



Tiananmen crackdown 24 years on, still waiting for justice and denied a voice

The vivid scenes of People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops quashing unarmed civilians on 3 and 4 June 1989 in and around Tiananmen Square still haunt many people around the world. In the past 24 years, the Chinese authorities continue to reject calls from activists to hold an open and independent inquiry into this violent military crackdown.

While the Chinese authorities have demonstrated a superb ability to adapt to economic changes, they have shown stubborn resistance to reforms that would improve human rights. Chinese authorities continue to have a low tolerance for the work of human rights defenders and often persecute both the defenders and their families. For the past two years, the Chinese authorities have held Liu Xia, wife of Liu Xiaobo, under illegal house arrest. Chen Kegui, the nephew of Chen Guangcheng, faced an unfair trial after his uncle's escape, while his family continues to receive threats and harassment. The government similarly persecutes many who continue to criticize the 1989 military crackdown or those who publically commemorate its victims.

Amnesty International reiterates the call for an open and independent inquiry into the 1989 military crackdown and urges the Chinese authorities to guarantee their citizens' rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, which are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and protected in the Chinese Constitution and the new Criminal Procedure Law.

Article 35 of the Chinese Constitution stipulates that "Citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly, of association, of procession and of demonstration" while Article 2 of the Criminal Procedure Law (CPL) states that, "The tasks of the Criminal Procedure Law of the People's Republic of China are to [...] to ensure respect for and safeguard human rights, and to protect citizens' rights to person, rights to property, democratic rights and other rights".

Attempts to commemorate, discuss and demand justice for what happened 24 years ago are forcefully curbed. The 1989 crackdown remains a major official taboo in China. No public discussion of it is allowed.

While there have been repeated calls from exiles, the momentum to demand justice inside China has met different challenges. Increasing numbers of the Tiananmen Mothers, an advocacy group composed mainly of 150 parents whose children were killed in the 1989 military crackdown, have repeatedly urged the Chinese authorities to prosecute and punish the perpetrators but a number of them, have passed away due to advanced age. It is reported that at least four more members died in the past year, which combined with previous deaths reduce their original numbers now by 32, with many of the remaining members suffering from poor health.

In the newly released white paper on *Progress in China's Human Rights in 2012*, issued on 14 May, the Chinese government acknowledges the importance of the internet as a channel "for citizens to exercise their rights to know, participate, be heard and supervise, as well as an important means for the government to get to know the public's opinions". However, for those who search online for "June Fourth" information, or seek to air their views on this subject in social media platforms, their attempts end in vain. The so-called "Great Fire wall" continues to bar Chinese citizens from accessing information not sanctioned by the government. Websites such as Twitter, YouTube and Facebook are blocked. Available social media micro blogging sites such as Sina Weibo are censored. A number of words and phrases such as "June Fourth", "Zhao Ziyang", "democracy" and "human rights" have reportedly been banned from posts. Any publication containing such words will be removed.



At times, the Chinese authorities impose harsh prison sentences on writers, bloggers, journalists, academics, whistle-blowers and ordinary citizens who peacefully exercise their right to freedom of expression, including publishing articles or posting comments online that advocate democratic reform and human rights.

In the lead up to the Tiananmen anniversary activists often experience harassment from authorities including: detention, monitoring of telephones and travel bans both inside and exiting China. Shenzhen-based activist **Yu Gang** was not allowed to leave home on 27 May, and his telephone and internet services were suspended. **Yedu**, an online activist, has been placed under house arrest starting 28 May and has been denied internet access. Shandong-based human rights defender **Li Hongwei** and approximately a dozen people gathering to commemorate the June Fourth anniversary were interrogated by the state police. Reportedly Li Hongwei was the last one to be released after being detained for approximately seven hours. **Zhang Xianling**, a member of the Tiananmen Mothers Group, was warned by the police not to go to Hong Kong with her husband, who had been invited as an advisor for a musical event, on the pretext that “the city is chaotic recently.” The couple did not heed this warning and continued to make their travel arrangements but the organizer of the musical event later rescinded their invitation saying “June Fourth is coming, and they should not come (to Hong Kong) during this sensitive time.”

As the 24th anniversary of the Tiananmen crackdown approaches, Amnesty International urges the Chinese authorities to

- launch an open and independent inquiry into the 1989 military crackdown and hold those responsible for human rights violations accountable;
- publicly acknowledge the human rights violations which occurred;
- cease harassment and prosecution of those exercising their right to freedom of expression and assembly including those seeking reassessment of the 1989 Tiananmen protests and commemorating its victims and;
- provide compensation to victims of the 1989 pro-democracy protests and their families.

Case updates:

The following individuals are still imprisoned for their peaceful web communications about the 1989 crackdown. Amnesty International considers them the prisoners of conscience and call for their immediate and unconditional release.

Chen Wei – On 23 December 2011, Chen Wei was convicted of “inciting subversion of state power” and sentenced to nine years for 11 articles he had written in support of democracy and political reform. He was one of the leaders of the 1989 student democracy movement, for which he was imprisoned until January 1991. In May 1992, authorities arrested him again, this time for commemorating the anniversary of the 1989 student democracy movement and for organizing a political party. They sentenced him to five years for “counterrevolutionary propaganda and incitement.”

Chen Xi – a veteran democracy activist from Guizhou province was sentenced to ten years’ imprisonment in December 2011 after being convicted of “inciting subversion of state power”, and 36 articles he had published on overseas websites advocating democratic reform were cited as evidence. He had earlier been sentenced to a three-year prison term for his activism during the 4 June 1989 democracy movement and was released in June 1992. In 1996, he was sentenced to ten years’



imprisonment in connection with his democracy activism He was released in 2005 upon completion of his term.

Zhu Yufu – a Zhejiang based democracy activist, was sentenced to seven years in February 2012 for “inciting subversion of state power” for writing a poem. He supported the students during the 1989 student democracy movement and afterwards was repeatedly summoned by the authorities. His wife Jiang Hangli has been appealing to authorities to release him on medical grounds due to his longstanding poor health, but these requests have been rejected. In April, his wife visited Zhu Yufu and subsequently said his head was swollen. She also reported that the prison authorities have cancelled his nutritious meals and have blocked him from sending and receiving letters.

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For more information please call Roseann Rife + 852 3963 7101 or +852 9103 7183 (M)

