



## Mongolian Netizens 'Punished' for Chinese Resettlement Complaints

By Joshua Lipis  
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A photo circulating on social media sites purportedly shows hundreds of Han Chinese waiting to register in front of the Ar-Horqin banner government office.

Photo courtesy of SMHRIC

Chinese authorities have “punished” more than a dozen ethnically Mongolian netizens for “spreading rumors” about the resettlement to Inner Mongolia of hundreds of thousands of Han Chinese left homeless by a 2008 earthquake, a rights group said Monday.

A post by the official microblog of the Ulanhadhot (in Chinese, Chifeng) municipality Public Security

Bureau of Inner Mongolia last week said that at least 13 netizens were “given administrative punishment” for discussing the topic, New York-based Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center (SMHRIC) said in a statement.

“A message posted on the blog on Aug. 7 states that ‘recently, a handful of netizens spread rumors through the Internet such as The Chinese from Sichuan are Migrating to Inner Mongolia, seriously disturbing Internet order and affecting social stability’,” SMHRIC said.

According to the blog, Public Security authorities had “targeted activities related to spreading rumors and made harsher” punishments against those who “carry out these sorts of illegal activities,” in order to maintain social stability.

Two days later, SMHRIC said, the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region Public Security Bureau said on its official website that “state plans to migrate disaster evictees of Sichuan to Inner Mongolia is pure rumor,” confirming that Public Security authorities had “detained, warned and educated” those who “spread the rumors and provocative information through the Internet.”

The post called “rumors” that authorities plan to migrate large numbers of Chinese immigrants from earthquake-stricken Sichuan province to Inner Mongolia “provocative in nature” and “cooked up by a handful of overseas personnel.”

It said a small number of netizens helped to spread the rumor, “stir up ethnic conflict,” and “sabotage social harmony,” justifying the punishment against those who took part in online discussions and protests.

### **Online activities**

SMHRIC said that over the past month, Mongolian netizens in Inner Mongolia had strongly protested Chinese authorities’ plans to migrate “about a million Chinese” from Sichuan to Inner Mongolia, using social media to spread the word and rally Mongolians to stage demonstrations.

“No, no! We can’t accept them! Go wherever you want! But we Southern Mongolians can’t accept them,” wrote Munkhmandaa on his Teng Xun blog, using a term for Inner Mongolia preferred by people opposed to Chinese rule of the region.

Munkhmandaa said that 50,000 Chinese from Sichuan were to be relocated to Left Sonid (in Chinese, Sunite Zuoqi) banner (county), where houses had already been built for them and which was home to only 20,000 Mongolian herders.

He said 80,000 would be moved to Bairin Right (Balin Youqi) banner and 100,000 to Ar Horqin (Alu Ke’erqin Qi) banner.

Another Mongolian blogger said “tens of thousands of Chinese” were heading toward Inner Mongolia.

“Mongols who love their grassland are protesting,” he wrote.

Others called for more drastic measures to repel the displaced Chinese.

“Stand up oppressed Southern Mongolians! Let us drive out the Sichuanese and defend our Southern Mongolia! Brothers and sisters, the grassland is ours,” one poster, which went viral online, said.

A drawing of a man in dark sunglasses holding a spear posted by Mongolian netizen Husel also made the rounds, with text saying “I am from Ar Horqin banner. If you Sichuanese come to our land, I will break your legs!”

### **Official denial**

SMHRIC said that in response to the heated discussion by Mongolian netizens, the regional Public Security Bureau put out a statement claiming that “there have never been any such documents as ‘Sichuan Disaster Evictees to Inner Mongolia’ issued by the central government or the Autonomous Region.”

It said no Sichuanese earthquake victims “have ever been resettled in the Autonomous Region.”

But while authorities deny that any large-scale migration had ever taken place, SMHRIC said that various reports in China’s official news media since the 2008 earthquake say otherwise.

In one September 2008 report by the official Inner Mongolia News Net, directors of the Poverty Alleviation and Development Associations of both Sichuan and Inner Mongolia met in the latter’s capital Hohhot and signed an agreement shortly after the earthquake.

The report said the pact looked to “boost economic cooperation through combining the advantages of Sichuan province’s human resources and technology and the advantages of Inner Mongolia’s natural resources.”

Another report released later that month by the News Net said that the Dong Da Meng Gu Wang Group of Inner Mongolia’s Ordos municipality initiated and carried out the “Project for Resettling 400 Sichuan Earthquake Evictees Households in Dong Da Villages for Poverty Alleviation” in the name of “ecological migration” and “poverty relief.”

The report quoted a peasant representative from Qingchuan county in Sichuan as saying that he had “made up my mind ... to go back once to pack up my stuff and bring my first group of people and settle here” during his orientation in Ordos.

### **Chinese wave**

Meanwhile, local Mongolians from Ar Horqin banner have complained that waves of Chinese immigrants from Sichuan have recently flooded their hometowns, according to SMHRIC.

The rights group cited photos circulating on social media sites that purportedly show hundreds of newly arrived Chinese families with their luggage gathered in front of the Ar Horqin banner government office apparently preparing to register as residents.

It quoted eyewitness blogger “T” as saying that major hotels in the area had become “completely occupied by the newly-arrived Sichuanese.”

Clashes between Han Chinese and ethnic Mongolian herders protesting to protect grasslands are not new to Inner Mongolia.

Ethnic Mongolians, who make up almost 20 percent of Inner Mongolia's population of 23 million, complain of environmental destruction and unfair development policies in the region.

Last month, about a dozen ethnic Mongolians were arrested and several others injured in clashes with police after a herder was assaulted by a group of drunken Han Chinese in Sonid Left banner.

And in April this year, more than 100 Chinese farmers assaulted ethnic Mongolian herders during a dispute over leased land, leaving seven herders seriously injured in Bayantal township in Ongniud (Wengniute Qi) banner.