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China: Detail needed on labour camp ‘reforms’

Claims that China’s system of “Re-education Through Labour” [RTL] is to be stopped in 2013 will raise more questions than answers, Amnesty International said in the wake of reported comments by Meng Jianzhu, head of the Chinese Communist Party’s Political and Legal Affairs Committee.

Roseann Rife, Amnesty International’s Head of East Asia said:

“If these reports are true, clearly this is a step in the right direction, but the proposed reforms are unclear and need to be spelled out in detail and subject to open public debate.

“The danger is the authorities’ rhetoric creates a veneer of reform without the reality changing for the hundreds of thousands of people detained in such facilities nor is it clear that any new system will meet international standards.”

People can be held in RTL camps without charge or trial for up to four years. Torture and other ill-treatment are endemic in the camps.

The RTL system violates international human rights law and standards and must be abolished. Those currently being detained must be released, and those that suffered abuse be provided with a genuine chance for redress.