

## Video of Beatings Amid Demolition in China Leads to Punishments

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By AUSTIN RAMZY  
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HONG KONG — An official who oversaw a demolition project in southern China has stepped down, and two others have been dismissed, state news media reported on Monday, after a video showing law enforcement officers beating women and at least one child circulated on social media, prompting widespread criticism.

Seven officers who were filmed kicking and hitting residents of the village of Qionghua in Haikou, a city on the southern island province of Hainan, were also detained over the weekend, the Haikou government said.

Workers had been trying to remove people from houses that scheduled for demolition. The local government said the houses had been built illegally.

The video shows members of a local police auxiliary unit, known as a joint defense team, kicking and clubbing women and a child as they sat in a dusty street, the sound of cries filling the air.

Huang Hongru, who oversees the district that encompasses Qionghua, stepped down to take the blame for the episode, and two deputy officials were dismissed, the state news agency Xinhua reported on Monday.

The local authorities said that some people had thrown rocks and lit fireworks and gas canisters in an effort to resist the officers, and 11 had been detained on Saturday, Beijing Youth Daily reported.

“People who see this video will feel a stab of pain: officers wearing law enforcement uniforms brandishing clubs, striking women and children cowering at the foot of a wall, the scene filled with cries,” read a commentary published on Monday by The Beijing News. “If you use clubs to deal with women and children, even if you are justified in targeting illegal construction, you’ll be condemned from all sides.”

The Haikou government said a group of officials visited people who were assaulted to offer apologies. But comments posted to the city’s official Weibo account indicated this had done little to assuage public anger, as some called for more officials to be dismissed.

Property and land rights in China are frequent sources of conflict, which can sometimes spiral into violence. The disputes are often over efforts to tear down houses to redevelop valuable land, moves that are usually backed by local officials seeking to increase economic growth and tax revenue from land sales. Such clashes have sometimes resulted in the deaths of residents and workers and in suicides by people trying to defend their homes.