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1996 UN COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS: OPEN LETTER FROM AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL CHALLENGES CHIRAC AND KOHL ON CHINA

Amnesty International sent open letters yesterday to French President Jacques Chirac and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl challenging them to state unequivocally that their governments will support action on China at the 1996 UN Commission on Human Rights.

“The 52nd Session of the Commission on Human Rights cannot avoid a resolution on the human rights situation in China,” Amnesty International said in its open letter.

The human rights organization calls on both countries to support a resolution on China, a resolution that “should explicitly call for the cessation of torture, the immediate and unconditional release of all prisoners of conscience, an end to arbitrary arrests and imprisonments and unfair trials, and the abolition of the death penalty”.

“If France and Germany decide not to support the initiative at the commission, it would be a strong sign that these countries have broken their past commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights throughout the world.”

“Even more seriously, it would be a sign of the lack of importance which these countries attach to the suffering endured in a country in which a fifth of humanity lives,” Amnesty International said.

The resolution should urge China to ratify the main human rights covenants on civil and political rights and on economic, social and cultural rights.

The resolution should also invite the Chinese Government to cooperate with UN human rights experts and call on China to allow the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and the UN Special Rapporteurs on torture and on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions to carry out fact-finding missions in the country.

Amnesty International sent these open letters after it became clear from reliable sources that France and Germany were retreating from their previous support for a resolution.

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