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Asia - China

Self-immolation censored

Four young Tibetans jailed for providing information about self-immolation

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Reporters Without Borders is appalled to learn that more Tibetans, including a minor, have been given long jail sentences for trying to circulate information about the grave human rights situation in the Tibetan region, where at least 52 people have set fire to themselves since February 2009.

"China is stepping up its isolation of Tibet and, by denying journalists access and by cutting communications temporarily or permanently, [is making it very hard to circulate information](#)," Reporters Without Borders said. "The only people providing or relaying information there are the Tibetan citizens themselves, who take great risks to get reports, photos or video footage to the outside world."

"The [Chinese authorities are trying to deter members of the public from providing the international community](#) with information by using the [state secrets law](#), article 32 of which says it is a crime to divulge 'state secrets' abroad."

Last month, courts in the western province of Sichuan (just to the east of Tibet) sentenced four Tibetan men – three of them monks – to sentences ranging from 7 to 11 years in prison for providing contacts outside China with information about cases of self-immolation and about the Chinese government's crackdown in the region.

Two young monks from Kirti monastery in Ngaba county (in Sichuan) – **Lobsang Tsultrim**, 19, and **Lobsang Jangchub**, 17 – were sentenced to 11 and 8 years in prison respectively for allegedly helping a third Kirti monk aged 18 to take his own life by setting himself on fire in a protest on 10 March.

The news of their conviction came from Kanyak Tsering, a monk who is the monastery's media coordinator and who is now in exile in India. No information has been provided about their situation since their arrest in March, after the self-immolation.

Similarly, a people's intermediary court in Barkham (in Sichuan province) sentenced **Lobsang Tashi**, a Kirti monk aged 26, and **Bu Thupdor**, a layman aged 25, to seven and seven and a half years in prison respectively for sending information about the situation in Tibet to contacts abroad. They have been held since November 2011.

Sources say the families of the two defendants were given two days' prior notice of the trial but were not allowed to hire a lawyer. After the trial, the two men were allowed to see their relatives for just a few minutes. They are now reportedly serving their sentences in Mianyang prison, in Sichuan province. The authorities have not confirmed any of this information.

China is ranked 174th of 179 countries in the [2011-2012 World Press Freedom Index](#) compiled by Reporters Without Borders and is on the organization's 2012 list of "[Internet Enemies](#)".

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