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China: Technical cooperation with the UN is not enough

The Chinese Government has yet to demonstrate it is willing to cooperate with all arms of the UN and enforce proper human rights protection, Amnesty International said today as China signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

The MOU program will initially focus on training in the areas of human rights education, police, and the issue of minor crimes and administrative detention. However it does not appear to include a monitoring component.

"The Chinese government should take concrete steps to improve the human rights situation on the ground by addressing widespread torture, executions and repression. It should widen its cooperation with the UN and invite human rights monitoring mechanisms to visit China freely and without conditions, and implement UN recommendations," the organization said.

The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture was scheduled to visit China earlier this year but his visit was cancelled when the government refused to accept the standard terms of reference which have been adopted by all Special Rapporteurs. China is a party to the Torture Convention but the government has made no moves to implement specific recommendations made by the UN expert body which monitors its implementation, the Committee against Torture.

There is no sign either of any relaxation of the crackdown on fundamental freedoms or improvement in the human rights situation,

which has seriously deteriorated over the past two years. Widespread arrests of the Falun Gong and other Qi Gong or religious groups has continued this year and people who have expressed dissenting views, including on corruption or the environment, have been imprisoned.

The Chinese government continues to make rhetorical statements about the importance it attaches to the protection of human rights and to international cooperation in that area.

"It is high time China gave some indication that it means what it says, and take serious steps to redress human rights violations and protect fundamental freedoms," Amnesty International said.

The MOU will set in motion a program of technical cooperation aimed at encouraging ratification of the two international human rights covenants, which China signed in 1997 and 1998 but has not yet ratified.

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