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CHINA: SEVEN YEARS AFTER TIANANMEN -- REPRESSION CONTINUES UNABATED

Seven years after the massacre in Beijing, Amnesty International today launched a directory of victims of human rights violations in China -- part of a week of activities culminating in a world-wide day of protest on 4 June to mark the Tiananmen Square anniversary and continuing repression.

Amnesty International's directory includes some 2,000 victims, -- men, women and children, many of them prisoners of conscience -- and illustrates how no-one in China is safe from human rights violations.

The youngest victim, seven-year-old Gendun Choekyi Nyima, "disappeared" after being taken away by Chinese authorities in May 1995, following the Dalai Lama's recognition of him as the 11th Panchen Lama.

The oldest, Lobsang Tsultrim, an 81-year-old monk, is serving a six-year sentence for "involvement in illegal separatist activities". While in detention in 1991, he was placed in solitary confinement and beaten so severely that he bled from his mouth and ears.

"Each personal story of these victims is an appalling indictment of the Chinese government," Amnesty International said. "The continuing tragedy for the people of China is that seven years after Tiananmen, it's business as usual for the authorities."

Other victims in the directory include:

- Zhang Jie, a worker from Shandong Province, serving an 18-year sentence followed by five years deprivation of political rights for making speeches on 5 June 1989 paying respect to those killed in Beijing -- he was convicted of "counter-revolutionary incitement, blocking traffic and disturbing social order".
- Zhang Caixian, a 66-year old woman from Yunnan province serving a life sentence for organizing a "counter-revolutionary" secret religious society.
- Li Yongsheng, a manual worker from Tianjin Municipality, serving a 12-year sentence for participating in 1989 pro-democracy protests

The directory includes prisoners serving lengthy sentences for involvement in 1989 activities, but also others detained since then. Victims include not only well-known dissidents such as Wei Jingsheng, who was sentenced to 14 years in 1995, but also the "invisible victims" of China's brutal crackdown on ethnic and religious minorities, political activists, workers and human rights defenders from all regions of the country.

In his address to the 1996 United Nations Commission on Human Rights, the Chinese ambassador stated: "The core of democracy is to respect the different views expressed by others... some countries persist in double-standard, selectivity and political confrontation. The strong ones bully the weak. The big ones oppress the small. This kind of behaviour has nothing to

do with the promotion and protection of human rights.” These words apply more than ever to his own government’s treatment of its people, Amnesty International said.

Many victims have been detained and released several times over the years, but the repression and harassment continues whether the victim is in or out of prison, Amnesty International said. Out of detention, many victims, their relatives and friends continue to suffer harassment, including beatings, heavy-handed surveillance and intimidation.

Liu Gang, a well-known 1989 dissident who fled to the United States of America in April 1996, explained just how the authorities made life intolerable for him after his release from prison in 1995. He was asked to regularly report “his thoughts” to the police, both he and his relatives and friends were followed all the time, he was detained for questioning several times, his mail was confiscated and he was prevented from working.

“In prison, I was beaten and insulted, but I had food and a roof on my head. Outside, I could not work or sustain my own living -- they were going to make me starve to death,” he told Amnesty International.

Almost all of those detained have not had access to a fair trial in line with international standards, many have not been tried or charged at all, and all are victims of a government that feels free to impose arbitrary punishments on anyone who exercises human rights guaranteed by international law, Amnesty International said.

Many political prisoners are held under “administrative detention” -- a parallel system to the criminal justice system, under which hundreds of thousands are incarcerated each year. Under this system, people can be picked off the streets at the whim of police or local officials and held incommunicado for months or years without charge or trial. Many face torture and appalling prison conditions.

The organization is calling on the Chinese government to immediately release all prisoners of conscience, to ensure that all political prisoners are given fair and prompt trials, to protect former detainees from further arbitrary detention and harassment and to ensure that all victims of human rights violations have full and open access to effective complaints procedures and redress.

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To commemorate the Tiananmen Square anniversary, on 4 June 1996, Amnesty International is releasing an interactive (computer) floppy disk with information on human rights defenders in China. This disk will be distributed free and can be downloaded from Amnesty International’s internet web site: <http://www.amnesty.org>

If you would like more information, a copy of *China: Repression in the 1990s -- A directory of victims*, or to arrange an interview, please call:

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