

## AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL BRIEFING PAPER EU- CHINA AND HUMAN RIGHTS SINCE TIANANMEN

- 14 April 2004 -

### **STRICT EMBARGO:**

**10.45 Brussels time (08.45 GMT) WEDNESDAY 14 APRIL 2004**

***"The European Council, ~~recalling the declaration of the twelve of June 6, [...]~~ strongly condemns the brutal repression taking place in China. It expresses its dismay at the pursuit of executions in spite of all the appeals of the international community. It solemnly requests the Chinese authorities to stop the executions and to put an end to the repressive actions against those who legitimately claim their democratic rights.***

***The European Council requests the Chinese authorities to respect human rights and to take into account the hopes for freedom and democracy deeply felt by the population. It underlines that this is an essential element for the pursuit of the policy of reforms and openness that has been supported by the European***

European Council Declaration on China: Madrid, 26-27 June 1989

***"...it would be a great deal easier to negotiate lifting the embargo if the Chinese government took some concrete steps to improve the human rights record."***

EU External Relations Commissioner Chris Patten: reported on AFP  
("China presses EU to lift arms embargo", 8 March, 2004)

### **EU arms embargo against China**

The EU arms embargo was imposed on 27 June 1989 as a direct response to the brutal actions of the Chinese authorities against protestors calling for democratic and political reform. The protests began in Beijing in April 1989 and spread quickly to other major cities and provinces throughout China. This culminated on the night of 3-4 June 1989 in the area around Tiananmen Square when the army moved in and hundreds of unarmed civilians were killed or injured.

Tens of thousands were arrested in the aftermath of the 1989 crackdown throughout China. Many of those detained were tortured or ill-treated by the police or soldiers, often with devastating long-term effects on their physical and mental health. Some were sentenced to long imprisonment after unfair trials and others were sentenced to death and executed.

As the 15th anniversary of the demonstration approaches, dozens of people are still in prison in connection with the protests, or living in exile. The Chinese authorities continue to ignore calls from both domestic and international activists to conduct a full, independent and impartial inquiry into the events.

### **The legacy of Tiananmen – ongoing arrests**

"The Tiananmen Mothers", a network of more than 130 families of victims of the 1989 crackdown, have continued to campaign for justice, despite persistent government intimidation and persecution. Three of them, including a prominent spokesperson for the organisation Ding Zilin, whose son was killed at Tiananmen, were detained on 28 March 2004 in an apparent attempt to stop them or warn them against commemorating the anniversary. All were released on 2 April.

Other Chinese activists who have openly called for a reassessment of the pro-democracy protests or an investigation into the crackdown have also been detained and some have been imprisoned. For example:

***Huang Qi**, a computer engineer, set up his own web-site in 1998, a missing persons search service on the Internet. The web-site developed into a discussion forum for users publicising abuse of power by local officials including information about the independence movement in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region and the banned spiritual group Falun Gong. On the eve of the 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1989 pro-democracy crackdown, the day of Huang Qi's arrest, messages critical of the authorities were posted on his web-site including an account by a mother who accused police of having beaten her son to death during the 1989 pro-democracy protests. Huang Qi was sentenced to five years in prison for "inciting subversion". The "evidence" against him included reference to an Amnesty International document about the Tiananmen crackdown which had been posted on his web-site.*

***Yan Jun**, a biology teacher, was charged with "inciting subversion" for posting material on the Internet critical of the Tiananmen crackdown and advocating greater democracy. He was reportedly beaten severely by fellow detainees acting on police orders during pre-trial detention. He was tried in secret in October 2003 and sentenced to two years' imprisonment.*

***Wang Jinbo**, a member of the banned Chinese Democracy Party, was sentenced in 2002 to four years' imprisonment for posting articles on the Internet including an appeal to the government to overturn its "counter-revolutionary" verdict of the 1989 protests. Fellow prisoners have reportedly subjected him to repeated beatings, on which prison authorities have reportedly failed to act.*

***Wang Wanxing** attempted to unfurl a banner in Tiananmen Square in 1992 commemorating the 1989 demonstrations. As a result he has spent the last twelve years at Ankang Psychiatric Hospital in Beijing. His wife has campaigned tirelessly for his release, asserting that he is not mentally ill.*

