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## **People's Republic of China: Stop the execution of Wo Weihan**

Amnesty International today called on the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress to pardon 59 year old medical scientist Wo Weihan, echoing his daughter's concerns about the fairness of his trial and conviction.

The Beijing Intermediate People's Court told his family last week to apply for visitation permits within seven days. The Court had previously refused the family visiting permits for nearly four years. The family has also received verbal confirmation that the Supreme People's Court has approved the death sentence. This means that the death sentence is likely to be carried out, possibly as soon as Thursday 27 November.

Today one of his three daughters said: "The execution is not fair. The process was not transparent. The evidence in the verdict was vague and circumstantial, and he was found guilty through a confession that was forced out of him and which he retracted later in court. We can only now appeal to stop any execution and keep my father alive."

Sam Zarifi, Asia Pacific Director of Amnesty International, said: "The Chinese authorities should pardon Wo Weihan and stop this execution. Available information suggests that Wo Weihan did not receive a fair trial according to international standards. He was convicted of violating China's vaguely-defined state secrets law. China is entitled to prosecute people for spying but for him to be killed by the Chinese government is cruel and inhumane. We deplore China's continued position as the world's leading executioner."

Wo Weihan was sentenced to death in May 2007 for 'spying' for Taiwan after a closed trial in Beijing. He lost his appeal on 29 February 2008. According to the verdict issued by the Beijing Municipal Higher People's Court, Wo Weihan was found guilty of spying for Taiwan on a number of occasions. He was found guilty, among other charges, of discussing the health status of senior Chinese leaders which is considered to be a state secret, and of sending information from a "classified" magazine, one which was in fact available in the Chinese Academy of Sciences library.

On 19 January 2005 Wo Weihan was detained in Beijing, but he was not formally arrested until 5 May. According to the verdict, he confessed to the charges while in detention. His family says that he confessed in the absence of a lawyer and that he later recanted his confession and claimed innocence, which raised doubts over his treatment in detention.

Wo Weihan suffered a brain haemorrhage while in a detention centre on 6 February 2005. He was allowed to recuperate at home for six weeks. In March 2005, he was taken to Beijing Municipal Bo Ren Hospital (a prison hospital) where he has been held since. According to his family, he had no health problems before being detained.

During the first ten months of his detention, no one was allowed to meet with Wo Weihan. He was eventually allowed regular meetings with his lawyers, but family has not been allowed to meet with him until now.

## **Background**

Amnesty International issued an [Urgent Action](#) on 21 November urging its members to appeal to the Chinese authorities not to execute him, and to immediately establish a moratorium on executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty.

On 20 November, the United Nations General Assembly reinforced its call for an [end to executions](#) worldwide. A total of 105 countries voted in favour of the draft resolution, 48 voted against and 31 abstained. China voted against the draft resolution. A range of amendments proposed by a small minority of pro-death penalty countries were overwhelmingly defeated.

137 countries have abolished the death penalty in law or practice, as of November 2008. During 2007, at least 1,252 people were executed in 24 countries. At least 3,347 people were sentenced to death in 51 countries.

China executes more people each year than any other country in the world. There was likely to have been a significant drop in executions during 2007, after the Supreme People's Court resumed power to review all death sentences. In 2007 Amnesty International recorded 470 executions but this is an absolute minimum, based on publicly available reports.