



Dozen Arrested After Inner Mongolian Herders Clash With Police

By Rachel Vandenbrink
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An angry crowd surrounds a police vehicle amid clashes in Inner Mongolia's Sonid Left Banner on July 21, 2013.

Photo courtesy of SMHRIC

About a dozen ethnic Mongolians were arrested and several others injured in weekend clashes with police after a herder was assaulted by a group of drunken Han Chinese in northern China's Inner Mongolia region, an overseas rights group said Monday.

Hundreds of mostly ethnic Mongolian herders smashed the windows and doors of the local public security bureau of Sonid Left (in Chinese, Sunite Zuoqi) banner (county) on Sunday night, the New York-based Southern Mongolia Human Rights Information Center (SMHRIC) said.

The group, citing photos and written communication from eyewitnesses, said the clashes erupted in the banner's capital Mandalt (Mendeleite) township in Xilin Gol league (prefecture) after three Han Chinese who were drunk insulted the Mongolian herder and had him beaten up.

Without punishing those who had assaulted him, police arrested the herder and "tortured" him, the group said, quoting one eyewitness blogger as saying that police had beaten him further and "poured hot chili pepper oil" into his eyes.

"Seeing the extreme injustice and discrimination, hundreds of Mongolians rushed to destroy the police vehicle at the scene and proceeded to smash the windows of the Public Security building," SMHRIC quoted another blogger as saying.

A dozen ethnic Mongolians were arrested after riot police were called in from elsewhere in Xilin Gol to crack down on the crowd, it said, adding that several others were injured.

An official at the public security bureau told SMHRIC on Monday that those arrested in the clash were still in custody.

'On our own land'

A Mongolian student named Bataa who took part in the clash told SMHRIC that the clash had been rooted in ethnic tensions in the region, where the overwhelming majority of residents are Han Chinese.

"I was on the scene, and supported our fellow Mongolians," he said. "The Chinese are going too far on our own land."

Clashes between the two groups, particularly involving ethnic Mongolian herders protesting to protect grasslands, are not new to the region.

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

In 2011, a herder in Xilin Gol League named Murgan was killed amid a standoff with Han Chinese mining company employees in an incident that set off a wave of protests by ethnic Mongolians in the region.

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 (in Chinese, Wengniute Qi) banner.