

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

Index: ASA 17/025/2011

2 June 2011

## China: Tiananmen, 22 years on, the repressive patterns continue

It's been 22 years since the People's Liberation Army fired on peaceful protesters in Beijing and other cities, killing hundreds, if not thousands, of students and other ordinary people who had gathered to demand a more open and responsive government.

In the two decades since the harsh crackdown on the unarmed protestors, the Chinese government has deflected any calls for an open and honest accounting of what happened in and around Tiananmen Square on June 3rd and 4th. What many call a massacre, the Chinese Communist Party now calls a mere "political disturbance." This week, China opened up its secret national archives, but justified keeping any of the historical documents on Tiananmen Square (and other unpleasant disturbances) under wraps, lest they damage anyone's "privacy" or "reputation."

But the brutal tactics and ensuing crackdown employed by the government to suppress the student-led democracy movement of 1989 are not only history. They are a continuing tool used to suppress even the possibility of a challenge to the Communist Party's monopoly on power. Their use regularly undermines freedoms of expression, association and assembly enshrined in China's own constitution.

Recently, the government has responded to the popular uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa by intimidating, threatening or detaining anyone it deems a potentially outspoken critic.

Since late February, Amnesty International has documented more than 130 cases of activists, bloggers, lawyers, and others who have been detained by police, subjected to monitoring and intimidation by security forces, or who have disappeared. Some are veterans of the 1989 student democracy movement who have once again found themselves the victims of persecution. Many face vague, potentially catch-all, charges of "inciting subversion" like the "counter-revolutionary" charges imposed so liberally in the 1989 crackdown. They include:

**Chen Wei:** Sichuan activist taken away by police on February 20th, since charged with "inciting subversion of state power".

**Ding Mao:** Also a Sichuan activist, and founder of the Social Democratic Party, denied legal recognition. Police detained Ding Mao on 19 February and he has also been charged with "inciting subversion".

**Li Hai:** Police arrested Li Hai on 26 February [where] on suspicion of "provoking trouble" for publicizing the Jasmine Revolution in the Middle East. He is currently under surveillance and awaiting trial. Li Hai was imprisoned in the mid-1990s for "divulging state secrets" after compiling a list of people imprisoned after the 1989 Tiananmen protests.

**Wang Lihong:** A former doctor, Wang Lihong was placed under surveillance on 20 February and detained the following day. She has been charged with “gathering a crowd to disturb public order”.

The Chinese government increasingly uses the charge of “inciting subversion of state power” to jail critics. Nobel Peace Prize Laureate **Liu Xiaobo** and activist **Liu Xianbin**, both of whom helped to draft Charter 08, the political manifesto that calls for peaceful political change in China are serving prison sentences of 11 and 10 years respectively for inciting subversion. Both previously served prison time for their role in the 1989 student movement.

Other activists who have recently been charged with inciting subversion include activist **Hu Jun** and writer **Ran Yunfei**.

End/