

# Reporters Without Borders

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Asia - China

Information black hole

## Wave of arrests contributes to Tibet's growing isolation

16 October 2013

The Chinese authorities have stepped up their persecution of independent Tibetan news providers in recent weeks, arresting three writers who are frequent information sources for external observers on the pretext that they carried out "political activities aimed at destroying social stability and dividing the Chinese homeland."

"Every arrest of a Tibetan who tried to inform his peers and the outside world about the dramatic situation in Tibet plunges the region further into isolation," Reporters Without Borders said.

"Instead of trying to turn Tibet into an information black hole, the Chinese authorities must put an immediate stop to these arbitrary arrests and release those detained without delay. We urge the international community to forcefully condemn their detention."

Reporters Without Borders added: "There can be no justification for remaining silent in the face of these flagrant violations of freedom of information, not even the 'respect for sovereignty' that the Chinese government repeatedly cites in response to criticism of its repressive and discriminatory policies towards Tibetans."

A Tibetan exile known only as Tharpa told Reporters Without Borders that he learned from two local sources that **Kalsang Choedhar**, a monk from Palyul monastery, was arrested in the market in Sog, in eastern Tibet, on 12 October for circulating information about a two-week-old crackdown by the Chinese authorities in Driru county.

Choedhar's mobile phone was confiscated following his arrest and he is currently being held incommunicado in an unknown location. Hundreds of Tibetan monks from Palyul monastery demonstrated outside Palyul county government offices and a police station to demand Choedhar's release. Officials said he had been transferred to Chamdo.

**Tsultrim Gyaltzen**, a 27-year-old Tibetan writer who uses the pen-name of "Shokdril," was arrested in Khardrong, in Driru province, on 11 October, and a 25-year-old associate known only as **Yulgal** was arrested the next day. Both are accused of "political activities aimed at destroying social stability and dividing the Chinese homeland." Their current place of detention and physical condition are not known.

Gyaltzen's computer, mobile phone, books and other personal effects were confiscated by Chinese security officials who went to his home at 1 a.m., witnesses said.

A former monk, Gyaltzen has written two books about Tibet and used to edit a Tibetan-language magazine called *The New Generation*. Yulgal is a former Security Bureau officer who resigned because of the "political" nature of his work.

The manner in which the three are being held is similar to that used with **Lobsang Namygal**, a Tibetan poet also known by the pen-name of "Sangming," who has been held incommunicado ever since his arrest on 15 May 2012 for publishing the Dalai Lama's banned speeches and other politically sensitive works about Tibet.

Namygal's detention was kept secret for more than a year. His family knew absolutely nothing about his whereabouts until March 2013, when they learned that he was probably being held in Chengdu prison (in Sichuan province) although they still did not know why.

It was only in September that the authorities confirmed that he was being held in Chengdu and gave the grounds for his arrest. They also confirmed that he was not permitted any visits. He still has not been allowed to speak to a lawyer or receive visitors.

An employee of Chengdu's Buddha Cultural Centre until his arrest, Namgyal is the author of a book of poems that express his views and arguments in favour of Tibetan independence. He was previously held for a year after being arrested in 2008 in connection with demonstrations in Lhasa linked to the Beijing Olympics.

The situation of news and information providers is worrying throughout China but particularly in Tibet, where any criticism of the Chinese authorities is severely punished.

Chinese embassy officials in Thailand directly threatened the French journalist [Cyril Payen](#) after *France 24* broadcast his documentary "Seven Days in Tibet" in May and tried to get the TV station to remove it from its website.

China is on the Reporters Without Borders list of "[Enemies of the Internet](#)" and is ranked 173rd out of 179 countries in the 2013 Reporters Without Borders [press freedom index](#).

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