

[China: Tibetan Immolations, Security Measures Escalate](http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/11/29/china-tibetan-immolations-security-measures-escalate)

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November Brings 23 Deaths in 27 Immolations

November 29, 2012

(New York) – The self-immolation of seven Tibetans since November 26, 2012, highlights the failure of Chinese authorities to address Tibetan grievances, Human Rights Watch said today. Increasingly pervasive and punitive security measures in response to protests have exacerbated the situation in Tibetan areas of China.

A total of 89 Tibetans have self-immolated since February 2009, almost all of whom shouted slogans or left statements calling for the return of the Dalai Lama to [Tibet](#), Tibetan freedom, relaxation of religious and cultural policy, and related issues. In 2012, 76 Tibetans self-immolated, including 27 in November. Of the 89, 74 died, 7 reportedly survived, and the condition of 6 is unknown.

“Self-immolation is an act of complete desperation to bring attention to the plight of Tibetans,” said [Brad Adams](#), Asia director at Human Rights Watch. “Instead of stepping up repression and driving people to believe there is no hope of change, Beijing needs to take steps to respond to Tibetans’ grievances.”

The central government has authorized increasingly aggressive moves against both individual Tibetans and Tibetan communities where immolations have taken place, Human Rights Watch said. Since late October, officials have responded to immolations by punishing the families and communities of protestors, characterizing immolations as criminal offenses, arresting those associated with immolators, and by deploying paramilitary forces and restricting communications and travel in areas where immolations have occurred.

Although the Chinese leadership in March said that the immolators were “innocents,” officials this month described these protests as “ugly and evil acts intended to achieve the separatist goal of Tibetan independence,” and as “used by the Dalai group to incite unrest in an attempt to split the nation.”

Qinghai and Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) officials have in recent weeks employed forms of collective punishment to discourage immolations. On November 14, after five self-immolations in their area in a week, officials in Huangnan (*Malho* in Tibetan) prefecture in Qinghai ordered the cancellation of all “benefits received by the households of self-immolators under public benefit policies” and announced that “all projects running on state funds in self-immolators’ villages must be stopped.” The officials extended those cancellations to any families, monks, or monasteries who take part in “instances of greeting and making contributions to family members of self-immolators,” and ordered criminal investigations to begin against any

“laypeople and monks who organized to greet family members” of immolators (see appendix for full statement).

The use of collective punishment is contrary to international human rights law, and in these instances infringe on the rights to freedom of religion and belief, Human Rights Watch said.

Similarly broad punishments have been imposed in Lhasa, the capital of TAR, since a May 27 double immolation. As a direct result of those immolations, the authorities have since [banned](#) all Tibetans who reside outside the TAR from entering the region without written police guarantees. In some cases documented by Human Rights Watch, police have indicated that self-immolations are being treated as a criminal offense.

According to press reports, after four immolations in October 2012, the prefectural police in Gannan (*Ganlho* in Tibetan), Gansu province, issued a notice offering rewards of up to 50,000 yuan (approximately US\$7,900) for information on “the sources of scheming, planning, and instigating” of immolations and offered 20,000 yuan (US\$3,150) for information leading to those supposed to have planned the protests.

The authorities have also arrested Tibetans apparently for involvement in helping immolators plan or carry out their protests. A local source reported that on October 6, four Buddhist monks from Dokar monastery in Gannan, Gansu province, were detained apparently "for taking care of the body” of an immolator and for taking photos of the body. Four monks from Zilkar monastery in Chenduo (*Trindu* in Tibetan) county, Yushu prefecture, Qinghai province, were detained on September 1 and later sentenced to up to two years in prison, apparently for involvement in a small protest on February 8.

Both sets of arrests were carried out by large numbers of armed police in riot gear who surrounded and raided the monasteries.

Large contingents of armed police in areas where immolations have occurred continue to be reported. Since October, reports of large numbers of security forces were received from numerous sites where immolations have occurred, including Tongren (*Rebkong* in Tibetan) in Qinghai, Xiahe (*Sangchu* in Tibetan) county in Gansu, Serxu (*Sershul* in Tibetan) in Sichuan Province, as well as Hezuo in Gansu province, Chenduo in Qinghai, and Suo in Nagchu, TAR.

Human Rights Watch asked governments committed to promoting human rights to jointly urge the Chinese government to address Tibetan grievances. They should consider forming a contact group or issuing a joint statement on longstanding human rights problems in Tibet.

“The central government should devote as much energy to addressing the deep-rooted problems facing Tibetans as it is on punishing the families of those who have taken the drastic step of protesting by self-immolating,” Adams said. “Coordinated, international expressions of concern are essential to get Beijing to substantively address the issues being raised by Tibetans.”

Appendix

The text below was translated by Human Rights Watch from an original text in Tibetan transcribed by the Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, from a screenshot of a television broadcast that showed the notice.

