

Protests Reflect Restrictions on Basic Freedoms

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[China: Address Causes of Tibet Self-Immolations](#)

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Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch

(London) – The Chinese government should address the underlying causes of protests that have led 11 Tibetans to set themselves on fire since March 2011, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch said today.

In a [letter](#) to Chinese President Hu Jintao on November 3, the human rights organizations called on the Chinese government to carry out a comprehensive review of the human rights situation across the Tibetan plateau and to end legal and policy restrictions that breach human rights in the region.

“The Chinese government must put an end to repressive policies that infringe on the fundamental freedoms of ethnic Tibetans,” said Salil Shetty, Amnesty International’s secretary general. “The Chinese authorities have not heeded the demands of Tibetans, but have instead resorted to heavy-handed tactics that can only deepen and further fuel resentments. They must respect the right of Tibetans to practice their religion and to enjoy their culture.”

The self-immolations have appeared to be in protest against restrictions on basic freedoms and punitive security measures imposed on a number of monasteries in the area, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch said. Tibetans have continued to set themselves on fire despite a crackdown by the authorities.

The Chinese government has responded to the protests with mass arrests, imprisonment, and possible killings by the security forces. Those arrested included 300 monks from Kirti monastery, who the authorities said were taken away for “patriotic education.”

“Years of restrictions on Tibetans’ rights have led to further unrest and acts of desperation,” said Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch. “It is clearly time for the Chinese government to fundamentally rethink its approach by listening to and addressing Tibetans’ grievances.”

Nine Tibetan monks or former monks and two Tibetan nuns in Sichuan Province have set themselves on fire since March, and six of them are believed to have died. In the most recent case, on

November 3, Palden Choetso, a 35-year old nun from Tawu nunnery, died after she set herself on fire.

The Chinese government should reveal the whereabouts of everyone who has been detained, including those who set themselves on fire in protests and were then taken away, the groups said.

The Chinese government should also end the compulsory political indoctrination that Tibetan monks and nuns undergo as part of government-enforced “patriotic” and “legal education,” Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch said. Many Tibetans have particularly complained about this practice as intrusive on their rights to free expression and free exercise of their religion.

The organizations also called on the government to reduce the heavy security presence that continues in and around religious institutions.