

Clashes in Seoul as Olympic torch relay continues

The Olympic torch relay continued Sunday in the South Korean capital with shouts of pro-China demonstrators and amid strict security.

Shortly after the torch set off from the Olympic Park in the south of the city Sunday afternoon, witnesses reported clashes between the Chinese and some 50 people taking part in a protest against the deportation of North Korean refugees from China.

A middle-aged man tried to immolate himself in protest against the treatment of the North Korean refugees but was stopped by the police before he could set himself on fire.

The torch is due to arrive at the centre of the 1988 Olympic Village Sunday evening after a 24-km relay through the city.

Thousands of Chinese filled Seoul's streets with red flags to show their support for this summer's Olympic Games in Beijing, while in the Olympic Village, members of refugee and human rights groups protested China's treatment of North Korean refugees and its policies on Tibet.

Estimates place the number of North Korean refugees in China at 300,000.

Large numbers of people flee communist North Korea every year to escape hunger and persecution.

Like the previous day's relay through Nagano in Japan, the torch relay through Seoul took place under heightened security, with some 8,000 police officers deployed.

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