

Monk self-immolates in eastern Tibet

[28 February 2009] A Kirti monk in his mid-twenties has become the first known Tibetan to self-immolate.

On 27 February, the monk, known as Tapey (pictured right), set fire to himself in protest at a crossroad on Ngaba town's main street. People's Armed Police (PAP) shot at him, doused the flames and bundled him into a police van. Though unconfirmed he is believed to have later died.

The protest took place when the Monlan prayer festival was due to commence. This festival had been banned by the Chinese authorities but earlier in the day hundreds of Kirti monks had ignored this ban. However, at the request of senior monks and local officials the ceremony was disbanded and the monks dispersed. It is believed that at this point Tapey walked to the crossroads, poured gasoline over his body and set himself alight.

During his protest he held a handmade Tibetan national flag with a picture of the Dalai Lama at its centre and shouted slogans. Members of the People's Armed Police shot at his feet, causing him to collapse before putting out the flames and taking him away in a police van. Following his protest, monks from Kirti monastery carried out prayer rituals.

Further reading: ICT

Tapey reported to be alive

[UPDATE: 19 December 2011] Tapey was feared dead for nearly three years until Tibetan blogger Woesser reported that he was being held in a military hospital in Barkham. She reported that, as a result of the gunshots, his legs remained useless. Furthermore, Woesser revealed that Tapey's mother has been responsible for his care. She is banned from leaving the hospital and from talking to outside visitors. His uncle is supposedly the only outside visitor permitted.

Ngaba has been a hotbed of military occupation since 16 March 2008 when a protest led to the deaths of 10 Tibetans, the detention of many monks and laypeople as well as the raiding of the monastery. Since then the presence of Chinese forces has been ever growing as the number of self-immolations and protests in the region has increased.

Further reading: Phayul