

KARDZE

TIBETANS REPORTS KARDZE SHOOTING



KANGDING, China: Chinese paramilitary police stand guard in the capital of Sichuan's Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, March 21, 2008.

DHARAMSALA—A protest by Tibetan monks in China's Sichuan province was crushed by police on Tuesday amid reports of gunfire and detentions, according to Tibetan sources. The demonstration was the latest in a series of protests by Tibetans reported in the Kardze [in Chinese, Ganzi] Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture since widespread protests against Chinese rule swept Tibet and Tibetan areas of China beginning in March. "It appears that five monks staged a protest near a monastery in Derge [in Chinese, Dege] county and were calling for Tibetan independence," Jampa Monlam, assistant director of the India-based Tibetan Center for Human Rights and Democracy (TCHRD) said, citing reports from the region. "According to witnesses, there were a lot of armed police in the area at the time. The monks were immediately detained," he said. "Witnesses reported hearing gunshots at the time," he added. Sonam Dagpo, general secretary for international relations for the India-based Tibetan government-in-exile, confirmed the shooting had taken place near Gonchen monastery in Derge. "There was gunfire," he said. "But we don't know any details about injuries or how many were detained." An officer at the Derge County Public Security Bureau referred questions to the head of the county government. "If the head of the county government says this happened, then it happened," he said. "If he says it didn't happen, then it didn't."

'No problems'

An employee who answered the phone at the township government office would not confirm or deny the incident had occurred. "[The foreign media] are sure to be stirring up trouble and muddying the waters," she said. "We have a good government here. There aren't any problems. Who was protesting? We didn't see it."

Asked if the incident had taken place, a Tibetan resident of the town first said "Yes," then added "I don't know." Another resident was unwilling to respond to enquiries. Meanwhile, protests against Chinese rule were reported in Serthar [in Chinese, Seda] county, also in Sichuan. "On Jan. 27 and 28, posters calling for Tibetan independence were posted on county buildings in Serthar," Serthar Tsultrim, a member of the Tibetan exile parliament and native of Serthar, said. "Chinese flags were hauled down in the nearby towns of Khekor and Nyitoe on those same days," he said.

Sichuan's Kardze [in Chinese, Ganzi] Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture has seen repeated protests against Chinese policies in the region, which include requiring Tibetans to renounce Tibet's exiled spiritual leader the Dalai Lama. Portraits and media recordings of the exiled leader are banned.

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