

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL EU OFFICE PRESS RELEASE

AI Index: ASA 17/036/2003
News Service: 242
28 October 2003

EMBARGO: 09.00 BRUSSELS TIME, TUESDAY 28 OCTOBER 2003

EU-CHINA SUMMIT: AS THE PARTNERSHIP MATURES, VIOLATIONS CONTINUE

AMNESTY RELEASES LATEST ASSESSMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION IN CHINA

(Brussels 28 October 2003) In the lead-up to Thursday's EU-China summit meeting in Beijing, Amnesty International today releases its latest assessment of the human rights situation in China in a 20-page report entitled: ***"China: Continuing abuses under a new leadership - summary of human rights concerns"*** (available from 09.00 Tuesday 28 October on www.amnesty-eu.org and go to "documents" page or contact Amnesty International's EU Office for an advance copy).

"In the light of the serious human rights abuses outlined in this new report, Amnesty International calls on EU leaders to seize the opportunity of their first-ever summit with Chinese President Hu Jintao to fundamentally rethink their approach on human rights with China. Delivery on human rights protection must now be an imperative of a more mature relationship between the EU and China," Dick Oosting, Director of Amnesty International's EU Office in Brussels said.

"Until now, the European Union has been held hostage to China's insistence on mutual respect and non-confrontation on human rights issues, locked in a formal 'human rights dialogue' that has produced no relief for the victims of human rights abuses in China," he said. "But in a mature relationship, all parties recognize that the relationship has to achieve results."

"The EU should not just upgrade its human rights dialogue with China but start exerting political pressure on China to achieve concrete improvements, in particular, on the issues raised in this latest Amnesty report," he said.

The Amnesty International report states that hundreds of thousands of people continue to be detained across China, in violation of their fundamental human rights. Death sentences and executions continue to be imposed after unfair trials, torture and ill-treatment remain widespread and systemic, and freedom of expression and information continue to be severely curtailed.

"In particular, official reports in China praising the adoption of lethal injections as a method of execution, and hailing the introduction of 'mobile execution chambers' for their 'cost-effectiveness and efficiency' should send alarm bells ringing in the corridors of the EU. Despite six years of dialogue on this issue, China is still responsible for more than 80 percent of the world's known executions," Dick Oosting said.

"Legal reforms in the commercial sphere may be occurring in China but unfortunately, we do not see the same level of attention being paid to reform of criminal justice, which is vital for the protection of human rights and as such an essential element for the country's stability and sustainable development," he said.

Amnesty International's key human rights concerns on China include:

- The continued use of the death penalty during the ongoing "strike hard" campaign resulting in high numbers of executions, often after unfair or summary trials;
- The continued use of "Re-education through Labour", a system which allows for the detention of hundreds of thousands of individuals every year without charge or trial;
- The persistence of serious allegations of torture and ill-treatment within China's criminal justice system;
- Increasing arrests and detentions of Internet users or so-called "cyber-dissidents" in violation of their fundamental rights to freedom of expression and information;
- An intensification in the crackdown on the human rights of the mainly Muslim Uighur community in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region under the guise of "anti-terrorism" measures;
- Continued repression of the rights to freedom of expression and association in Tibet, including scores of Buddhist monks and nuns who remain in prison as prisoners of conscience;
- The ongoing crackdown on the Falun Gong spiritual movement and other so-called "heretical organizations", leading to widespread reports of arbitrary detention, torture and deaths in custody;
- Serious human rights violations in the context of the spread of HIV/AIDS in China, including reports of torture and ill-treatment of people with HIV/AIDS, and the arbitrary detention, harassment and intimidation of HIV/AIDS activists;
- The plight of North Korean asylum seekers in China, who continue to face forced return to North Korea where they risk imprisonment, torture and even execution;
- Recent attempts by the Hong Kong administration to introduce new legislation on "treason, sedition, secession and subversion" despite widespread public concern that this could be used to restrict fundamental human rights.

PLEASE NOTE EMBARGO: 09.00 BRUSSELS TIME 28 OCTOBER 2003

"China: Continuing abuses under a new leadership - summary of human rights concerns" October 2003 (report available on www.amnesty-eu.org and www.news.amnesty.org)

For further comment/background and interviews:

Amnesty International EU Office (Brussels):

Tel: 32-2-5021499

Fax: 32-2-5025686

Email: amnesty-eu@aieu.be

Web-site: www.amnesty-eu.org