

“There’s a good reason that foreigners aren’t allowed in these places. It looks like a war zone.”

—Taiwanese-American tourist on the situation in Kham, E. Tibet



Chinese troops in the Ngaba region of Tibet carry out a mock military response to protests as a training exercise, while a helicopter monitors, July-August 2008

CONCERN OVER BEIJING’S POST-OLYMPIC RESPONSE IN TIBET

According to numerous reports received by ICT, there are serious fears that the crackdown in Tibet could worsen still further with the conclusion of the Olympics and diminished media and political focus on China. Many Tibetans are concerned - and in some cases, have been warned by Chinese security personnel - that more reprisals might follow the Olympics, with people who are now being monitored being taken into custody later. One source referred, chillingly, to the well-known Chinese phrase of “settling accounts after autumn harvest” (Ch. qiu hou suan zhang).

Veteran China analyst Willy Wo Lap Lam believes this may well apply throughout China, saying: “Not only have the Olympics failed to act as a catalyst for political liberalization in China, but the regime’s pre-Olympics security buildup looks set to enable the government to crack down as hard as ever on dissent after the Games are over... Growing instability on various fronts has predisposed the Hu leadership toward strengthening the police-state apparatus that has been put together in the name of ensuring a trouble-free Olympics. Moreover, cadres in the law-and-order establishment, who include senior officials in the Central Political and Legal Commission as well as military, police and judicial departments, have gained immense clout, not to mention much more funding, since early this year.” (Wall Street Journal, August 22, 2008).

New images and reports received from Tibet despite China’s attempts to impose an information blackout give evidence of the following:

- Intense security remains in the Kham area of eastern Tibet with severe restrictions on the movements of Tibetans and the atmosphere of a ‘war zone’, as described by a recent visitor
- Monasteries across the Tibetan plateau remain under lockdown
- In the early days of the Olympics, military snipers were positioned in Lhasa hotels

- Two Tibetan women entering a shop in Ngaba were shot by security personnel on 9 August, the day after the Olympics opening ceremony
- Security personnel in Ngaba held a mock demonstration a week before the Olympics complete with display of flags that appear to be similar to the banned Tibetan ‘snow lion’ flag

Military snipers positioned in Lhasa hotels

From August 6-10, military snipers were positioned in Lhasa hotels. According to a report by a Western expert with Tibetan sources, “In one hotel, which had no guests at the time, about 20 soldiers took over upstairs rooms overlooking the street for the entire period. They entered the hotel discreetly so few people knew they were there. They were behind curtains or stood back from the window in some other way so as not to be visible from the street. They were changed periodically by replacements. They paid a small token fee for each room and were well behaved and friendly. All were Chinese. My source believed that an order had been given for that 24-hour period that soldiers could shoot on sight anyone who was seen with a knife or other weapon.”

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IN THIS ISSUE

PAGE 3 President Sarkozy assures December Dalai Lama meeting

PAGE 3 India Okays Karmapa’s Visit to Border Areas

PAGE 4 Tibetan filmmakers detained for documenting Tibetan Olympics views

Two Tibetan women shot by security personnel

A day after the Olympics opening ceremony, on August 9, at around 4.30 p.m. local time, two Tibetan women in their twenties were shot by security personnel as they went to a shop in the town of Ngaba (Chinese: Aba), Ngaba Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan province. The two women are Sonam Wangmo, aged 22, from Lower Ngawa Sezo and Tranyeyeng, aged 28, from Gyalrang. One was shot in the leg and the other sustained an injury to her hand. According to three Tibetan sources in contact with exile Tibetans, it appears that the women were visiting the shop to recharge their mobile phones, and may have been shot because they were in the street at a time of restrictions linked to the Olympic Games and in the aftermath of protests in the region.

Sources in the area say that restaurants and shops are closed before 7 pm and no one is allowed to go out of their houses after that. People are even frightened to go out in the daytime. Monks are ordered to stay in their monasteries, which are surrounded by armed troops, according to various reports.

Kham area “like a war-zone”

A number of reports received by ICT indicate that Beijing has ramped up security substantially in Kardze (Chinese: Ganzi), Sichuan (the Tibetan area of Kham) in order to ensure that no discontent was expressed during the Olympics. Many monasteries in the area are still under lockdown and severe restrictions imposed on the movements of Tibetans in these areas.

A Taiwanese-American tourist, Wen Yan-King, who was detained and expelled from the Kardze area after an unauthorized visit in July, reported: “There’s a good reason that foreigners aren’t allowed in these places. It looks like a war zone. In Kardze the police are in the middle of the sidewalks. They’re sitting in helmets holding their guns and riot shields in rows of 10 or 15. They are outside convenience stores under blue tarps every half a block, on both sides of the road - watching. They’re up on raised metal posts with cutout windows - watching. I couldn’t walk anywhere without dozens of armed police staring at me. I’ve never seen so many police and military personnel in one town in my life. Nor have I experienced this kind of heart-pounding fear before.” (Rebecca Novick, August 12, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/rebecca-novick/arrested-in-tibet-a-young_b_118342.html).

Since the unrest began in March, the crackdown in the Kham area of Tibet has been particularly severe - ICT has logged a total of 45 out of 125 protests in Sichuan (incorporating the traditional Tibetan area of Kham) since March, the highest total out of all the provinces incorporating Tibetan autonomous areas (Qinghai, Tibet Autonomous Region, Gansu, Yunnan). Tibetans in this area are known for their strong sense of Tibetan identity and nationalism; many Khampas (residents of Kham) were involved in resistance to the Chinese invasion in 1949-50 and to the Chinese presence in 1956-9.

