

## Lhasa calm after riot, traffic control imposed

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LHASA, March 15 (Xinhua) -- After a day of rioting that killed 10 people on Friday, Lhasa reported no new incidents of violence on Saturday in the Tibetan regional capital.

Friday's riot involved beatings, vandalism, looting of shops and arson orchestrated by the Dalai clique, disturbing 18 years of tranquility in the city.

Traffic control was imposed on major streets, leaving few cars on the road on Saturday. Photos showed cars overturned, burnt motorcycles and bicycles scattered on the main streets. The air was tinged with smoke, according to local witnesses.

Most shops in the city were closed on Saturday. In downtown areas, about a 100 shops were ransacked and vandalized. Smoke belched from shops destroyed in the riot.

Power supply resumed in quarters along Duosenge Road, the area worst hit by the violence in the downtown. The local phone service, however, could not be resumed for the moment as the communications infrastructure was destroyed in the violence.

According to the witnesses, the unrest started around 1:10 p.m. on Friday when some people brandishing batons and knives took to the main streets, clashing with and stoning local police around the Ramogia Monastery in downtown Lhasa.

Rioters later began gathering around 2 p.m. near the Ramogia monastery, and set fire to shops along two main streets, and around Jokhang temple and Chomsigkang market.

They torched buildings for civilian use at 160 places, including banks, a press establishment, shops, schools and hospitals. This caused blackouts and interruption of communications in some areas. Shops close to the Jokhang temple and Ramogia monastery were shut down.

Among the dead were two hotel employees and two shop owners. A mob reportedly used double-barrel rifles to kill two business people.

"The victims are all innocent civilians, and most were burnt to death," said a regional government official.

No casualties have been reported among foreigners, an official with the foreign affairs office of the regional government said.

"We have not received any report that foreigners suffered injuries or death in the beating, smashing, looting and burning on Friday," the official said.

A Tibetan government official told Xinhua there had been enough evidence to prove the sabotage was "organized, premeditated and masterminded" by the Dalai clique.

The violence, involving beating, smashing, looting and burning, had disrupted public order and jeopardized people's lives and property, the official said.

Xinhua reporters in Lhasa saw many rioters carrying backpacks filled with stones and bottles of inflammable liquids, some holding iron bars, wooden sticks and long knives, signs the crowd had come fully prepared and meant harm.

The mobs assaulted passersby, sparing no women or children, witnesses said. They hit at things along their path, smashing windows, automatic teller machines and traffic lights. Several clothing shops, restaurants and mobile phone stores were looted. Bikes, motorcycles and cars were burnt.

After the violence broke out, the Tibet Autonomous Regional Party and government authorities set up a command headquarters that quickly mobilized security personnel to maintain order and disperse the crowds. Fire fighters were also called in to put out fires at different places and to help rescue innocent, stranded people. The injured were hospitalized.

Armed police in Lhasa rescued more than 580 people, including three Japanese tourists, as well as students and teaching faculty of a primary school and a middle school, Tibet Autonomous Region government sources said on Saturday.

The injuries and economic losses caused by Friday's violence are still under investigation.

The Lhasa government published a letter late on Friday asking urban dwellers to show support for the government in its efforts to clamp down on perpetrators according to law.

"Cadres, workers and residents in Lhasa shall have a good understanding of the current situation. Be firm with the efforts to fight against all forms of secessionist activities," said the letter.

"Stay away from lawbreaking acts meant to cause social disturbances and harm the interests of the broad masses of the people, and consciously safeguard social stability and your own legitimate rights, support the government's crackdown on all forms of criminal activities, so that together we can maintain harmony and stability in Tibet."

Meanwhile, law enforcement authorities in Tibet Autonomous Region issued a notice on Saturday urging lawbreakers in the riot to stop their criminal activities. They were offering leniency to those who voluntarily surrendered.

The notice, which was jointly issued by the Tibetan Higher People's Court, the regional people's procuratorate and the regional public security bureau, demanded the lawbreakers to give themselves up by Monday midnight.

## Tibet protesters fired on by Chinese security forces in 2008 – report

*Human Rights Watch alleges forces broke international law on multiple occasions during unrest that started in Lhasa*

The Guardian  
Tania Branigan in Beijing

Wednesday 21 July 2010 20.00 EDT  
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Chinese security forces fired indiscriminately on demonstrators and brutally beat detainees during unrest in Tibetan areas in 2008, alleges a report released today by Human Rights Watch.

After interviewing 200 refugees and travellers, the organisation also says that hundreds of those arrested remain unaccounted for after what was the region's most serious unrest for decades.

The riots in Lhasa on 14 March, in which officials say 21 died and hundreds were injured, followed protests by monks. Unrest then rippled across other Tibetan areas of China.

Chinese officials have said the security forces exercised "extreme restraint", and the commander of the People's Armed Police has said its actions complied with both domestic and international law.

But the report says that, while security forces showed some restraint on some occasions, "in multiple incidents ... [they] broke international law, including prohibitions against disproportionate use of force, torture, and arbitrary detention, as well as the right to peaceful assembly".

Beijing describes the events of March 2008 as riots instigated by the "Dalai clique" in the hope of winning independence. Exiles, who say they seek only meaningful autonomy, accuse security forces of attacking peaceful protesters and killing scores of people.

