

Hu leaves G8 amid Chinese rioting



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Crowds of Han Chinese and Uighurs were separated by riot police

Chinese President Hu Jintao has cut short a visit to Italy for the G8 summit amid ongoing unrest in Xinjiang.

Troops are on the streets after a curfew in Urumqi, Xinjiang's provincial capital, where ethnic riots on Sunday left 156 people dead.

A BBC correspondent in Urumqi says the security forces are now mounting a show of force after fresh clashes on Tuesday between Muslim Uighurs and Han Chinese.

More than 1,400 people have been arrested over Sunday's violence.

[Map showing protest area in Urumqi](#)

State news agency Xinhua said Mr Hu had flown back to Beijing early on Wednesday, leaving officials to represent China at the G8 talks in Rome.

A state visit to Portugal has also been cancelled, Xinhua said.

Bayonets fixed

The BBC's Quentin Sommerville, in Urumqi, says that when the curfew ended on Wednesday morning it was quickly clear that more troops were on the streets of the city than the day before, many standing to attention with bayonets fixed.

On Tuesday, riot police fired tear gas to break up groups of Han Chinese armed with clubs, who said they were angry at violence carried out by ethnic Muslim Uighurs in the north-western province.

Early in the day, Uighur women rallied against the arrest of family members, saying hundreds of their men had been detained arbitrarily in a massive police sweep through Urumqi's Uighur districts.

AT THE SCENE



Quentin Sommerville, Urumqi

As the sun began to set and the guards around the square changed shifts, dozens of trucks and buses full of camouflaged troops began arriving in the city.

Despite the curfew, small groups of Han Chinese - mostly young men - wandered around, weapons still in their hands.

Ethnic harmony and stability are watchwords for China's leadership, but there has been little of either on display here in Xinjiang.

After days of violence and threats, Uighurs and Han Chinese have never been further apart.

[Ethnic mobs overrun city](#)

Later hundreds of Han Chinese marched through the streets of Urumqi smashing shops and stalls belonging to Uighurs.

The BBC's Quentin Sommerville, in Urumqi, says some of the protesters were shouting "down with Uighurs" as they rampaged through the streets armed with homemade weapons.

Police attempted to block access to the bazaar and other Uighur districts of the city and fired tear gas as the Han Chinese confronted groups of Uighurs.

The Han Chinese said they were angry at the failure of security forces to protect their community on Sunday.

One protester, clutching a metal bar, told the AFP news agency: "The Uighurs came to our area to smash things, now we are going to their area to beat them."

'Deadliest riot'

As night fell, correspondents said there was a heavy security presence in People's (Renmin) Square in the city centre and at major intersections elsewhere.

Officials say 156 people - mostly ethnic Han Chinese - died in Sunday's violence. Uighur groups say many more have died, claiming 90% of the dead were Uighurs.

UIGHURS AND XINJIANG



Xinjiang population is 45% Uighur, 40% Han Chinese

Uighurs are ethnically Turkic Muslims

China re-established control in 1949 after crushing short-lived state of East Turkestan

Since then, large-scale immigration of Han Chinese

Sporadic violence since 1991

Attack on 4 Aug 2008 near Kashgar kills 16 Chinese policemen

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One official described Sunday's unrest as the "deadliest riot since New China was founded in 1949". The unrest erupted when Uighur protesters attacked vehicles before turning on local Han Chinese and battling security forces.

They had initially been protesting over a brawl between Uighurs and Han Chinese several weeks earlier in a toy factory thousands of miles away in Guangdong province.

China's authorities have repeatedly claimed that exiled Uighur leader Rebiya Kadeer is stirring up trouble in the region. But she told the BBC she was not responsible for any of the violence.

Tensions have been growing in Xinjiang for many years, as Han Chinese migrants have poured into the region, where China's Uighur ethnic minority is concentrated. Many Uighurs feel economic growth has bypassed them and complain of discrimination and diminished opportunities.

Some Uighurs support the notion of an independent state and there have been a number of bombings and some attacks on security forces.

Chinese authorities say the Xinjiang separatists are terrorists with links to al-Qaeda and receive support from outside the country.

Campaigners accuse China of exaggerating the threat to justify tough security clampdowns in the region.