

IN BRIEF

PROVO, Utah — The mother of missing Brigham Young University student Brooke Wilberger visited the university Monday and brought 3,000 pink bracelets with her.

Cammy Wilberger said the bracelets are intended to keep Brooke's story in the spotlight.

An anonymous donor from Eugene originally donated 20,000 of the bracelets with an additional 25,000 being produced. The bracelets, which carry a tip-line phone number

and the www.FindBrooke.com Web address, are available at the Seagull Bookstore in Provo for a suggested donation of \$1. The proceeds go to the Brooke Wilberger Search and Rescue fund.

Brooke disappeared May 24 while she was working for her sister and brother-in-law at the Corvallis apartment complex they managed.

She vanished from the complex's parking lot, leaving behind her flip-flops, her purse, cell phone and the bucket of soapy water she was using to clean the light fixtures.

— The Associated Press

Riots break out following ethnic tensions in China

Eighteen jailed after a traffic accident instigates violence; residents say seven are dead, 42 injured

BY AUDRA ANG
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LANGCHENGGANG, China — Police by the thousands patrolled this central Chinese town Monday and residents hunkered down in their homes after deadly street fights between members of the country's main ethnic group and a Muslim minority.

On Monday, minivans with loudspeakers strapped to their roofs drove through the dirt roads of Langchenggang and neighboring villages in Henan province.

As many as 5,000 people fought with sticks and burned several houses over the weekend in violence between Hui Muslims and members of the Han ethnic majority, according to Langchenggang residents.

The fighting killed seven people and injured 42, according to residents and the government.

Authorities imposed martial law on the area in Zhongmou County near the city of Zhengzhou, residents said.

Eighteen people were arrested, the government said late Monday in its first official word on the fighting. The statement, carried by the Xinhua News Agency, didn't mention the ethnicities of the rioters.

The government said the violence began after members of two families from separate villages fought over a traffic dispute.

"Afterward, residents of both villages assembled with weapons," the Xinhua report said. "One villager was beaten to death on the spot and two died in the hospital one day later."

A spokesman for the county government, Liang Songzhou, said the traffic dispute involved a collision between two farm vehicles, one driven by a Han and the other by a Hui.

Today's Hui are descended from ethnic Chinese who converted to Islam generations ago. Han Chinese make up more than 90 percent of China's 1.3 billion people. China has 55 officially recognized ethnic groups.

China suffers occasional ethnic tensions, though the level of violence isn't clear because the communist government, eager to maintain the narrative of unity it has long trumpeted, routinely suppresses reports of social conflict.

Tensions are worse in China's poor countryside, home to some 800 million people. Economic competition, disputes over scarce farmland and control of lucrative government posts often combine to cause unrest.

In December 2000, at least five Hui were shot and killed by police during protests in the eastern province of Shandong after a dispute over a Han butcher advertising "Muslim pork." Muslim dietary laws forbid the eating of pork.

On Monday, police officers lined the roads into Langchenggang beginning six miles from town. They stopped cars at checkpoints and turned some away. At least four foreign reporters who visited the area were detained.

Residents sat outside shabby brick homes beside piles of drying corn and watched silently as trucks and tour buses full of police officers roared through the main road that runs through the villages.

There was no visible unrest, though shattered glass was strewn across the road in Weitan, a village adjacent to Langchenggang. Villagers said the debris was left over from an altercation between soldiers and a group of men, but it wasn't clear whether the men were Hui or Han.

In its report, The New York Times said the violence erupted after a Han girl was struck and killed by a Hui taxi driver.

An accountant in the town who would give only his surname, Liu, said the fighting began after three Hui men in a car beat up a 17-year-old Han boy who blocked the street. Liu said that confrontation escalated until a group of 400 to 500 Hui came from a nearby town and large-scale clashes took place.

"A lot of people were carrying clubs to fight. They set fire to several houses," said another Langchenggang resident surnamed Liu, who was not related to the accountant. "Right now, there are lots of police. The local government is allowing residents to move around, but everyone is afraid of going out."