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## **Macao: Proposed national security legislation undermines free expression**

Macao's legislators should revise proposed security legislation that threatens the rights of the territory's residents, Amnesty International said today, as the Macao Special Administrative Region's Legislature began discussion of the draft National Security legislation.

"The proposed legislation introduces restrictive language already in place in the People's Republic of China, including broad provisions concerning 'state security' and 'state secrets'," said Roseann Rife, Deputy Director in Amnesty International's Asia Pacific Programme.

"These are provisions the Chinese authorities have used to imprison many merely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and association."

One provision in the proposed legislation allows for closed-door trials for "state secret" cases when the judge deems it necessary. Under the proposed legislation, the central government in Beijing will determine if the material in dispute is a "state secret" or not.

Chinese authorities have detained many in China, including human rights lawyers and journalists, for supposedly revealing information classified as "state secrets", including information that would be considered public in many countries.

Amnesty International has repeatedly urged the Chinese authorities to clearly and narrowly define "state secrets" so that these provisions cannot continue to be used to silence dissent and arbitrarily persecute human rights defenders.

The preparation of treason, secession, or subversion against the central Beijing government are not now considered crimes in Macao and their inclusion in this legislation could limit freedom of expression and encourage self-censorship. .

"This legislation jeopardizes the future direction of fundamental freedoms in Macao and the concept of 'One Country, Two Systems,' which could affect not only Macao but also neighbouring Hong Kong," said Roseann Rife.

Amnesty International submitted a list of its concerns about the draft bill to the Macao authorities on 29 November 2008, including concerns that the process provided inadequate time for the territory's residents to consider and discuss the proposals.

The organization called for more time for the consideration of this legislation to allow for the fullest possible

public discussion. The organization also urged the Macao legislature to make sure the legislation protects the rights of individuals who peacefully exercise their rights to freedom of expression and association as well as other fundamental human rights.

### **Background**

Like neighbouring Hong Kong, the Macao Special Administrative Region, a Portuguese colony for 400 years until 1999, has operated under the policy of “One Country, Two Systems”.

Between 22 October and 30 November 2008, the Macao government conducted a 40-day public consultation about the implementation of Article 23 of Macao’s Basic Law on National Security. The government amended the content and submitted the bill to the legislature in December. On 5 January, the legislature adopted the bill in principle with only two votes against and one abstention.

Amnesty International’s 29 November 2008 [submission to the Macao authorities](#) during the public consultation.