## **Serious and widespread human rights violations continue**

China's human rights record remains extremely poor, and there are few signs that the authorities are willing to make the fundamental legal and institutional changes necessary to address the serious and widespread abuses which have continued across the country over the last 15 years. For example:

**Crackdown on Internet users:** Amnesty International has raised concerns over the rising numbers of people detained or sentenced for peacefully expressing their views or downloading information on the Internet in China. By the end of March 2004, at least 60 people had been detained or imprisoned after accessing or circulating politically sensitive information on the Internet. It is widely regarded that the Internet censorship practised by the Chinese government is the most extensive in the world, and many of the toughest controls have been issued since 2000. Over the past years web-sites of human rights organisations, including Amnesty International, and several international news sites have been regularly blocked by government-controlled routers.

**Death penalty:** China continues to execute more people than the rest of the world combined. Executions are carried out following trials that fall far short of international fair trial standards. The death penalty continues to be used extensively and arbitrarily as a result of

political interference. People continue to be executed for non-violent crimes such as tax fraud and pimping as well as drug offences and violent crimes.

**Torture, unfair trials and administrative detention:** Torture and ill-treatment remain widespread in police stations, prisons and labour camps, including kicking, beating, electric shocks, suspension by the arms, shackling in painful positions, and sleep and food deprivation. People accused of both political and criminal offences continue to be denied due process and detainees' access to lawyers and family members is severely restricted. China's system of "Re-education through Labour" continues to allow for the detention of hundreds of thousands of people for up to three years without charge or trial.

**Repression in Tibet:** Despite the release of several high-profile Tibetan prisoners of conscience before the end of their sentence, suppression of political dissent and restrictions on religious freedom continue throughout Tibetan areas of the PRC. For example, a popular singer was detained in March 2004 because of the political content of his songs, and in February, a young monk was arrested at his monastery for possessing a photograph of the Dalai Lama. Such detentions and arrests have been increasing in recent months, but the Chinese authorities refuse to divulge any information on the status or whereabouts of the people being held.

**Repression of the ethnic Uighur community:** The authorities continue to use the international "war against terrorism" to justify harsh repression in Xinjiang, north-west China, home to China's mainly Muslim Uighur community. Several mosques have been closed, use of the Uighur language has been restricted and certain Uighur books and journals have been banned. The crackdown against suspected "separatists, terrorists and religious extremists" intensified following the start of a renewed 100-day security crack-down in October 2003. Arrests continue and hundreds of political prisoners, including prisoners of conscience, remain in prison.

**Repression of spiritual and religious groups:** Members of unofficial spiritual or religious groups, including some Qi Gong groups and unregistered Christian groups, continue to be arbitrarily detained, tortured and ill-treated. Detained Falun Gong practitioners, including large numbers of women, are at risk of torture, including sexual abuse, particularly if they refuse to renounce their beliefs.

#### Questions for the European Union from Amnesty International

- On what grounds does the EU believe it is appropriate to lift the embargo now?
- What message will this send to the Chinese authorities, the victims of the crackdown and the growing numbers of Chinese activists who are being put behind bars for their peaceful activities in connection with the 1989 crackdown?
- What message is it likely to send to human rights defenders in China like Ding Zilin ~~and Dr Jiang Yanyong~~?
- What other leverage will the EU exert to demonstrate its concerns over the continuing impunity which surrounds the ~~Tiananmen~~ June 1989 crackdown and ensure that the Chinese authorities bring an end to this impunity?
- What measures will the EU take to ensure that China does not interpret the lifting of the arms embargo as evidence that the EU cares little for the victims of the June 1989 ~~Tiananmen~~ crackdown, for those who have remained in prison since 1989, and for others who continue to be arrested for calling for a reassessment of government actions at the time ~~the incident~~?

**For further information on Amnesty International's human rights concerns in China, please see:**

- *China: detention of Tiananmen Mothers*, 1 April 2004 (AI Index: ASA 17/014/2004)
- *People's Republic of China: Controls tighten as Internet activism grows*, January 2004, (AI Index: ASA 17/001/2004)
- *People's Republic of China: Executed "according to law"? The death penalty in China*, March 2004 (AI Index: ASA 17/003/2004)
- *People's Republic of China: Miscarriages of Justice – selected cases*, March 2004 (AI Index: ASA 17/002/2004).

and other documents available at [www.amnesty.org](http://www.amnesty.org).

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