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## **'New Year of Mourning' in Tibet: Police again open fire killing Tibetan**

International Campaign for Tibet

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At least one Tibetan was killed yesterday (January 24) when police opened fire on Tibetan protestors in Serthar (Chinese: Seda) in Kardze.

This shooting death occurred a day after police killed a Tibetan called Yonden ([pictured here](#) [1]) during a protest in Drango (Chinese: Luhuo) also in Kardze Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Sichuan (the Tibetan area of Kham) on the first day of the Chinese (and Amdowa) New Year. The situation remains tense in Drango with high numbers of troops surrounding the monastery and in the town.

News has also emerged of two peaceful vigils by monks and laypeople on Monday (January 23) in neighboring Ngaba (Chinese: Aba), the Tibetan area of Amdo, where most of the self-immolations of Tibetans have occurred since February 2009. Police broke up one of the vigils, but allowed a circumambulation of Kirti monastery by monks and laypeople to continue.

According to Kirti monks in exile: "January 23 is New Year's Day in Amdo, but there is no celebration, and people are treating it as a day of mourning. People are mostly gathered in their local community places and temples, offering butter-lamps and reciting mantras for the whole day. The people of Amdo Ngaba, monks and laity, have resolved to publicly mourn rather than celebrate any annual festivals, whether whitewashing houses in spring or harvest festival in summer, and have started by marking the new year in this way."

### **Serthar town square "covered in blood" after shooting**

Tibetan sources said that the town square in Serthar was "covered in blood" and tear-gas canisters were scattered in the street after the shooting yesterday (January 24). Tibetans had gathered at the town square in Serthar in the morning after 10 a.m. Tibetan sources in exile said that hundreds of Tibetans gathered peacefully, and armed police did not take any immediate action. But after some time, tear-gas was fired and police started shooting into the crowd. One exile source said: "Tibetans were running everywhere to escape. There were Chinese taxi-drivers and other Chinese who had been in the area too were running with them away from the troops. Some couldn't run away because they were too seriously injured." According to various exile sources in contact with Tibetans in the region, leaflets or posters had been disseminated that were either similar or the same to those distributed in Drango on Monday (January 23), encouraging Tibetans not to celebrate the New Year, but to mark it by mourning ([ICT Report: Three Tibetans shot dead on first day of Chinese New Year](#) [1]).

ICT has been given the names of three Tibetans who were severely injured in yesterday's protest; their current whereabouts and condition are not known. The Chinese state media has confirmed the death of one Tibetan who was shot. The area is now completely locked down, with some sources reporting at least 40 military trucks arriving in the town. The number of detentions is also not known.

The protest on January 24 was the fourth in recent days (the second in two days in Serthar county town in addition to two other protests in rural areas of Serthar).

On January 23, Tibetans gathered in the town square at Serthar and staged a protest. According to one Tibetan, a banner was seen which carried a message translated by exile sources as: "We protest against failed Chinese policies in Tibet." It is not clear how many people were involved and it seems the protest ended peacefully and without violence. On January 22, there was another protest in a village in the Serthar area involving a number of local people calling for the long life of the Dalai Lama and for freedom for Tibetans. Although police arrived, the protest was dispersed without violence. No further details are currently known about these two incidents.

On January 18, around 50 Tibetans participated in a protest in a village and monastery some distance from Serthar town, calling for the long life of the Dalai Lama and for Chinese migrants to leave Tibet, according to information from one source in exile who has spoken to people in the area.

### **A new year of mourning: Ngaba vigils**

On the first day of the Chinese and Amdowa New Year on Monday (January 23), two vigils were held in Ngaba Tibetan and Qiang Autonomous Prefecture, including one at Kirti monastery.

According to monks from Kirti monastery in exile, a number of local people were detained by police and taken away on January 23. It is not known whether these detentions are linked to Chinese New Year or an upcoming prayer festival, to be held at Kirti on January 25. Tibetan nomads and others travelling to this festival have been stopped and detained, according to the same sources.

On the same day, monks and laypeople gathered in Ngaba county town outside the main entrance of Kirti monastery.

The same sources said: "A confrontation was avoided when members of the monastery administration came and led the crowd in circumambulation of the monastery, holding butter-lamps and incense sticks and chanting mantras. By 3 pm their number had grown to 300, and they continued walking around the monastery walls and chanting prayers. Security forces looked on but did not start beating people or making arrests."

On the morning of the same day, monks from Namtso monastery, near Me'uruma township, and laypeople gathered, reciting mantra and carrying with them dry tsampa (roasted barley flour - a Tibetan staple, and a food that is associated with Tibetan identity). They walked in a candle-lit procession, even while confronted by troops who blocked their path, according to the same exile sources.

They began to call for the long life of the Dalai Lama and freedom in Tibet, and police then began to beat the Tibetans and detain them. According to the same sources, many of the Namtso monks and laypeople were taken away in a truck.

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[1] <http://www.savetibet.org/media-center/ict-news-reports/three-tibetans-shot-dead-first-day-chinese-new-year>