Wen Yan-King reported similar restrictions in the Lithang (Chinese: Litang) area, where she counted as many as seven police stations in a half-mile radius. “The local Tibetans told me that these police stations had sprung up after the protests in March. If there’s a way to instill fear in people, this is the way to do it. You’re not going to go out in the street and protest when you see fifty armed police to the left and right of you.” (Huffington Post, August 12).

Mock protest demonstrates military force

During the Olympic period, there was a significant buildup of troops in the Ngaba region, with military even carrying out a mock protest as a training exercise at the end of July/early August. Images received by ICT show troops near to Tro-Tsuk monastery in Ngaba county re-enacting a protest and demonstrating the suppression of that protest. They carried flags that appeared to be similar to the Tibetan national flag. According to Tibetan sources who provided the images, some soldiers were dressed as monks and lay protesters during the exercise. Sources have speculated that the protest was being filmed, perhaps for propaganda purposes as well as to train military personnel.

[See also Willy Lam’s article for the Jamestown Foundation, ‘Beijing’s Post Olympic Shakedown in Xinjiang and Tibet’ at http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/uploads/cb_008_017.pdf <http://www.jamestown.org/terrorism/news/uploads/cb_008_017.pdf>] ■



Dalai Lama and Mrs Bruni-Sarkozy walk together during the Tibetan leader's visit to France

President Sarkozy assures December Dalai Lama meeting

His Holiness the Dalai Lama visited France between 11-23 August, during which he inaugurated a major new Buddhist temple and met with French political figures, including Foreign Minister Kouchner.

During the visit, the Dalai Lama gave a press briefing in Paris and met with more than thirty French parliamentarians, Deputies and Senators, in a closed-door session at the French Senate. He also met with Ms. Ségolène Royal, the socialist candidate in last year's presidential elections, who was supportive on Tibetan issues and announced that she would be seeking a visa to Tibet.

On the 22nd of August the Dalai Lama attended the inauguration of the Buddhist Lerab Ling temple in Roqueredonde, southern France. Mrs. Carla Bruni-Sarkozy, Foreign Minister Kouchner and State Secretary for Human Rights Rama Yade attended the inauguration. Following closed talks with the Dalai Lama, Foreign Minister Kouchner told media that the Dalai Lama was always welcome in France.

A spokesperson from the Elysée, the presidential palace, announced that President Sarkozy was ready and willing to meet the Dalai Lama on 10 December in Paris on the occasion of the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Shortly after returning to India from France, the Dalai Lama was admitted to a Mumbai hospital suffering from stomach pains. Following a series of tests, the Dalai Lama was discharged on 1 September and has returned to Dharamsala to rest over the coming weeks. In a message issued by his office, the Dalai Lama said he was suffering from "fatigue" and that there was "no cause for concern." ■

India Okays Karmapa's Visit to Border Areas

According to aides of the 17th Karmapa, Ugyen Trinley Dorjee, the Indian government will allow the Karmapa to visit areas close to the Chinese border, after initially rejecting the plan.



The 17th Karmapa during his recent visit to the United States

The young head of Tibetan Buddhism's Kagyu Sect had earlier asked for permission to visit various monasteries in Himachal Pradesh as well as Ladakh in Jammu and Kashmir in July this year. The Karmapa was earlier denied permission to visit Buddhist-dominated areas along the China border in the wake of the Beijing

Olympics, sources close to the Tibetan Lama had told the media. But the Indian government had not cited any reason for denying him permission.

The Karmapa fled Tibet and arrived in India on 5 January 2000, and is the only major reincarnate recognized by both the Dalai Lama and China. Since then, he has mostly lived in the Gyuto Tantric monastery near Dharamsala. The Karmapa visited the United States in May 2008, his first ever trip abroad.

The Indian government continues to restrict the 17th Karmapa from visiting Rumtek Monastery, the seat of the 16th Karmapa, which lies in Sikkim, a sensitive region in Sino-Indian relations. ■



Tibetan filmmaker Dhondup Wangchen prior to his detention in March 2008

Tibetan filmmakers detained for documenting Tibetan Olympics views

Two Tibetan filmmakers are currently being detained by Chinese authorities for recording Tibetan views on the Beijing Olympics inside Tibet. The two traveled extensively in Eastern Tibet prior to the Spring Uprising in March this year, recording over 100 hours of discussions with ordinary Tibetans on how they viewed the Beijing Games and the situation of Tibetans.

Dhondup Wangchen, 34, created the film "Leaving Fear Behind," with assistance from his friend, Golog Jigme. The 25-minute film features several Tibetans inside Tibet who speak on camera candidly about how the Beijing Olympics have affected their lives, the denigration of their culture under Chinese rule, and their passion for the Dalai Lama despite government efforts to outlaw such devotion. Many Tibetans featured in the film acknowledged their willingness to carry the risk of speaking publicly about their plight.

"Leaving Fear Behind" was screened for foreign journalists in a Beijing hotel room on August 6, two days before the start of the Beijing Games. A second screening was stopped by Chinese authorities.

Dhondup Wangchen and Golog Jigme were detained in March shortly after completing filming and sending their tapes overseas to be edited and produced. According to Wangchen's family members, Wangchen was last seen in detention in Guangsheng Binguan in Xining, Qinghai province, and Jigme was last seen in a detention center in Lingxia, Gansu province.

The International Campaign for Tibet is calling on governments to press the Chinese government to provide an update on the whereabouts and conditions of Dhondup Wangchen and Golog Jigme, to detail the charges against them and terms of their detention, and to release them, provided that the charges pertain to nothing more than making a film.

The film can be viewed online at: <http://video.google.de/videoplay?docid=8048230761996582635> ■