

17 jailed for Lhasa violence

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An open court session in connection with the Lhasa violence on March 14 is held at the Intermediate People's Court of Lhasa, capital of southwest China's Tibet Autonomous Region, April 29, 2008. (Xinhua Photo)

LHASA, April 29 (Xinhua) -- Seventeen people were sentenced on Tuesday to jail terms ranging from three years to life in connection with the Lhasa violence on March 14, a Lhasa court said.

The Intermediate People's Court of Lhasa, capital of Tibet Autonomous Region, passed down the sentences at an open court session on Tuesday morning.

Soi'nam Norbu, a driver with a Lhasa real estate company, and Basang, a monk, were sentenced to life, the court said.

It said Soi'nam Norbu, born in 1988, was one of the mobs which burnt vehicles in a square near the Jokhang Monastery, smashed police stations and fire engines with stones, and assaulted firemen during the riot that broke out in downtown Lhasa on March 14.

"He was convicted of arson and disrupting public services," the court said in a press release.

Basang, a monk from Doilungdeqen County in Lhasa, led 10 people-- including five monks -- to destroy the local government office, smash or burn down 11 shops and rob their valuables, and attack policemen on duty, it said.

Of the five monks who followed Basang, two were sentenced to 20 years and the other three to 15 years.

The Lhasa violence left seven schools, five hospitals and 120 homes torched and 908 shops looted. Total damage was more than 244 million yuan (35 million U.S. dollars).

A total of 18 innocent civilians and one police officer died in the riot, in addition to 382 injured civilians and 241 policemen.