



Inner Mongolian Herder Beaten to Death in Land Clash

By Rachel Vandenbrink
2013-08-23



Han Chinese railroad workers beat and threaten Mongolian herders in Uushin banner, Inner Mongolia, on Aug. 19, 2013.

Photo courtesy of SMHRIC

An ethnic Inner Mongolian herder has been “brutally” beaten to death by Han Chinese railroad workers while protesting the occupation of grazing lands, stoking tensions as the authorities keep his relatives under house arrest without prosecuting his attackers, according to an overseas rights group.

Herder Bayanbaatar, 58, was killed Monday in Uushin (in Chinese, Wushen) banner (county) in Inner Mongolia’s Ordos municipality after being severely assaulted by workers from China Railway Bureau No.23, the U.S.-based Southern Mongolian Human Rights Information Center (SMHRIC) said this week.

Chinese central authorities, concerned that the unrest could spark widespread protests prompted by a similar

killing of a herder two years ago, have sent representatives to negotiate compensation offers between the main attacker and Bayanbaatar's family, according to the group.

Local authorities have placed some 80 people including Bayanbaatar's family under house arrest at a funeral home, the group said.

Citing contacts in the region, the SMHRIC said that several fellow herders from Bayanbaatar's Tug Sum township were believed to have been arrested on Thursday on suspicion of possible unrest sparked by the case, but the arrests could not be confirmed.

Bayanbaatar was among a group of herders protesting the railroad company's occupation of their grazing land without proper compensation when its workers started beating and throwing rocks at them, injuring several, according to SMHRIC.

'Intentional, malicious, and brutal' killing

After beating Bayanbaatar the workers prevented herders from taking him to the hospital for at least half an hour and he died of his injuries, relatives told the group.

Police arrived late on the scene and refused to make arrests, they said.

"It is very clear that the killing was intentional, malicious, and brutal," Bayanbaatar's daughter-in-law Chyandmuun, whose husband was also injured in the clash, told SMHRIC.

The workers "violently kicked and used their fists" on Bayanbaatar after threatening to kill all of the herders with knives if they continued their protest, she said. "Most of the beating was done by one man in a white shirt."

Photos taken of the clash show the man beating herders and throwing rocks at them, SMHRIC said.

Held 'hostage'

Chyandmuun said she was being held "hostage" along with some 80 others at a funeral home near the the Uushin People's Hospital.

"The entire funeral house is put under tight police surveillance and we are not allowed to leave the funeral house," she said.

"Our every single move is monitored closely. Our phones are tapped; Police are escorting us everywhere around the clock even when we go to the toilet."

"We have completely lost our freedom here."

'Not the only victim'

The family has not received any word on prosecution of Bayanbaatar's attackers, she said.

Authorities have offered Bayanbaatar's family 500,000 yuan (U.S. \$82,000) in compensation for his death, but relatives have refused, demanding a government apology and that the killer be brought to justice.

"My father-in-law or my family is not the only victim. All Mongolians are victimized," Chyandmuun said.

She rejected claims by local authorities and in local media reports that Bayanbaatar's death was linked to a pre-existing heart condition.

"My father-in-law was a very healthy man who had no health problem at all. It is an undeniable fact that my father-in-law was beaten to death by the Chinese."

Bayanbaatar is at least the fifth ethnic Mongolian herder to die amid altercations with Han Chinese over grazing land in recent years, including one who committed suicide last month after stabbing to death the head of a local "livestock grazing prohibition team."

In 2011, the death of herder Murgan, who was run over by a worker driving a coal-hauling truck while protesting the destruction of grazing lands by a mining company, triggered weeks of demonstrations by herders and students across Inner Mongolia.

In June this year, hundreds of herders smashed the windows and doors of the local public security bureau of Xilingol league's Sonid Left (Sunite Zuoqi) banner after a herder was assaulted by a group of drunken Han Chinese.