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MEDIA ADVISORY

China: new report on torture and ill-treatment of Falun Gong followers

Numerous reports of torture and ill-treatment of followers of the Falun Gong, banned by the Chinese authorities in July 1999, continue to be received by Amnesty International.

In a report released today, the human rights organization documents accounts of police brutality against people arrested in the immediate aftermath of the ban and others detained since then. One member of the group, Zhao Jinhua, a 42 year-old woman from Shandong province, was reportedly beaten to death in police custody -- an autopsy report revealed that her death was caused by beatings with blunt instruments.

Most of the accounts describe patterns of torture which are known to be common in China, including use of electric shock batons, beatings and a device known as the "Di Lao", in which victims' wrists and feet are shackled and linked together with crossed steel chains making it nearly impossible to walk or sit down.

The report, including names and photographs of the victims and their injuries, is further evidence that torture of criminal or political suspects and convicted prisoners remains widespread in China, despite being prohibited under Chinese law.

Hundreds of Falun Gong members remain in detention and Amnesty International fears that they are at risk of torture and ill treatment.

In the report the organization calls on the Chinese authorities:

to launch immediate and impartial investigations into all allegations of torture and ill-treatment and to make public the findings;

to punish those found responsible for torturing or ill-treating detainees;

to ensure that all individuals who remain in detention are protected from torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

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For more information or to receive a copy of "*Reports of torture and ill-treatment of followers of the Falun Gong*" (AI Index ASA 17/54/99), please call Amnesty International's press office in London, UK, on + 44 171 413 5566 or visit our website at <http://www.amnesty.org>