

Police fire teargas on China village after land grab protest

Tuesday 12 March 2013, by [China Labour Net](#), [The Lahore Times](#) (Date first published: 10 March 2013).

Chinese security forces fired tear gas and beat protesters in a village in southern China on Sunday to quell a grassroots protest movement over a land dispute, residents said.

Dozens of villagers were taken to hospitals in Mianhu town and Jieyang city and five people were arrested, witnesses said.

A large contingent of riot police and other security personnel moved into Shangpu village in southern Guangdong province early on Sunday morning, said several residents contacted by Reuters by telephone and on microblogging sites.

“They didn’t say a thing and started firing teargas and beating villagers with truncheons,” said a young villager who witnessed the incident.

“They had torches on their helmets, like miners, and were hitting some old people with truncheons who were sleeping in tents. They gave no warning.”

Gongs were sounded and hundreds of villagers charged out to help those being beaten but were forced back by some 3,000 security personnel and volleys of teargas, villagers said.

The unrest in Shangpu was triggered over a land deal involving some 33 hectares of rice paddies on the outskirts of the village that were leased cheaply to a firm called Wan Feng for 50 years to build an electric cable factory.

The deal, made without majority village consent, was brokered by Shangpu’s village committee chief Li Baoyu, according to a signed contract seen by Reuters.

The villagers want the contract scrapped, their land returned and Li fired.

In late February several hundred men, armed with steel pipes and spades, threatened the 3000-strong village to accept the land deal. Villagers, however, retaliated, chasing the men away and destroyed over 20 of their jeeps and cars.

The villagers refused to allow authorities to clear away the gutted vehicles, demanding the land deal be scrapped first.

But early on Sunday, however, tow trucks cleared away most of the vehicles from a highway outside the village. A small number remained on the main street.

“We tried to stop them from doing this...If they tow away the cars, they won’t do anything anymore,” said a villager.

A senior villager, who delivered a written indictment against the land sale to provincial leaders including Guangdong governor Zhu Xiaodan, said he was shocked and disappointed with Communist

Party authorities for cracking down in this manner.

Authorities in nearby Jieyang city have verbally agreed to scrap the land deal, senior villagers say, but they have not yet been offered written proof of this.

The situation in Shangpu is similar to that of another high-profile standoff over land seizures in Wukan village, about an hour's drive away – that openly revolted for several months over murky land sales in 2011. Like Wukan, Shangpu villagers are also calling for elections to vote in a new village leader.

REUTERS

* *From The Lahore Times*. Published: March 10, 2013:

<http://www.lhrtimes.com/2013/03/10/police-fire-teargas-on-china-village-after-land-grab-protest/#ixz2NCsw63Jh>

Earlier Report: Villagers Protest Land Grab, Demand Democracy

Police have set up a blockade around the Guangdong village of Shangpu, just 100 kilometers away from Wukan, after residents clashed with thugs they claim were sent by the local communist party chief in connection with a disputed land deal. The villagers have demanded democratic elections, according to AFP, which has gained entry into Shangpu:

At the main entrance of the village of 3,000 people, 40 police and officials stood guard, barring outside vehicles from entering. Not far away, a cloth banner read: “Strongly request legal, democratic elections.”

Shangpu's two-storey houses, typical of the region, and low-slung family-run workshops are surrounded by fields awaiting spring planting. But the main street is lined with the wrecks of cars damaged in the clash, with glass and metal littering the ground.

Residents said they should have the right to vote both for the leader who represents them and on whether to approve a controversial proposal to transform rice fields into an industrial zone.

“This should be decided by a vote by villagers,” said one of the protest leaders, adding: “The village chief should represent our interests, but he doesn't.”

Residents told AFP that the village chief and party head fraudulently collected signatures to facilitate the transfer of farmland to a local businessman for industrial use, and they fear they will not be properly compensated. China's state-run Global Times reported on Monday that the county-level public security bureau arrested the village leader and eight others it claims were hired by the village leader to attack the Shangpu residents:

County authorities said that on the morning of February 22, village committee director, Li Baoyu, called police to report he was attacked in his office and injured by six masked thugs. Less than an hour later, police say, Li hired his own thugs from other villages and ordered them to attack residents of Shangpu village, said the newspaper.

According to county police the fight injured four residents and damaged at least 26 vehicles, two of which were burned. Police earlier arrested Li, and on Friday eight other assailants were detained. The police are still hunting for 10 other men.

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* <http://worldlabour.org/eng/node/558>
