

Text service resumes 6 months after Xinjiang riots

January 17 2010, By TINI TRAN , Associated Press Writer

(AP) -- Text messaging services restarted with some restrictions Sunday for cell phone users in far western China, more than six months after deadly ethnic rioting prompted the government to shut them down.

Users are once again able to send text messages throughout [China](#), but sending texts to overseas numbers remains prohibited, a staffer with the information office of the Xinjiang provincial government said. She declined to give her name as is customary.

Calls to a service hot line for state-owned [China Mobile](#) in the western region were answered with a message that said texting had resumed but "in order to prevent this service being made use of by lawless persons, each person will be allowed to send a maximum of 20 messages a day."

Last July riots in the provincial capital of Urumqi between Xinjiang's native ethnic minority Uighurs and the majority Han Chinese residents left nearly 200 people dead.

The government blamed the violence on overseas groups pushing for broader rights for Uighurs in Xinjiang, though the groups denied it.

Authorities accused organizers of using text messages and the Internet to organize the protests and promptly shut down cell phone lines and Web sites to "calm the situation."

An operator for China Mobile said roaming services for [mobile phone](#)

[users](#) coming from outside of Xinjiang would remain blocked. A [China Telecom](#) operator said that residents who wanted to make international phone calls would have to provide identification at a local branch office.

In late December, the Xinjiang government allowed limited Internet services to return, with access available to approved Web sites such as the state-run Xinhua News Agency and the People's Daily, the Communist Party newspaper.

Many Uighurs resent Beijing's heavy-handed rule in Xinjiang, and ethnic tensions there occasionally turn violent. China says it respects minority rights and has spent billions on boosting living standards there.

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Citation: Text service resumes 6 months after Xinjiang riots (2010, January 17) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-01-text-resumes-months-xinjiang-riots.html>

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