

# PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

## TIANANMEN - 11 YEARS ON AND STILL NO GOVERNMENT INQUIRY “FORGOTTEN PRISONERS”

*“ I cannot turn a blind eye to the pain of those who suffer my fate. In this cold and uncaring world, they have lost their loved ones and have nowhere to turn for consolation. As a group, they have been forgotten or forsaken by society. Under these circumstances, others may be able to close their eyes, but I cannot.”*

**Ding Zilin**, whose son died on the night of 3 June 1989.

### **The Situation 11 Years On**

The 4<sup>th</sup> June 2000 marks the eleventh anniversary of the massacre of hundreds of unarmed civilians in Beijing and the subsequent injuries and arrest of tens of thousands of demonstrators throughout China.

Despite the extensive loss of life and appeals from organizations, governments and other concerned individuals, the authorities have failed after eleven years to institute any sort of public enquiry into the events on the night of 3-4 June or to grant compensation to the families of those killed.

Amnesty International has records of 213 people who are still imprisoned or on medical parole for their activities in connection with the 1989 protests. 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. The list excludes prisoners who will have served their sentences in June 2000.

Ding Zilin, a professor of philosophy, has led a campaign to seek redress and to grant compensation for the families of those killed. The group of mothers and other relatives of those killed or injured have compiled a list of 155 dead and 65 wounded giving the names and other details of victims who range in age from nine to 61 years. Those involved in this group have faced short-term detention, police

harassment, discrimination and loss of earnings for their efforts to account for those killed and injured. In addition, humanitarian donations from overseas earmarked for the victims' families have been frozen by the authorities.

In April this year the wife of author Edgar Snow<sup>1</sup>, Lois Snow, was prevented by the Chinese authorities from meeting Ding Zilin. Instead Lois Snow decided to hand a small donation and a message of support to **Su Bingxian**, a mother whose son was also killed in 1989. For this Su Bingxian was arrested and detained for a short period.

Last year in commemoration of the tenth anniversary of Tiananmen, Amnesty International documented several cases of people who were arrested, imprisoned or sent to labour camps for activities to mark the anniversary. Some of the cases are cited below.

**Peng Cheng**, an engineer, who was involved in a signature campaign calling on the authorities to reassess its verdict on the Tiananmen massacre was sent to a labour camp for three years. Peng Cheng had collected 296 signatures in support of a signature campaign launched by Wang Dan and supported by international human rights organizations. Peng Cheng was detained on 3 June last year and assigned to a labour camp in Shandong Province in September.

**Yuan Yungbo**, a student aged 18, was sentenced to a one-year prison term in September for putting up posters denouncing the 1989 crackdown in the Jianli County Teachers School where he studied in Hubei Province. Yuan Yungbo was charged with attempting to subvert state political power.

**Jiang Qisheng** was detained in May last year without an arrest warrant after he wrote an open letter entitled: "Light a Myriad Candles to Collectively Commemorate the Brave Spirits of June Fourth" which called on the Chinese people to mark the tenth anniversary with symbolic, non-violent acts. Jiang Qisheng was tried in November. At the end of the closed trial no verdict was announced and no decision has yet been made public. Amnesty International is concerned about the serious irregularities in the way in which Jiang's detention and trial were conducted highlighting major violations of the law and denying a fair and open trial.

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<sup>1</sup>In 1937 Edgar Snow published a book, *Red Star Over China*, which focussed international attention on the then struggling Chinese communist movement.

### **Short Background on the 1989 Pro-Democracy Crackdown**

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 and drew unprecedented wide public support and millions joined peaceful demonstrations. This ended 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.

### **AI Concerns**

Amnesty International has 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. Many of those arrested in 1989 are prisoners of conscience held for the peaceful exercise of fundamental human rights, others were convicted of criminal offences committed during the protests or when the army moved in on 3-4 June 1989 to clear Tiananmen Square. Many were convicted in 1989 of “counter-revolutionary” crimes and served or are still serving prison terms for crimes which are no longer crimes under the revised Criminal Law. The Criminal Law was revised in 1997.

Many of the 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. Most political prisoners have to serve a supplementary punishment, known as “deprivation of political rights” 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.

Amnesty International is also concerned that dissidents continue to be imprisoned or sent to labour camps for peacefully commemorating the anniversaries of Tiananmen and that the group of mothers and relatives face short-term detention and harassment in their efforts to seek redress and compensation to the families of those killed.

**Amnesty International reiterates its call to the Chinese authorities:**

- ◆ **to release immediately and unconditionally all those held for the peaceful exercise of fundamental human rights in connection with the 1989 protests and subsequent anniversaries;**
- ◆ **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;**
- ◆ **to account for all those killed and injured and that the victims and families involved be compensated and that the perpetrators be brought to justice.**