Human Rights Watch believes, though cannot confirm, that this November 14, 2012 notice, issued by the Huangnan prefectural authorities in Qinghai province, is an official document.

Urgent notice from the Huangnan Prefecture Party Work Department and Huangnan Prefecture Peoples Government Work Department concerning issues related to social stability

To the Party committees and Peoples Governments of each county, departments of the Prefecture Party committee, Prefecture agencies, Provincial offices based in the prefecture, Mass organizations and Armed [Police] branches in the prefecture:

In the period of the 18th Party congress, six incidents of instability have occurred one after the other in the Rebkong [Ch.: Tongren] area of the prefecture. This has caused serious damage to harmony and stability in the whole prefecture and been a negative influence on the province and nation. The incidents are clearly a case of the Dalai group, while wearing the cloak of religion, using self-immolation to encourage social grievance and incite unrest among students to create social disturbance in an attempt to split the nation. At this time when upper, lower and middle [level officials] throughout the prefecture are giving all their strength to maintaining social stability, the masses in some areas, both monks and laypeople, are putting about random and nonsensical talk and being taken in by the incitements of the Dalai group through ignorance, believing the self-immolators to be heroes and even going to greet their family members and make voluntary donations to them. They have made a problematic scene and upset normal social order. With firm determination, those responsible for implementing the policies of the provincial Party committee, and those responsible for forcefully maintaining the appearance of social stability throughout the prefecture, must strictly smash the small number of criminals who despicably manipulate people who do not understand the real situation and incite them to self-immolate and create social grievances, must establish good order and smash disorder, in order to maintain general harmony and stability in the prefecture. The urgent notice on current related work follows below.

One: Each area, department and office must take swift measures to cancel benefits received by the households of self-immolators under public benefit policies, such as minimum income support, disaster relief aid and so on. No retrospective allocation is permitted. All projects running on state funds in self-immolators' villages must be stopped. All previously made arrangements must be reviewed and cancelled. The main responsible [local officials] in townships where self-immolation incidents have occurred must be thoroughly investigated by the county Party committee, and criticized in notices circulated throughout the prefecture. Township leaders and other government and Party officials may not be recommended as advanced personnel this year. Townships in which multiple incidents of instability have occurred may not benefit from state-funded projects for the next three years, leading party and government officials in those townships must be replaced, other staff must be corrected, rejections of responsibility must be investigated, and insufficient attention to duty and failures in this regard

strictly punished according to Party discipline.

Two: Each area and related departments must swiftly and clearly establish whether there were instances of greeting and making contributions to family members of self-immolators among the masses in their locality. If there were instances of greeting, donation and paying of respect, the county and township Party committees must send special personnel to swiftly put a stop to it, educate them and clearly explain why this is mistaken and has serious consequences. Public security agencies must swiftly take measures against those who do not listen to this advice and strictly smash them.

Three: Laypeople and monks who greet and make donations must be given corrective training and criticism [*skyon brjod slob gso*], and the households of those who organized it and acted as public representatives, and of monks who went to greet family members, must have benefits granted under public benefit policies, such as minimum income support, disaster relief aid and so on cancelled. In the case of members of monastery management committees, they must be put together and determinedly dealt with by United Front and Nationalities and Religion departments. Where villages or monasteries organized to make collective donations (down to 'Five-support households') [poorest households that qualify for five kinds of state assistance] must have all benefits received under public benefit policies, such as minimum income support, disaster relief aid and so on cancelled. Those villages and monasteries may not benefit from any state-funded projects for the next three years, and those already underway must be cancelled.

Four: Laypeople and monks who organized to greet family members and forced others to participate must be swiftly investigated, and once solid evidence of their activities is gathered, they must face legal proceedings at an early date, and be smashed quickly and heavily, according to law. (Village and local Party officials) and especially village Party secretaries and village heads who were involved must resolutely be changed, their responsibility investigated, and their cases entrusted to disciplinary, organizational, Public Security and inspection departments for strict punishment, and any violations of discipline and law strictly dealt with. In the case of Lamas and monastery DMC members involved in such organizing activities, their monasteries must be closed according to law and strictly investigated, and those involved in organizing activities punished heavily.

Five: Officials who are found to have disregarded Party and government discipline and state laws to greet and make donations to the families of self-immolators must be swiftly dismissed from government service and handed over to the judicial departments to be strictly dealt with according to law.

Each locality, each unit and each office must use multiple methods to publicize and enact this notice, and report to Prefecture Party and Government on related matters in a timely way. Prefecture Party agencies responsible for internal oversight must monitor related matters in conjunction with the Prefecture Party and Government oversight departments, and if implementation is inadequate, and further incidents of self-immolators being greeted and offered donations occur, the Prefecture Party and Government will hold Party and government officials strictly to account.

*Huangnan Prefecture Party Work Department, Huangnan Peoples Government Work
Department*

November 14, 2012