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**MEDIA ADVISORY**

**People's Republic of China: Uighurs arbitrarily detained and tortured**

Amnesty International is today issuing information about the cases of Uighurs arbitrarily detained and tortured over the past few months in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) and elsewhere in the People's Republic of China (PRC).

The Uighurs are the majority ethnic group in the XUAR, where the local population is predominantly Muslim. Following ethnic unrest in February 1997, the authorities tightened controls and repressed any activity suspected of supporting Uighur nationalism -- officially termed "separatism" -- including peaceful religious activities. This is believed to have exacerbated ethnic tensions and contributed to the escalation of violence in the region.

Some Uighurs have been detained merely for being relatives or friends of political prisoners or fugitives, or simply for being Uighurs. Many have been held without charge for several months, in violation of Chinese law. Their relatives have received no news of them. Cases cited in Amnesty International's new report include:

Scores of Uighurs reportedly detained in villages near Gulja (*Yining*) city in April 1998 after security forces reportedly shot dead six local Uighur youths.

A doctor reportedly detained by the military authorities in Gulja since July 1998 for giving medical treatment to alleged “separatists”.

Four men and four children reportedly detained in the XUAR in September 1998 after being forcibly returned from neighbouring Kazakstan. The children were detained for 18 days and it is feared that the four men, believed to be still held in Kashgar city, may have been subjected to torture to extract information about their escape.

Amnesty International is calling on the Chinese authorities to immediately release all prisoners held simply for peacefully exercising their fundamental human rights, and to ensure that Uighur and other ethnic detainees and prisoners are not tortured or subjected to other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. ENDS ....\

**To receive a copy of the report, or to arrange an interview, please call Amnesty International’s press office on +44 171 413 5566, or e-mail [ikelly@amnesty.org](mailto:ikelly@amnesty.org)**