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CHINA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CONDEMNS WANG DAN'S TRIAL AS A  
PARODY OF JUSTICE

In sentencing Wang Dan to 11 years' imprisonment today, the Chinese authorities made clear their contempt for international opinion and the hollowness of their claims to be improving human rights protection in China, Amnesty International said today.

"Wang Dan's trial was a parody of justice," Amnesty International said. "It is clear that the verdict and sentence against him had been decided in advance and that he had no chance of receiving a fair trial."

"Wang Dan should never have been put on trial in the first place," the organisation said. "He has done nothing but write articles expressing his views and had contact with dissidents in China and overseas."

Wang Dan was found guilty of "conspiring to subvert the government" at the outcome of a four hour trial. Independent observers were excluded from the hearing, even though Chinese official sources had announced in advance that the trial would be open to the public .

Foreign journalists and diplomats who had asked to attend the trial were prevented from entering the courtroom by cordons of security officials. Amnesty International, who had also asked to attend, was told by a Chinese embassy official on 28 October that the trial was an "internal matter" and "outsiders" were not needed.

The verdict, which according to Wang Dan's mother took ten minutes to read out, had obviously been prepared in advance. Just one hour after the verdict was passed, the official Xinhua news agency published a lengthy interview, translated into English, with the chief trial judge.

Nowhere else in the world could the holding, translation and publication of such a long interview with the presiding judge at a major trial have been done within one hour of the verdict being passed. It is clear the main text of the interview had been prepared before the trial even started.

Wang Dan pleaded not guilty at his trial and was defended by his mother and a defence lawyer. He was found guilty as charged and sentenced to 11 years' imprisonment, plus an additional two years' deprivation of political rights. His relatives have indicated that he will appeal against the verdict and sentence.

A student leader in Beijing during the 1989 pro-democracy protests, Wang Dan had already spent four years in prison for his involvement in the protests. He was re-arrested in May 1995 and arbitrarily and illegally detained for nearly 17 months without charge. On 7 October 1996, he was finally charged with "subversion". His family, who had not been allowed to see him since his detention, were officially informed three days later to find him a lawyer by the following day.

The charge brought against Wang Dan was based on accusations that he had written articles criticising the government which were published overseas and had contacts with Chinese exile organisations and with other dissidents in China.

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