

Urumqi residents urge further action

Written by Taipei Times

Monday, 07 September 2009 09:09 -

Residents in Urumqi demanded further action yesterday after the sacking of two top officials in the restive Xinjiang region over syringe attacks that sparked deadly protests.

The Communist Party chief of Xinjiang's capital Urumqi and the region's top police official were dismissed on Saturday in the wake of the protests that left five people dead, but residents said the sackings were not enough.

"They [the sackings] will have a small impact, but this is not really what we wanted," said Du Xuelian, a clerk in a shop selling eyeglasses in Urumqi. "We want them to solve these problems. Changing officials isn't really the answer."

The protests in Urumqi began on Wednesday, with angry citizens demanding the government act to stop a spate of mysterious syringe attacks, just under two months after ethnic riots in the city left nearly 200 mostly Han Chinese dead, according to Beijing.

Calm only returned to the northwestern city on Saturday.

Liu Jialong, the owner of another glasses shop, called on the new officials to act firmly.

"This [the sackings] will definitely have an impact, but long term, to solve all these problems, it's going to take a lot of time and a lot of effort," he said. "We hope the new officials will have greater resolve in handling these affairs."

Yesterday, life in Urumqi began to return to normal, with pedestrians and traffic back on the streets, but in a sign that the situation was still tense, thousands of armed police were spread out in the city and officers searched the bags of passing men and women in the traditional Uighur district, as plainclothes officials looked on.

"It's really sad to live like this," said a 37-year-old store owner, who refused to be named — a member of the mainly Muslim Uighur minority. "We don't know how long it will be before we can relax again."

More than 530 people have gone to hospital after being stabbed with syringes in Urumqi in the past few weeks, official media said, and authorities have stressed that both Han and Uighurs were victims of the attacks.

China has arrested four people in connection with the stabbings and four others are to be criminally prosecuted.

Prosecutor Udgar Abdulrahman told journalists that in one case, a 47-year-old Uighur man assaulted police with a syringe containing heroin.

Urumqi residents urge further action

Written by Taipei Times

Monday, 07 September 2009 09:09 -

In another case, two drug addicts — a Uighur man and woman — threatened a taxi driver with a syringe and robbed him, before being arrested.

A panel of medical specialists told reporters it had examined the records of 217 victims and so far there was no evidence they had contracted diseases related to radioactive substances, anthrax, hepatitis B or AIDS.

Beijing has long contended it faces a major Islamic separatist threat originating in Xinjiang.

It blamed the July unrest on “separatists,” but Uighurs say it was sparked when Chinese security forces reacted harshly to peaceful protests over an earlier factory brawl in southern China.

Source: [Taipei Times 2009/09/07](#)