my above letter on the front page of your newspaper with a similar impact to the article entitled Dalai Lama faced with death threats (23rd November 2002) -- the article which contained false information. In this way your readers will receive a balanced interpretation of this situation and it will show clearly that you have considered and presented both sides equally.
2. If you do not accept to publicly apologize and withdraw your false statements and accusations, and to print an article based on my letter as detailed in point (1), then I have no choice but to engage in legal action.

Note to Editors: For further information, visit www.deaththreatstodalailama.org which will go live on Monday November 25, 2002.

URL: www.deaththreatstodalailama.org

Source of news: Stephanie France/Geshe Kelsang Gyatso

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