

# amnesty international news release

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## AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL URGES JAPAN NOT TO RETURN HIJACKER TO CHINA

Amnesty International today urged the Japanese government not to return a Chinese hijacker to China because of its fears he may be tortured, not given a fair trial, or even executed.

The Toyko High Court today ruled that under Japan's extradition law, the government could return Zhang Zhenhai to China. In a letter to the Minister of Justice, Amnesty International said that the overriding consideration in this case must be Japan's obligations under internationally recognized human rights standards, in particular the principle of not extraditing people at risk of human rights violations.

The worldwide human rights organization said that although the Chinese government's extradition request does not specifically refer to offences carrying the death penalty, there is no guarantee that Zhang Zhenhai, who hijacked a Chinese airplane last December, would not face other charges after his return to China. He could, for example, be charged in connection with his involvement in the pro-democracy protests last May and June, for which some people have been summarily executed and others have been allegedly tortured or ill-treated. The organization said that he could be prosecuted on additional charges without this becoming known outside China because of the difficulty in monitoring the situation of prisoners in that country.

Amnesty International also noted that under the United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, any person who has a "well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of ... political opinion" should be considered a refugee. Given the risks Zhang Zhenhai would face in China, the organization believes he should be considered a refugee. Although the convention does not apply to people who have committed some non-political offences, this would not exclude Zhang Zhenhai from its protection since he stated political reasons for the hijacking. International conventions on hijacking provide Japan with the alternative of trying Zhang Zhenhai instead of extraditing him, Amnesty International said.

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