The Human Rights Watch report alleges there is "substantial evidence" of deaths in at least three incidents involving indiscriminate shooting.

One Tibetan refugee, describing events in Lhasa on 14 March, told the group: "They [police] were coming from the direction of Jiangsu Lu firing at any Tibetans they saw, and many people had been killed."

The region's governor has said that security forces were not carrying lethal weapons, although state news agency Xinhua described police firing "warning shots" and other media showed armed officers. Witnesses at the time heard gunfire.

Chinese state media reported only one shooting by security forces, in Sichuan in mid-March. Xinhua said officers shot four rioters "in self-defence" - initially reporting the four were dead, but then amending the article.

Today's report also quotes several witnesses describing brutal beatings during arrests and detention, including with rifle butts, police batons and sand-filled rubber tubes.

One monk, from a monastery just outside Lhasa, told the group: "We were beaten very badly. The guards used clubs and sticks to beat us."

A resident from Tongren, in Qinghai province, said soldiers and police beat a crowd with electric batons as they arrested people.

The 73-page report is primarily based on interviews with people who had just left China, but some cases are from unreported official Chinese statements. A monk from Ganzi in Sichuan was jailed for six years for parading through a street with a Snow Lion flag, the symbol adopted by Tibetan exiles.

"The defendant Sherab Rongbo colluded with others to produce a 'Tibetan independence' flag, which he then held high in public ... brazenly inciting separatism and undermining national unity," said the Chinese report. It added that his "major criminal act" caused "mass panic" because shopkeepers feared the kind of attacks seen in Lhasa.

Sophie Richardson, Asia advocacy director at Human Rights Watch, called for a full independent inquiry into events, adding: "Abuses by security forces are unlikely to quell, and may even aggravate, the longstanding grievances that prompted the protests in the first place."

Verifying accounts of what happened in 2008 has been extremely difficult. Journalists were prevented from travelling to affected areas. Special permits for escorted tours are required for media visits to the Tibetan Autonomous Region and are rarely granted, although the Guardian was allowed to visit in October 2008. The security apparatus is extensive and many people in Lhasa were reluctant to talk.

The report also cites cases of Tibetans punished for passing information overseas. Gonpo Tserang was jailed for three years on state secrets charges for sending text messages that "distorted the facts and true situation regarding social stability in the Tibetan area".

## China: Government Cracks Down on Protesters

March 14, 2008 | 20:19 GMT

Report from Stratfor Global Intelligence

### Summary

Protesters in Tibet challenged the Chinese military during several days of rioting, hunger strikes and suicide attempts as Beijing continued to brace itself for more political displays leading up to the Olympic Games this summer.

### Analysis

Thousands of Chinese troops reportedly surrounded Buddhist monasteries March 14 when protests in the Tibetan capital of Lhasa turned violent, marking the largest Tibetan uprising in nearly two decades. The protests started out as relatively benign March 10 when a group of Buddhist monks and nuns held a public demonstration to commemorate Tibet's 1959 failed uprising against China. After 50 to 60 monks were arrested, the situation snowballed when hundreds of monks and ethnic Tibetans confronted police, employing hunger strikes and suicide attempts to demand the monks' release. By March 14, the protests had evolved into full-scale riots, with protesters burning shops, military vehicles and at least one tourist bus, according to scattered reports.

Beijing has long braced itself for an unleashing of ethnic minority unrest in the lead-up to the Olympics Games in August. The games could be used as a platform for separatist groups to air their grievances and give the Chinese government a black eye on human rights abuses. These worries were somewhat exacerbated by Kosovo's February independence declaration, as Beijing did not want separatist movements in Tibet, Taiwan and Xinjiang to follow suit.

Beijing is positioned to put a lid on this latest wave of Tibetan turmoil, however. China currently has a massive security regime in place for the Olympics and is well prepared to thwart any potential uprisings. Indeed, Chinese President Hu Jintao earned his claim to fame when he orchestrated a massive political crackdown in 1989 during one of Tibet's most volatile periods. Moreover, Tibet is in a geographically isolated location where media and society are fully infiltrated and controlled by the Beijing government. These conditions makes it unlikely that Tibetan demonstrations will have much reach beyond the monasteries to galvanize the country's other ethnic minorities in opposing Chinese rule.

Chinese state media have already released reports implying that Tibetans monks have been rioting and burning shops, laying the groundwork for Chinese troops to crack down aggressively on further signs of dissent. While Beijing's Olympics-related image management will suffer a setback, these riots will not end China's Olympic bid, just as the Save Darfur's campaign has failed to do. Western governments have more geopolitically pertinent issues to prioritize than Tibet's freedom in its relationship with Beijing, and the response from Brussels and Washington has been extremely tepid over the past five days of protests.

Tibet is an integral part of China's wider geopolitical security, along with Manchuria, Inner Mongolia, and Xinjiang (where Beijing has recently taken preemptive measures against ethnic Muslim Uighur separatists). Tibet is a critical de facto buffer state China maintains to surround and protect from foreign invaders the territorial security of its core, which is the fertile area around the three major rivers in the East: the Yellow, Yangtze and Pearl.

The demonstrations are largely an attempt by Tibet to capture Western media attention. Based on history and current reality, Tibetan protesters harbor no real hopes of gaining independence as a result of such

riots. Though the Tibetans have some political traction at the moment, it is nothing the Chinese government can't handle.