

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PUBLIC STATEMENT

AI Index: ASA 17/4157/2016

1 June 2016

## **Tiananmen: 27 years on, time for justice for families is slipping away**

On the 27th anniversary of the 1989 military crackdown Amnesty International reiterates its call for a thorough inquiry into the 1989 military crackdown and urges the Chinese authorities to guarantee their citizens' rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, which are enshrined in international law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and protected in the Chinese Constitution.

The scenes of troops from the People's Liberation Army (PLA) firing live ammunition on civilians calling for political reforms on 3 and 4 June 1989 in and around Tiananmen Square will not be forgotten by those who saw them. They are captured forever for history in film, photos, and in the memoirs of the survivors. The decision to clear Tiananmen Square with military force was accompanied by a nationwide crackdown that resulted in several bloody incidents and thousands of arrests in the subsequent weeks and months.

Yet the government has never accepted responsibility for the human rights violations during the military crackdown or held any perpetrator legally accountable. With each year that passes, justice becomes ever more elusive for family members of the hundreds if not thousands who were killed or injured in Beijing and across China. Once again, Amnesty International calls on the Chinese authorities to:

- launch an open and independent inquiry into the 1989 military crackdown and hold those responsible for human rights violations accountable;
- publicly acknowledge the human rights violations which occurred and provide an accounting of all those killed and injured during the military crackdown;
- provide appropriate compensation to victims of the crackdown on the 1989 pro-democracy protests, and their families, and;
- cease harassment and prosecution of individuals and immediately release all those detained for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly including those seeking reassessment of the 1989 Tiananmen protests and commemorating its victims.

The last known person to still be in prison directly related to the 1989 military crackdown, Miao Deshun, is set to be released later this year.

However, the authorities continue to suppress history and prosecute citizens who

commemorate the victims of the Tiananmen crackdown, and seek to reflect on the history of the pro-democracy “Beijing Spring” of 1989. References to the military crackdown remain systematically censored in print and on the internet.

In May 2015, labour rights activist and democracy advocate Liu Shaoming was detained right after he published an online essay reflecting on his participation in the pro-democracy movement in Tiananmen Square, and his eye-witness account of what occurred on 3 and 4 June 1989. He was later formally arrested on charges of “inciting subversion of state power”. He went on trial on 15 April 2016 and the verdict is still pending. His essay was one of the pieces of evidence used by the prosecution. In his final statement at his trial, Li Shaoming defiantly said that he wrote his article on Tiananmen with the “...goal and underlying intention of letting his countrymen not forget that piece of history, to reflect on those times which can seem unbearable to remember, in order to warn and prevent tragic history from repeating itself.”

In January 2016, democracy activists Tang Jingling, Yuan Xinting, and Wang Qingying, were convicted by the Guangzhou Municipal Intermediate People’s Court for “inciting subversion of state power”, in a case in which their involvement in peaceful social campaigns, including commemorating the Tiananmen crackdown, was part of the evidence used to convict them. They were sentenced to five years, three-and-a-half years and two-and-a-half years in jail respectively.

In April 2016, famed lawyer Pu Zhiqiang formally had his lawyer’s license revoked after he was found guilty by a Beijing court of “picking quarrels and provoking troubles” and “inciting ethnic hatred”. Pu Zhiqiang was detained in May 2014 after attended a meeting which called for an investigation into the suppression of the 1989 protests.

Former student leader and businessman Yu Shiwen’s wife wrote an open letter to the Supreme People’s Court on 28 April 2016 to condemn his status in limbo, in which he is neither put on trial, nor sentenced, nor released. Yu Shiwen was detained in May 2014 after he participated in a public memorial that paid homage to the victims of the 1989 military crackdown and Zhao Ziyang, the General Secretary of the Communist Party in 1989 who argued for greater leniency towards the protesters. Yu Shiwen was indicted on charges of “picking quarrels and provoking troubles” in February 2015. He has now spent over two years in detention and is on a hunger strike.

In May 2016, according to *Mingpao*, a Chinese language Hong Kong newspaper, a man in Chengdu was criminally detained on charges of “inciting subversion of state power” for selling *baijiu*, a popular alcoholic drink, with a label commemorating the 1989 military crackdown. The label read “Famous Eight Baijiu: 64 – Beijing, China” playing on the fact that the Chinese word for alcohol, *jiu*, is pronounced the same way as the word for the number nine in Chinese. Thus the label read “Eight Nine: 64” the date on which the 1989 crackdown took place: 89 for the year, 6 for month and 4 for the day. The label on the bottle also had a picture of the iconic “tank man”, and the alcohol slogan was: “never forget, never give up”. A female poet, Ma Qing, who had apparently promoted the alcohol on WeChat, a Chinese mobile text and voice messaging service, was also taken away by police.

But time is not on the side of the survivors and families of victims seeking justice. Jiang Peikun, the husband of Ding Zilin, was one of the founders of the Tiananmen Mothers, an advocacy group which has consistently campaigned for an investigation into the Tiananmen crackdown, accountability and compensation. He died in 2015 before he was able to see justice for his son Jiang Jielian, who was shot through the heart on the night of 3 June 1989.

The Tiananmen Mothers' cries for justice are clear. What is needed now is the political courage and leadership to face the events of 1989 in an open and honest manner, and ensure that justice delayed is not justice denied.