

Two elderly Tibetans killed as hundreds of monks detained from Kirti; crackdown deepens

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Kirti monastery, after a raid by security personnel following protests in March, 2008.

The crackdown in Ngaba has deepened with the deaths of two elderly Tibetans trying to protect hundreds of Kirti monks being taken into custody last night. A further Tibetan, Chukpel, was reportedly beaten to death after he protested on April 7 outside a police station in the area. There are fears that more monks will be detained tonight (April 22).

In a development linked to the crackdown and unrest, the Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) area and neighboring Kardze (Chinese: Ganzi) were closed to foreigners yesterday, and all foreigners advised to leave. Tibetans detained since the unrest at Kirti began following the self-immolation of a 20-year old monk called Phuntsog on March 16 have suffered severe torture, including beatings by electric shock-batons, and some of those released "pass out with pain several times a day."

Paramilitary police raided the monastery last night (April 21) and took away more than 300 monks, according to exile sources in contact with people in the area. As the monks were being driven away in large trucks, the group of laypeople – mainly in their sixties or older – who had been standing vigil at the monastery gate were beaten "mercilessly" by police according to the same sources. "People had their arms and legs broken, one old woman had her leg broken in three places, and cloth was stuffed in their mouths to stifle their screams," said an exiled Kirti monk. The two people who died in their attempt to prevent the monks from being taken away were Dongko (male) of upper Tawa, aged 60, and 65-year old Sherkyi (female).

Donko was from the Trinken Chukle pastoral division of Tawa Gongma in Ngaba county. He was 60 years old, and leaves a wife, Trangme, a son named Tsultrim and a daughter named Trinle Tso. Sherkyi was from the Rako Tsang house in Naktsangma, Cha township, Ngaba county.

The raid on the monastery last night began at around 9 pm, when armed troops were deployed around all of the monastic residences in the compound of Kirti monastery to seal them off. The monks detained, numbering more than 300 according to exile sources, were taken to 10 large military trucks and driven away. Their current location is not known. As the monks were driven away, laypeople who have been gathered around the entrance gate since April 12 attempted to prevent the trucks from leaving, but were severely beaten by People's Armed Police troops. Most or all of the laypeople were then loaded into goods trucks and taken to a nearby army camp. The two people who had died, Dongko and Sherkyi, were taken directly to the cemetery.

Most of them were released this morning (April 22), but a group of younger people was detained, although there are no further details on their names due to the authorities' attempts to impose an information blackout. According to the same sources, all shops and restaurants in Ngaba county town remained closed, and only military and official vehicles can be seen on the roads.

According to a [notice by provincial public security authorities issued yesterday](#), foreigners have been banned from entering various Tibetan areas of southwest Sichuan (northern Kham and southern Amdo) including the Tibetan area of Kardze and counties in neighboring Ngaba prefecture "Foreigners already in the aforementioned areas are to be urged to leave," the notice dated April 21 said, copies of which were placed on the websites of

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some Chinese travel agencies, according to a Reuters report today (Reuters, [China bans foreigners from restive Tibetan areas](#) - April 22). No explanation was given for the ban.

The deaths of two elderly Tibetans and the detention of several hundred monks are the latest developments in an escalating crisis at Kirti. The Tibetan Centre for Human Rights and Democracy reported today that a 24-year old Tibetan man, Chukpel, had died of his injuries after being beaten severely by police after he protested together with two other youths outside the local police station in Dzamtang township, Ngaba prefecture. The two other youths are severely injured and have been taken to Chengdu for urgent medical treatment. On April 7, the three young men had set off firecrackers outside the police station, saying that they were celebrating the elections among the Tibetan diaspora in exile for a new Kalon Tripa (head of the Tibetan exile government) and shouting slogans such as "May His Holiness the Dalai Lama live for 10,000 years!" and "Self-government for Tibet!" They were arrested and beaten by the police. According to TCHRD, Chukpel, who is from Gyalrong, lost consciousness and was taken to the local hospital, but died soon afterwards. According to the same source, hundreds of local people gathered at the police station to protest against Chukpel's death. The police offered 70,000 yuan (\$10,756) in compensation for the death, according to TCHRD, an NGO based in Dharamsala, India.

On Wednesday (April 20), several hundred officials from nearby counties gathered at Kirti to conduct 'patriotic education'. In scenes that appear to be reminiscent of the Cultural Revolution, when monks gave answers that the officials did not approve of, the monks were severely beaten.

There have been further detentions in the area although full details of the identity of those detained are not known. Those now released from custody are apparently traumatized and injured after torture. The same exiled Kirti sources said that some of those released are incapable of looking after themselves and some "pass out from the pain several times a day". The torture included being tied to powerful electric heaters, beaten, tied to metal pillars, and beaten with electric shock-batons.

The Chinese state media confirmed today that it was conducting a "legal education" campaign at Kirti, describing it as a "troublesome" monastery (April 22, Xinhua). The same Xinhua report alleged that monks had visited prostitutes and taken part in gambling. The Xinhua report is part of a pattern of proactive and assertive attempts by the authorities to distort and mislead international media coverage and opinion.

Powerful new footage released this week by the Voice of America Tibetan Service refuted the Chinese government's claims that the situation in Ngaba is "normal" (ICT report, [Dramatic new footage reveals Ngaba crackdown, refutes Chinese claims of "normal life"](#)). To view the footage, see: <http://www.youtube.com/user/VOAKunleng#p/u/0/zwmstGsFJlc>.

The US State Department is monitoring the situation in Ngaba and has twice publicly expressed concern for ongoing violations of human rights by the Chinese authorities. The next US-China human rights dialogue will be held on April 27-29 in Beijing. The timing and the gravity of the situation suggest that Ngaba should be raised as an issue of urgency.