

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

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Oral statement to be read out at the UN Human Rights Council on the afternoon of 25 March 2008.

Amnesty International

UN Human Rights Council, 7th regular session

Oral statement under item 8 of the Agenda

(Follow-up and Implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action)

25 March 2008

Mr. President,

Amnesty International is deeply concerned at human rights violations during recent events in the Autonomous Region of Tibet and neighbouring regions.

Initial protests by Tibetans in these regions appear to have been peaceful and suppressed in violation of protestors' right to freedom of expression, association and assembly, including through excessive use of force.

Amnesty International is aware that protests later turned violent, with individuals apparently attacked solely for their ethnic identity, resulting in death, injury and damage to property. Amnesty International condemns such attacks unreservedly, and acknowledges the Chinese authorities' right and duty to protect all individuals against violence.

However, Amnesty International is concerned that in restoring order, the Chinese authorities have resorted to measures which violate international human rights law and standards. These have reportedly included excessive use of force, including lethal force and arbitrary detentions.

Amnesty International has previously documented a pattern of torture and other ill-treatment of detainees in Tibet by China's security forces, especially those accused by the Chinese authorities of "separatist" activities. Moreover, China has long banned independent human rights monitors from Tibet, and the region is now virtually sealed. For these reasons AI fears for the safety of those recently detained.

Mr. President,

Amnesty International calls on the Human Rights Council to address the human rights situation in the Tibetan Autonomous Region and in the neighbouring provinces which have experienced unrest. Amnesty International also calls on the Chinese authorities to:

- o release all those detained solely for peaceful protest;
- o fully respect the rights of all persons to freedom of expression, association and assembly;
- o avoid unnecessary and excessive use of force in restoring order and protecting individuals and property;
- o fully account for those detained, ensuring they will not be ill-treated and are released unless they are charged with recognizably criminal offences and remanded by an independent court;
- o ensure that all killings, violent assaults and other attacks on persons and property are investigated promptly, independently and effectively, regardless of the identity of the perpetrators and the victims, and that suspected perpetrators are prosecuted in proceedings which meet international standards of fairness and are without the imposition of the death penalty;
- o allow independent UN scrutiny into the current human rights situation in the Tibetan Autonomous Region and neighbouring provinces;
- o grant unimpeded access to the Tibetan Autonomous Region and neighbouring provinces for journalists and other independent observers.

Beyond these immediate concerns, Amnesty International calls on the Council to urge the Chinese authorities to address Tibetans' long-term grievances, including restrictions on religious practice, persecution for exercising their freedoms of expression, association and assembly, government policies that have weakened their culture and ethnic identity, and perceived exclusion from the benefits of economic development.

Thank you Mr. President.

/ENDS

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