

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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Tiananmen, 26 years on, the repressive patterns intensify

The graphic scenes of People's Liberation Army (PLA) troops firing live ammunition on unarmed civilians demanding political reforms on 3 and 4 June 1989 in and around Tiananmen Square still seem vivid to so many who witnessed them, and the events cry out for solemn remembrance.

As in previous years, Amnesty International reiterates the call for an open and independent inquiry into the 1989 military crackdown and urges the Chinese authorities to guarantee their citizens' rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, which are enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and protected in the Chinese Constitution and the Criminal Procedure Law.

Once again, we call on the Chinese authorities to:

- launch an open and independent inquiry into the 1989 military crackdown and hold those responsible for human rights violations accountable;
- publicly acknowledge the human rights violations which occurred;
- cease harassment and prosecution of those exercising their right to freedom of expression and assembly including those seeking reassessment of the 1989 Tiananmen protests and commemorating its victims and;
- provide compensation to victims of the 1989 pro-democracy protests and their families.

The Chinese authorities today, however, have not only continued to prosecute citizens who criticize the crackdown or commemorate its victims, but they seem more intent than ever on reasserting control over the ideological sphere and squashing China's civil society sector.

One year on, there are activists who were detained in the run up to the 25th anniversary of the Tiananmen crackdown who are still behind bars and facing the prospect of unfair trials.

Jia Lingmin was detained in in May 2014 for "gathering crowds to disturb social order" which subsequently changed to "picking quarrels and provoking troubles". It is widely believed that her detention was in retaliation for the legal education seminars that she put on for dozens of communities affected by forced evictions across China.

Pu Zhiqiang, one of China's most prominent lawyers on freedom of expression, was detained in May 2014 after attending a small home gathering recognizing the events in 1989. He has been indicted on the charges of "picking quarrels and provoking troubles" and "inciting ethnic hatred".

The Buddhist monk **Shen Guan** (real name: Xu Zhiqiang) is on trial facing the charge of “inciting subversion of state power” after he shared some of his private thoughts on the Tiananmen crackdown to friends while eating a meal last May.

Despite rhetoric supporting and efforts to push forward the “the rule of law”, Chinese authorities continue to operate outside of the rule of law when it comes to cracking down on human rights defenders.

- **Su Changlan**, who had worked on land rights and women’s rights issues – including family planning and domestic violence – was detained in October for supporting the pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong and was arrested on charges of “inciting subversion of state power”.
- Earlier this year **five feminists** were detained on 6 and 7 March as they attempted to hold small scale protests to demand an end to sexual harassment on public transport. The women were criminally detained on the charge of “picking quarrels and provoking troubles”, and were only released on bail after 37 days of unprecedented international pressure.

Perhaps no better example of the government’s desire to control the historical and ideological narrative comes in the persecution of the respected journalist **Gao Yu**, who was detained in April last year and accused of having leaked an internal Communist Party ideological paper, known as Document No. 9. Despite longstanding demands to redress the verdict on Tiananmen, Document No. 9 makes it clear that rejecting the “accepted conclusion” of major historical events like the Tiananmen crackdown would be strictly off limits, and seen as a form of “historical nihilism”.

The government’s increasingly hardline stance towards reassessing the Tiananmen crackdown can be seen in how it treats the people who have bravely tried to commemorate the event. The **Tiananmen Mothers**, an advocacy group composed mainly of parents whose children were killed in the 1989 military crackdown, has experienced an increase on the usual restrictions on their movement, harassment, and surveillance. Similarly, on 25 March this year, activist **Chen Yunfei** was detained shortly after visiting the grave sites of students killed in the Tiananmen crackdown in Sichuan province. He was later formally arrested on the charges of “picking a quarrel and provoking trouble” and “inciting subversion of state power”.