

Authorities stop mining in Garthar after protests

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Reuters reports that hundreds of Tibetans demonstrated in late May 2007 against lead and zinc mining at Yara Mountain (Chin: Yala Shan), which they consider sacred. The protests took place in Garthar area, Dawu County (Chin: Daofu), Kardze Prefecture (Chin: Ganzi) prefecture in Sichuan province, which belongs to the Tibetan area traditionally known as Kham. Tibetans reportedly smashed cars during the protest outside the local branch of a mining company and, according to a later report of 23 June by Radio Free Asia (RFA), blocked the main Dartsedo (Chin: Kanding) to Kardze road and staged a hunger strike. A number of arrests followed, according to RFA, and 22 Tibetans were taken into custody. Reports that a number of protesters lost their lives have not been confirmed, but residents reported that eight elders have been missing since they tried to petition the Sichuan government in the provincial capital of Chengdu. Later, however, a source in Beijing told RFA that an emergency meeting of local government officials, Party leaders and parliamentary representatives was held and: *"On 18 June, Sichuan provincial authorities instructed Kardze officials to stop any mining activities which do not help the public". "They decided to release all the Tibetans and stop all mining activities which are not properly approved"*, the source added. In the past years, the Chinese authorities have been keen to stop small scale, 'artisan' mining, as this type of mineral extraction is generally harmful to the environment, and small mines operators find it easy to avoid taxation. The government plan to replace them with large-scale industrial mining.

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