

MEDIA ADVISORY

News Service 114/97

AI INDEX: ASA 19/16/97

30 JUNE 1997

Hong Kong Handover--no Room for Complacency

"The last days before the handover have seen worrying signs for the future of human rights in Hong Kong", Amnesty International Asia-Pacific Director Rory Mungoven said today.

_ The heavy handed deployment of People's Liberation Army personnel (PLA) is coupled with real fears that army personnel may not be accountable to Hong Kong's people.

"For China the deployment might make good nationalist theatre. But for Hong Kong's people it is a signal that behind their autonomy is the heavy hand of China's control."

_ There will be legal confusion after midnight as the unelected Provisional Legislature moves to wind back freedoms. Peaceful demonstrators could be arrested tonight for breaking laws which have not yet been passed.

"Hong Kong is not a place with a civil order problem. It is not a place with a security problem. It is not a place with a tradition of violent disturbances. Why is there any need for new curbs on civil liberties?"

_ Mr Tung's signal that peaceful expression on sensitive issues will be banned and that only 'constructive criticism' will be tolerated sends worrying signs.

"Where will they draw the line on this? Today it's talk about Taiwan and Tibet that's off limits, but what will it be tomorrow? The experience in China shows that today's concerned citizen can be tomorrow's dissident".

Amnesty International has issued a checklist for human rights in Hong Kong:

1. International human rights standards must not be undermined in Hong Kong law;
2. Freedom of expression, association and assembly must not be restricted;
3. Public confidence in the legislature must be restored;
4. Police, army and prison personnel must remain under scrutiny;
5. Independence of the judiciary must not be compromised.

An Amnesty International team will be monitoring developments and available for interview or comment throughout the night.

Mark Ogle, Asia Pacific Spokesperson, mobile: (852) 9267 2117

Rory Mungoven, Asia Pacific Program Director, responsible for AI's research and campaigning policy on the Asia Pacific region, **mobile: (852) 9471 7113**

Catherine Baber, Researcher based in the Hong Kong Regional Office, **mobile: (852) 9267 2116**

Hong Kong Regional Office: (852) 2385 7197

*Source: Amnesty International, International Secretariat,
1 Easton Street, WC1X 8DJ, London, United Kingdom*