Chinese Police Fire on Tibetan Protesters Again

By KEITH BRADSHER

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HONG KONG — The police in the western Chinese province of Sichuan fired on Tibetan protesters for the third time this week, killing at least one and injuring several, overseas Tibetan activist groups said on Friday.

The shootings, which appear to be the worst outbreak of violence in the heavily Tibetan-populated region of Sichuan in nearly four years, came as the Chinese authorities tightened security in the region as well as in neighboring Tibet to suppress any further unrest.

Foreign journalists in Sichuan who tried to drive to the affected region were turned back at security checkpoints that had been erected more than 60 miles from where the shootings took place. One overseas activist group, Free Tibet, said its informants in Lhasa, the Tibetan capital, had reported a heavy increase in Chinese security forces there as well.

The latest shooting episode occurred on Thursday when the police detained a young man for putting up posters that described a series of recent self-immolations as acts aimed at winning freedom for Tibetans, according to Free Tibet, which is based in London, and another activist group, the International Campaign for Tibet, based in Washington. A crowd formed and tried to prevent the officers from taking him away, and the police responded by opening fire, both groups said.

The shooting took place in a village in Rangtang County, known in Tibetan as Dzamtang. It is in Aba Prefecture, which was also the site of the first episode this year in which activists said the police had opened fire on Tibetan protesters. Initial reports suggested that one person may have died during that shooting, on Jan. 14, but overseas activist groups have struggled to confirm that.

The police also fired into crowds earlier this week, on Monday in Luhuo and on Tuesday in Serthar, two communities in Sichuan Province very close to the province’s border with Tibet. All of the shootings, each of which killed at least one person and might have killed several, according to activists, have taken place in largely Tibetan areas.

According to the International Campaign for Tibet, thousands of people were converging on Rangtang on Friday to hold a larger protest.

No information was immediately available on the fate of the young man who had been putting up the posters.

The western region of Sichuan was a focus of protests that roiled Tibetan communities of China in early 2008, five months before the Olympic Games in Beijing.

China has placed blame for Tibetan unrest on outside agitators and agents of Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibet’s government-in-exile in India, where he fled in 1959 after the Chinese military occupied Tibet, a former Himalayan kingdom.

Michael Wines contributed reporting from Beijing, and Rick Gladstone from New York.

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