

China: Riots win concessions

Sunday 24 June 2007, by [CHENG Eva](#) (Date first published: 21 June 2007).

On June 3, an elderly flower seller in the municipality of Chongqing was critically injured when council rangers violently cleared the area of street hawkers. In response, a thousand-strong riot erupted. Three days later, a similar incident occurred in the Henan provincial capital of Zhengzhou, when a riot of thousands of people forced a backdown from the authorities.

According to the Hong Kong-based Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, more than 100 riot police clashed with the demonstrators during the June 3 incident, which lasted eight hours. Ten people were injured, four seriously.

The vendor in the Zhengzhou incident was a female student who had her front teeth knocked out while being attacked by rangers. According to the June 8 Hong Kong-based *Economic Daily*, those who came to her rescue were also mostly students. During the resulting four-hour riot, a car was torched and five students were arrested.

Within the next day or so, reported the *Economic Daily*, the Zhengzhou City government had ordered that 12 of the rangers involved be punished. Some were sacked and six were detained. The city authorities also ordered the local administration to pay the medical bills of the injured.

The violent implementation of China's one-child policy provoked riots in seven villages and towns in the Bobai county of Guangxi province during May. More than 300 people protested on May 17 outside a local town government office, alleging brutality by birth-control officials and rampant imposition of fines. Similar protests erupted in six nearby towns over the next two days involving some 3000 people, according to a May 23 report on Singtaonet.com.

The report said that following the protests, 4200 officials were sent to 28 villages and towns seeking to "improve communications" with the local people.

On March 30, Singtaonet.com reported on a rare breakdown of government statistics on "mass incidents" — a euphemism for public protests — for the first eight months of 2006. It revealed that around 19% of them were triggered by wages, welfare conditions and other basic survival issues; 15% by land acquisitions and forced evictions; 8% by corporate restructuring and corporate bankruptcy; 6% by civil disputes; 5% in relation to other disputes involving land, mines, forests and water; and 2% by shares and stock market capitalisation issues. Beijing has revealed that there were 87,000 mass incidents in China in 2005, a tenfold increase compared to 1993.

Without quoting a specific source, Singtaonet.com reported that Chinese officials had recently admitted publicly that "mass incidents" have already become "the most prominent problem" impacting on social stability in the country.

A December 8, 2006, Singtaonet.com report claimed that an October 2006 central committee meeting of the Communist Party had resolved to "actively prevent and handle properly the mass incidents".

P.S.

From: International News, Green Left Weekly issue #715 27 June 2007.