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CHINA: TIANANMEN -- THE SILENCING OF REMEMBRANCE

Eight years after the brutal suppression of the 1989 pro-democracy movement, the Chinese government continues to deny accountability for the hundreds of deaths which took place and keeps in jail many of those involved in the protests, Amnesty International said today.

The human rights organization produced a list of 300 people who remain in prison for their part in the protest. All are serving long prison sentences -- including life -- many have been ill-treated and all faced unfair trials. They form just a fraction of the thousands of political prisoners in China. However, the victims of 1989 also include relatives of those killed or imprisoned and people harassed and jailed for seeking to expose the truth about the events.

“The Chinese authorities continue to show contempt for world opinion by describing the popular protests as a ‘counter-revolutionary riot’,” Amnesty International said. “Following the death of Deng Xiaoping, the new leadership should take the opportunity to reevaluate the events of 1989 and end the distorted and inaccurate propaganda of the last eight years.”

“The victims and their families deserve the truth at long last, rather than the harassment, surveillance and attempts to silence their brave struggle for truth and justice.”

Bereaved relatives and families face intimidation when openly commemorating their dead. Dissidents too put themselves at risk by regularly commemorating the date or by making appeals and submitting petitions to the government.

The Chinese government’s attempt to silence the remembrance of Tiananmen Square does not bode well for the people of Hong Kong who each year commemorate the 4th of June. The legal reforms recently tabled by the future administration of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) give the authorities the power to prevent legitimate peaceful demonstrations in Hong Kong, such as this one, on very broadly defined grounds of “national security”.

“This year should not be the last time that Hong Kong residents are able to remember the victims of 1989 and promote respect for human rights in China,” Amnesty International said. “For the people of Hong Kong the ability to commemorate the victims in the future will be a benchmark for human rights respect in the HKSAR.”

BACKGROUND -- SOME CASE DETAILS:

Wang Dan and **Li Hai** -- both prisoners of conscience -- were imprisoned for their activities in 1989 are now serving a second term of imprisonment for seeking redress for those who were silenced for simply calling for democratic reforms within China. Both were held illegally in

incommunicado detention for almost 18 months and sentenced after unfair trials to long terms of imprisonment.

Wang Dan was sentenced to 11 years for ‘conspiring to subvert the government’. Amnesty International condemned the trial as a parody of justice, illustrated by a judges verdict which was obviously prepared in advance of the trial. Li Hai’s trial was held in secret. He was charged with ‘prying into’ alleged state secrets. The charge was based solely on accusations that Li Hai had attempted to gather information about political prisoners imprisoned since the 1989 massacre. For this he was sentenced to nine years’ imprisonment.

Li Wangyang, a prisoner of conscience, was sentenced in 1990 to 13 years in jail for his involvement in the 1989 protests. He was accused of putting up banners, issuing leaflets and founding an independent workers organization in Shaoyang, Hunan province. Li was charged with ‘counter-revolutionary propaganda and incitement’. During his imprisonment he has been reportedly severely ill-treated.

Zhao Junlu, a prisoner of conscience, was charged with ‘counter-revolutionary propaganda and incitement’ for giving lectures on the pro-democracy movement to students in Fuxin city, Liaoning Province, collecting donations and displaying photos of the Tiananmen protests. He is serving a 10-year sentence.

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For further information, to arrange an interview, or to receive a copy of *People’s Republic of China: The Eighth Anniversary of the 1989 Massacre -- Those Who Have Been Silenced*, please call:

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