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EU-China summit: EU must continue pressing for real progress on human rights in China

(Brussels, Friday 2 September 2005) In the lead-up to the EU-China Summit in Beijing on 5 September, Amnesty International today released a briefing paper reviewing areas of concern raised by the European Union on human rights in China, and called on the EU to continue pressing for real progress.

At the last EU-China Ministerial Troika in May 2005, in relation to future consideration in lifting the arms embargo, the EU expressed human rights concerns on four areas, specifically:

- the need for the release of individuals still held in prison in connection with the pro-democracy movement of 1989;
- the need to ease media censorship;
- the need to reform the "Re-education Through Labour" (RTL) system;
- and the need to ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).

Reporting on cases covering the four areas, Amnesty International considers progress so far unsatisfactory (see "Amnesty International Briefing on EU concerns regarding human rights in China"):

- 1. Detention of Tiananmen prisoners:** 16 years after the events in Tiananmen Square dozens of individuals remain in prison and the Chinese government refuses a full, independent and impartial investigation. Yu Dongyue, for example, remains in prison for having, together with two other young men, thrown paint on the portrait of Mao Zedong that hangs in Tiananmen Square.
- 2. Freedom of expression:** in the last six months the authorities have added new legal, technological, and political means of monitoring and restricting the flow of information and expression in various media, including restrictions in areas where citizens had earlier enjoyed freedoms, such as on private blogs on the internet.
- 3. "Re-education Through Labour":** moves by the Chinese authorities to abolish or reform RTL appear to have slowed over recent months. A proposal for a new law entitled "Illegal Behaviour Rectification Law" (IBRL) appears to fall short of international standards.
- 4. Ratification of the ICCPR:** China's arbitrary detention of human rights defenders, the extensive

use of the death penalty, of torture and other ill-treatment and the lack of immediate access to legal representation are all infringements of key fundamental rights protected by the ICCPR. Ratification of the Covenant would be an important step in committing the Chinese government to stop those practices. But, despite promises, it has not yet provided any concrete timeframe for ratification.

"We welcome the fact that the EU has made the lifting of its arms embargo contingent on human rights reform", said Dick Oosting, Director of Amnesty International EU Office, "but concerns remain in all areas under scrutiny. The Chinese government has yet to present a coherent plan of reform and steps to improve its human rights practices must be implemented in a clear and consistent manner."

Amnesty International calls on the EU to keep pressing the Chinese authorities for such steps in the debate around lifting the arms embargo on China.

"*Amnesty International Briefing on EU concerns regarding human rights in China*" is available at: www.amnesty-eu.org.

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