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### **Three Tibetans shot dead on first day of Chinese New Year**

International Campaign for Tibet

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Three Tibetans were killed and several injured when police opened fire on Tibetans who gathered to protest in Drango, Kardze (the Tibetan area of Kham) today, the first day of Chinese New Year. The escalating crackdown in Drango follows the circulation of leaflets in the area saying that Tibetans should not celebrate the New Year in 2012 because of the self-immolations, and declaring an intention by the unnamed author of the leaflets to set fire to themselves at the time of Tibetan New Year (Losar, which falls on February 22).

The Chinese state media confirmed that one Tibetan had died (Xinhua, January 23) in the protest. More Tibetans may die of their injuries following the incident today as Tibetans who were wounded by being shot or beaten by police are too frightened to seek medical treatment at the local government-run hospital due to concerns of arrest.

Tibetans gathered in Drango (Chinese: Luhuo) county town in Kardze (Chinese: Ganzi) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan, at around 12 noon-2 pm today (January 23) following a buildup of tensions in the area. According to Tibetan exile sources in contact with Tibetans in the area, the local authorities tightened control in the area after the dissemination of leaflets. Although full details of circumstances leading up to the protest are not known, several sources said that police had adopted harsh measures to counter the impact of the leaflets, and that this has led to people from the three main nomadic areas of Drango gathering in the town. Tibetans shouted slogans calling for freedom and saying that they could not live under Chinese rule in Tibet.

A Tibetan exile in contact with some of the sources said: “The sense of grief and pain about the self-immolations across Tibet is at the forefront of people’s minds, and because they could not bear it, they began to express their views and protest – even though they must have known the danger they faced. Today was the beginning of lunar New Year (Chinese New Year) but people in the area had decided not to celebrate because of the self-immolations that have happened.”

According to the same sources, when news spread of the protest, Tibetans began to converge upon Drango from different areas including Serthar and Lithang (Chinese: Litang), also in Kardze. There are serious fears of further escalation and military buildup, and concerns for the safety of monks at Drango monastery (the name means literally ‘head of the rock’). Drango is one of the most important and largest monasteries in Kham, situated on a mountain slope at the confluence of two rivers, around 25 kilometers from Kardze town.

One of the Tibetans killed in the shooting has been named as Yonden, the brother of a reincarnate lama in a local monastery. In neighbouring Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) last week, two Tibetans were shot after police opened fire on Tibetans who had gathered following the self-immolation of 20-year old former monk Losang Jamyang, the 17th Tibetan to set fire to himself since February 2009. It is still not known whether any of the Tibetans who were shot or beaten after this incident died, but tensions remain very high in Ngaba (the Tibetan area of Amdo). ([Latest information here](#) [1].)

Tibetans in the Kardze area, the Tibetan area of Kham, are renowned for their strong sense of Tibetan identity and nationalism, and have risked their lives on numerous occasions through demonstrations, prayer vigils, and solitary protests, in order to convey their loyalty to the Dalai Lama and their anguish at the repression since March, 2008. Police previously opened fire on peaceful protestors in Drango on March 24, 2008, shooting dead a 21-year old monk called Kunga. The protest had followed a clash with a Chinese official work team requiring Tibetans to sign a document denouncing the Dalai Lama. ([ICT Report: Move to allow Dalai Lama pictures prompts speculation: No policy change evident Secret Shrine with HHDL Images](#) [2]).

Three Tibetans from Kardze set fire to themselves last year in separate incidents; Tsewang Norbu from Nyitso monastery in Tawu (Chinese: Daofu), on August 15; monk Dawa Tsering, who set fire to himself during a Cham (monastic) dance in Kardze monastery on October 25, and nun Palden Choetso, from Ganden Jangchup Choeling nunnery also in Tawu on November 3. ([ICT: Self-Immolation Fact Sheet](#) [3])

Hardline Chinese campaigns against the Dalai Lama, economic policies that have led to the loss of Tibetans' land and livelihoods, and an intense security buildup have caused deep resentment and tensions in Kardze. One of 18 counties in the prefecture, Kardze has been the site of more known political detentions of Tibetans by Chinese authorities than any other county outside the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) since the current period of Tibetan political activism began in 1987, based on data available in the Congressional-Executive Commission on China Political Prisoner Database ([www.cecc.gov](http://www.cecc.gov) [4]). ([ICT Report: Dozens of Tibetans imprisoned in new wave of Kardze demonstrations: protest in Lhasa by Dargye monk](#) [5])

An article in Ganzi Daily published on January 4, 2008, noted that the county's remote location and "historical reasons" - a reference to Tibetan pro-independence sentiment and loyalty to the Dalai Lama - had made the work of "maintaining public order and safeguarding stability...very arduous."

The Kardze region has been closed to visitors since April 21, 2011 when a travel ban was imposed by the authorities following a major crackdown in neighboring Ngaba (Chinese: Aba) Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture. No explanation was given for the ban, and the Chinese authorities have denied to governments that it is in place. ([ICT Report: Crackdown continues at Kirti as Chinese authorities maintain pretence of 'normality'](#) [6])

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[3] <http://www.savetibet.org/resource-center/maps-data-fact-sheets/self-immolation-fact-sheet>

[4] <http://www.cecc.gov>

[5] <http://www.savetibet.org/media-center/ict-news-reports/dozens-tibetans-imprisoned-new-wave-kardze-demonstrations-protest-lhasa-kardze-monk>

[6] <http://www.savetibet.org/media-center/ict-news-reports/crackdown-continues-kirti-chinese-authorities-maintain-pretence-'normality'>