
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL NEWS SERVICE 108/94

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DENMARK: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL DELEGATION MEETS MINISTER OF JUSTICE

Two delegates from Amnesty International's International Secretariat in London are today meeting the Danish Minister of Justice to discuss the organization's concerns about ill-treatment by police in Denmark.

The Amnesty International delegates, Nicholas Howen, Director of Legal and International Organizations Program, and Jill Heine, Researcher in Europe Regional Program, will discuss the organization's concerns in specific cases and make recommendations for improvement in human rights protection in Denmark.

Amnesty International will be make its findings and recommendations public in a report in the near future.

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CHINA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL APPEALS FOR RELEASE OF "1989" PRISONERS

Marking the fifth anniversary of the 1989 massacre in Beijing, Amnesty International calls on China to release prisoners of conscience and redress other human rights violations, including the torture and ill-treatment of pro-democracy protestors arrested then and still imprisoned today.

"Despite China's rapid economic changes that have increased freedoms and relaxed social controls, there has been no fundamental change in the government's human rights policy", Amnesty International said. "Arbitrary arrests, unfair trials and torture continue to be widespread, and the death penalty is used extensively for a wide range of offenses."

Amnesty International is today publishing a report, China: Human Rights Violations Five Years after Tiananmen, which documents some of these violations. The report for the first time documents the names and some of the circumstances of 75 people killed by martial law troops in Beijing in 1989.

"Many of them were the victims of extrajudicial executions," Amnesty International said, "but their relatives are still waiting for the government to acknowledge that the victims were not 'rioters', as claimed at the time."

Government forces killed hundreds of unarmed civilians during the suppression of the 1989 student-led protests, opening fire into crowds in Beijing on 4 June 1989, and killing others during the following days. Though five years have elapsed, no public enquiry has yet been held into the killings. Amnesty International calls on the Chinese authorities to investigate and account for all the victims of extrajudicial executions, compensate their families and bring those responsible to justice.

Thousands of political prisoners arrested in the crackdown continue to be imprisoned, subjected to harsh conditions and in some cases torture. Amnesty International's report describes the cases of prisoners of conscience serving long prison sentences in various places in China.

The report also documents the cases of 171 political prisoners who remain at the Qinghe farm, a huge complex of farms and factories in Chadian, some 130 kilometres southeast of Beijing, as well as those of 35 political prisoners held at Beijing Prison No.2.

Amnesty International calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience who were imprisoned simply for expressing their political beliefs. The organization also calls for the release or retrial in an open, fair court hearing of those political prisoners who allegedly committed ordinary criminal offenses during the 1989 protests.

Allegations of torture -- such as those in a petition from prisoners at Hanyang Prison in Hubei Province, included in the Amnesty International report -- should be investigated without delay, Amnesty International said.

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GUATEMALA: ONE YEAR AFTER THE ATTEMPTED COUP IMPUNITY PREVAILS; WILL TALKS IN NORWAY ESTABLISH A "CLARIFICATION COMMISSION"?

Guatemalan security forces are violating human rights virtually every day, Amnesty International said on the one-year anniversary of the attempted "self-imposed" coup by the country's former president.

"Guatemala's new president -- former human rights procurator Ramiro de León Carpio -- personally assured Amnesty International within hours of his inauguration that he was committed to protecting human rights," the human rights organization said. "The reality is that violations by state agents are continuing, and only a handful of cases have made any progress in the Guatemalan courts".

Past human rights abuses will be on the agenda on 31 May - 4 June in Norway, when representatives of the governments and the armed opposition will discuss creating a so-called "Clarification Commission" to look into abuses committed by both sides during Guatemala's turbulent past.

"The authorities' failure to investigate past abuses and bring members of the security forces responsible to justice underscores the need for the creation such a commission with real teeth," AI said.

Amnesty International stressed that any such Commission must be given a mandate and sufficient resources to enable it to look into all reported cases of abuses carried out by both government forces and the armed opposition. The results of its findings should be referred to the appropriate judicial bodies and those found responsible for human rights violations be brought to justice.

Amnesty International is also urging that the proposed Commission make recommendations on how to eliminate the structures, policies or mechanisms which have contributed to the persistence of human rights violations in Guatemala over a period of almost three decades.

"Such steps are vital, not only for the sake of the victims and their relatives, but so as to prevent such abuses from happening again", the human rights organization said.

The agreement to discuss the formation of a Clarification Commission for Guatemala had come in the context of a 29 March human rights agreement between the authorities and the armed opposition, in which the government affirmed its commitment to respect and promote human rights. Despite this, there has been little evidence of either a drop in human rights violations or genuine efforts to investigate those that have already occurred, Amnesty International said.

In the year since President de León had taken office, Amnesty International revealed that it had appealed to him on 51 separate occasions involving reported or feared abuses such as extrajudicial executions, "disappearances", torture and intimidation against some 285 victims.

"This figure is by no means exhaustive of all the instances of harassment, death threats, torture and "disappearance" and extrajudicial execution that had been reported to it since President de León came to office", the human rights organization said.

Among the many victims of apparent extrajudicial executions over the last year, Eduardo Epaminondas González Dubón was shot and killed on 1 April in Guatemala City by plain-clothed armed men believed by Guatemalan human rights sources to have been acting on behalf of hard-line sectors of the military. Eduardo González, president of the Constitutional Court, was instrumental in resolving the crisis evoked by Serrano's coup attempt. Although a number of common criminals have been arrested in connection with his murder, they have denied any involvement in the incident and highly placed government officials have publicly stated there is no concrete evidence to link them to the crime.

Jorge Carpio -- a prominent politician, newspaper owner and publisher -- was shot and killed along with three others on 3 July 1993. Originally blamed by the government on common delinquents, evidence has since emerged to link the army-instigated and supported Patrullas de Auto-defensa Civil (PAC), Civil Defence Patrols to Jorge Carpio's death.

In both cases it Amnesty International believes that the official agencies have failed to instigate full and proper inquiries into the deaths, and the real culprits have still not been brought to justice.

Since President de León came to office, Amnesty International has also acted on six cases of persons who reportedly "disappeared" after being seized by official security agents, or in circumstances suggesting that official forces had been responsible for their abduction. One, Salvador Aguirre Corado, a farmer, was found dead several days after he was seized by armed men in uniform in September 1993. The other five are still missing.

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