



Sat Jun 7, 8:19 AM ET

Nepali police halt pro-Tibet protests, 450 detained

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KATHMANDU (Reuters) - Nepali police used batons to break up a pro-Tibet rally in Kathmandu on Saturday, detaining at least 450 exiles, police and witnesses said.

Those detained will be freed later on Saturday, a police officer said. Witnesses said hundreds of refugees, including nuns and monks, shouting "free Tibet" and "down with China" were held as they tried to march towards a Chinese visa office.

It was the highest number of refugees detained in a single day since the exiled Tibetans resumed protests this week after a lull of two weeks following the devastating earthquake in China.

More than 20,000 Tibetans live in Nepal since fleeing their homeland after a failed 1959 uprising against Chinese rule.

Nepal considers Tibet part of China, a key aid donor, and does not allow anti-China activities. However, exiles have been staging regular protests since the Chinese crackdown in Tibet in March.



AP Associated Press Thu Jun 5, 8:56 AM ET

450 Tibetans detained in Nepal: police

KATHMANDU (AFP) — Police on Saturday detained 450 Tibetan activists, beating some with bamboo sticks and punching others, as they staged a pro-Tibet protest in Nepal's capital, officials and witnesses said. Police rounded up the activists as over 500 Tibetans, mostly monks and nuns, crying "Down with China" and "Free Tibet," staged a rally near the sprawling royal pink palace, an area out of bounds to demonstrators. "We detained around 450 Tibetan exiles as they tried to march into the off-limits area for protests," police officer Bharat Lama told AFP.

"We had to beat them as they forcibly tried to enter the restricted zone despite repeated warnings," Lama said, adding all would be freed later Saturday. Police dragged the protesters to waiting police vans and shoved them inside. Those who resisted were punched and kicked, an AFP reporter said. The Tibetan exiles in Nepal began staging almost daily protests in Kathmandu in March after deadly unrest in their homeland. They suspended their protests after a catastrophic earthquake hit China on May 12, leaving about 70,000 people dead, 18,000 missing and 15 million more homeless. But this week they restarted protests in which usually hundreds of demonstrators gather, many are detained and are then released without charge. They return the next day to be detained again. Nepal officially respects its giant northern neighbour's "One China" policy that regards Tibet and Taiwan as indivisible parts of China.

More than 20,000 Tibetan refugees live in Nepal and around 2,500 still arrive annually in Kathmandu before heading to Dharamshala in northern India, home of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan government-in-exile.

Photos AFP, AP et *REUTERS/Deepa Shrestha (NEPAL)*