



THE DALAI LAMA

June 22, 2004

## APPEAL

On behalf of my friends at People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), I am writing to ask that KFC abandon its plan to open restaurants in Tibet, because your corporation's support for cruelty and mass slaughter violate Tibetan value.

I have been particularly concerned with the sufferings of chickens for many years. It was the death of a chicken that finally strengthened my resolve to become vegetarian. In 1965, I was staying at a Government Guest House in south India. My room looked directly on to the kitchens opposite. One day I chanced to see the slaughter of a chicken, which made me decide to become a vegetarian.

Tibetans are not, as a rule, vegetarians, because in Tibet vegetables are often scarce and meat forms a large part of the staple diet. However, it was considered more ethical to eat the meat of larger animals such as yaks than small ones, because fewer large animals would have to be killed. For this reason, consumption of fish and chicken was rare, in fact traditionally we thought of chickens only as a source of eggs, not as food themselves, and even eggs were seldom eaten because they were thought to dull the sharpness of mind and memory. Eating chicken only really began with the arrival of the Chinese communists.

These days, when I see a row of plucked chickens hanging in a meat shop it hurts. I find it unacceptable that violence is the basis of some of our food habits. When I am driving through the towns near where I live in India I see thousands of chickens in cages outside restaurants ready to be killed. When I see them I feel very sad, because in the heat they have no shade or relief, and in the cold they have no shelter from the wind. These poor chickens are treated as if they were merely vegetables.

In Tibet, buying animals from the butcher, thereby saving their lives, and setting them free was a common practice. Many Tibetans, even in exile, continue this practice where practically possible. It is therefore quite natural for me to support those who are currently protesting against the introduction of industrial food practices into Tibet that will perpetuate the suffering of huge numbers of chickens.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tenzin Gyatso".