

<https://www.savetibet.org/images-of-repression-and-resilience-from-tibet-on-day-of-miracles/>

Images of repression and resilience from Tibet on 'Day of Miracles'

A major show of military force was in evidence today (March 2) during an important prayer festival at Kumbum monastery in eastern Tibet as Tibetan New Year (Losar) rituals draw to a close. Footage from Kumbum shows marching ranks of black-uniformed troops in riot gear, giving the impression of a war zone rather than a peaceful prayer festival, the Monlam Chenmo.

Footage and images circulating on social media showed celebrations of the Monlam Chenmo across the Tibetan area of Amdo over the past two days, with a particularly strong military presence at the ancient Kumbum monastery (in present-day Qinghai), where thousands of devotees gather each year to offer prayers and view the famous butter sculptures.

The images also show airport-style scanning gates at the entrance to Kumbum, and People's Armed Police troops in camouflage gear marching in front of the traditional Tibetan Buddhist butter sculpture offering. The intimidating display of military force is consistent with celebrations of Monlam Chenmo over the past few years; in 2015, the ranks of uniformed paramilitary police appeared to outnumber religious devotees at the festival, which is one of the most significant religious gatherings in Tibet, attracting thousands of pilgrims. Footage and images from 2015 showed troops in riot gear carrying guns jogging into the monastery.

Other images from across eastern Tibet show crowds of thousands of pilgrims gathering to mark the Monlam Chenmo, or Great Prayer Festival, which is observed in the first Tibetan month that started on February 16 this year. Gatherings of this size for Monlam Chenmo are a testimony to Tibetan resilience and the determination to express their religious identity, even in the face of an intimidating security presence and increasingly pervasive 'grass roots' surveillance measures.

In Tibetan Buddhism, the first half of the first month (ending this year on March 2) is described as the 'Festival of Miracles', celebrated as part of the Great Prayer Festival.

In a teaching today in Dharamsala, India, the Dalai Lama told devotees: "The Day of Miracles is celebrated as part of the Great Prayer Festival that has been held in Lhasa for almost 600 years. It commemorates an occasion during the Buddha's life when he defeated other ascetics in a display of miraculous feats." (<https://www.dalailama.com/news/2018/celebrating-the-day-of-miracles>).

The Tibet Autonomous Region is currently closed to foreign visitors in what has become an annual closure linked to the sensitive political anniversary of the 1959 Uprising on March 10. This year also marks the ten-year anniversary of the wave of overwhelmingly peaceful protests that swept across Tibet from March 10, 2008.

View images that were captured on social media here:

<https://www.dalailama.com/news/2018/celebrating-the-day-of-miracles>