

# PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

## TIANANMEN - 10 YEARS ON - “FORGOTTEN PRISONERS”

### Background

The 4<sup>th</sup> June 1999 marks the tenth anniversary of the massacre of hundreds of unarmed civilians in Beijing and the subsequent arrest of tens of thousands of demonstrators in major cities and provinces throughout China.

The pro-democracy protests started in Beijing in April 1989 and spread quickly to other major cities. The protesters demands included an end to official corruption and calls for political reforms. These demands drew unprecedented wide public support and millions joined peaceful demonstrations as the pro-democracy movement developed throughout China. This culminated with the massacre in Beijing on the night of 3-4 June when the army moved in and hundreds of unarmed civilians were killed and injured. Thousands of arrests followed.

Amnesty International has records of 241 people who are still imprisoned or on medical parole serving long sentences for their activities in connection with the 1989 protests<sup>1</sup>. The attached list of names is a mere fraction of the real number of people throughout China who were unfairly tried and sentenced for their involvement in the protests.

Official Chinese sources last year put the number of those convicted of counter-revolutionary crimes and who remain imprisoned at nearly 2,000 - many of these are prisoners arrested from all over China in connection with the events surrounding the 1989 pro-democracy protests ten years ago.

Ten years on the Government has still not officially accounted for those killed, injured or arrested. The authorities continue to maintain the protests were a “counter-revolutionary riot”.

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<sup>1</sup>See *People's Republic of China - Ten Years after Tiananmen*, ASA 17/07/99, May 1999

## AI Concerns

Amnesty International has specific concerns about each of the individual cases cited in the list. The arrests, trials and killings came at a time of heightened tension in China and basic procedures for arrest and minimum requirements of justice were largely dispensed with. None of the prisoners received fair trials and prison conditions remain harsh. Many of those arrested for their involvement in the 1989 protests are prisoners of conscience held for the peaceful exercise of fundamental human rights. Others have been convicted of criminal offences allegedly committed during the protests or when the army moved in on 3-4 June 1989 to clear Tiananmen Square. Amnesty International believes they were denied fair trials. Many of those prisoners were convicted in 1989 of “counter-revolutionary” crimes and are now serving sentences for crimes which are no longer crimes under the revised Criminal Law. The Criminal Law was revised in 1997.

Some prisoners included in the list were sentenced to death with a two-year reprieve after grossly unfair trials. They have since had their sentences revised and are now serving terms of life imprisonment for their involvement in the 1989 protests.

The list also includes the cases of those who received a supplementary punishment known as “deprivation of political rights”. Most political prisoners in China have to serve a supplementary punishment for a fixed period after release from prison. Restrictions are placed on their freedom of movement and association, and may mean that they have to live within a specified area and have to report regularly to the police. This often presents problems for former prisoners who have difficulty finding work and whose lives are still closely watched and monitored by the authorities.

Some prisoners whose cases are cited may be due for release on or around the anniversary date of the protests this year but are included if they were believed to be imprisoned in April 1999 - the time this list was published.

**Amnesty International is calling on the Chinese authorities to release immediately and unconditionally all those held for the peaceful exercise of fundamental human rights, and to grant an amnesty to all others imprisoned in connection with the 1989 protests, given the length of time they have spent in prison, the summary and unfair nature of their trials and the fact that repeated calls for them to be retried, in accordance with international standards, have gone unheeded.**

**Amnesty International is calling on the Chinese authorities to account for all those killed and injured during the protests and that the victims and families involved be properly compensated and that those responsible be brought to justice.**