

AI Index: PRE 01/207/2009  
03 June 2009

## **China: Harassment of activists escalates ahead of Tiananmen Anniversary**

Chinese authorities have stepped up curbs on dissenting voices and escalated censorship of activists throughout the country, a day before the 20th anniversary of the Tiananmen crackdown.

“Cutting off communication and preventing movement will not stop activists from fighting for their rights and will not stop people from marking the 20th anniversary of the crackdown,” said Roseann Rife, Asia-Pacific Deputy Director at Amnesty International. “The quest for truth will only be fuelled by excessive harassment.”

Over the past few days, Amnesty International has received reports of serious harassment of human rights activists:

- In Beijing, HIV/AIDS activist, Wan Yanhai, was forced to travel to the northern city of Changchun ahead of the anniversary. Police officers knocked at his door and requested he leave to “avoid possible conflict”. He refused but was forced to board a train to leave the capital with his family.
- On 3 June, Zeng Jinyan, carrying her infant daughter, attempted to leave home to attend her mother’s birthday celebration. Five policemen roughly pushed her back inside and told her she was not allowed to leave the house in the coming days.
- On 3 June, in Hangzhou, police officers gathered outside the house of human rights activists Wen Kejian and invited him for a “talk”.
- On 2 June, two police officers and four "Neighbourhood/Residential Committee" members were stationed outside the Shanghai-based reproductive rights activist, Mao Hengfeng’s house. They forced her back inside after she attempted to leave and told her she was forbidden to go out until the 4 June anniversary was over.
- On 2 June, in Inner Mongolia, internal security police reportedly took away internet writer Tian Yongde at around 3:30pm, while he was visiting his mother in hospital. His whereabouts are currently unknown.
- On 1 June, police took up positions outside the houses of lawyers Jiang Tianyong and Li Xiongbing, and other police drive them wherever they go.
- At midnight on 2 June, lawyers Lan Zhixue and Tang Jitian were discussing a case in the offices of an NGO. When they were leaving in the early hours of 3 June, police took the two lawyers in for questioning. They have not yet been released.

- In order to limit communication between activists and internet campaigners, Chinese authorities shut down Twitter, Flickr and Hotmail.

## Background

Amnesty International has documented at least one hundred cases of activists who have been detained briefly or faced violence from authorities in 2009 as they defended land rights, housing rights and labour rights. Signatories of the Charter 08, a petition calling for legal and political reforms, continue to face questioning.

Recently, lawyers have been threatened with denial of the licenses in retaliation for their work on human rights defence cases. On 31 May, at least 18 lawyers still had not received their license renewals by the 6pm deadline. These lawyers, from eleven different law firms, are involved in defending and providing legal aid to Tibetans who were detained in connection with March 2008 protests, Falun Gong practitioners, human rights defenders detained for exercising freedom of expression, families of victims of the Sichuan earthquake, families of victims of poisoned milk powder scandal and other public interest cases. Some of them have called for democratic election of Beijing lawyers Association executive committee members and are thus being targeted.