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MEDIA ADVISORY

Amnesty International has made three 8-minute documentary features looking at the human rights situation in China. These are available for free unrestricted worldwide broadcast and the footage from them is free for editing as tv stations require. If you are interested in receiving VHS viewing copies, please contact your local Amnesty International office.

FEATURE 1: DEATH BY NUMBERS

In China the death penalty is used widely to deal with all so-called "social ills" and thousands are executed every year. People have been executed for crimes as small as stealing cows and farm machinery. Shocking footage shows that mass executions are commonplace. At great personal risk a Chinese lawyer testifies that those executed are unlikely to have had a fair trial because extracting confessions by torture is rife. Though torture is illegal and punishable by law in China, theory and practice are worlds apart, as testified by a former police officer in an exclusive interview. China's cynical and arbitrary use of the death sentence compounds a legal system riddled with faults and inconsistencies.

FEATURE 2: THE POWER TO PERSECUTE

Behind the public image of China's police force as "helping the people", torture and brutality are endemic. The police often abuse their power in the name of a state which brooks no dissent. Artists, political activists and religious worshippers testify that for many Chinese citizens imprisonment, torture and official harassment are the norm. For over thirty years Tibetans have witnessed a sustained attack on their Buddhist culture and those that have protested have been mercilessly punished. A Tibetan monk shows equipment smuggled out of a prison that was used to torture him. China's new policy of openness does not extend to its citizens' basic human rights.

FEATURE 3: BUSINESS AS USUAL

In economic terms, China is open as never before. But the source of China's economic miracle - the cheap work force - has not benefited from the boom. Shocking footage shows that safety standards and repression of the rights of labourers who protest have been ignored in favour of hard profit. Foreign investors are happy to work with the Chinese state for profit, but they too are exposed to an arbitrary and unpredictable Chinese legal system which offers little recourse when foreign businesses get into dispute with Chinese state partners. A former executive of Shell International points out that businesses need a stable investment climate and that where there are human rights violations, there is potential instability.

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