

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

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Legal concern

24 January 1992

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA:

BAO TONG

According to various sources, Bao Tong, a close associate of the deposed Chinese Communist Party leader Zhao Ziyang, was arrested in Beijing on 21 January 1992 by military security officers on charges of carrying out "counter-revolutionary incitement" and "leaking state secrets". It is further reported that he may be tried within one month. His whereabouts are unknown.

Bao Tong was first arrested on 28 May 1989, a few days before the student-led pro-democracy protests were crushed by the army in Beijing on 4 June 1989. He was accused of "revealing party secrets" for allegedly telling some of his colleagues about the impending imposition of martial law in Beijing on 20 May 1989. One of the highest ranking of the party intellectuals behind Zhao Ziyang's reforms, Bao Tong was a member of the Chinese Communist Party Central Committee (CCPCC) and Director of the CCPCC Research Center for Reform of the Political Structure.

Following his 1989 arrest, he was held for a year in solitary confinement at Qincheng prison, north of Beijing. It seems that he was not formally charged, although his legal status subsequently was not clear. In May 1990, he was released from Qincheng prison and placed under house arrest in a government guest house. He was later allowed to live at his home in Beijing with his wife. It is not clear whether he was still subjected to restrictions.

Bao Tong was rearrested at home during the night of 21 January 1992 by uniformed officers from a Beijing military security unit, according to a Reuters report from Beijing on 23 January. Before leading him away, they read out the charges against him from a document. His arrest was confirmed by other sources.

Amnesty International is concerned that Bao Tong may be detained solely for peacefully exercising his right to freedom of expression and association. It is calling on the Chinese authorities to disclose publicly the legal status and whereabouts of Bao Tong, and to release him immediately if he is detained for the peaceful exercise of fundamental human rights.

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Telexes/faxes/airmail letters:

- expressing concern about reports that Bao Tong has been re-arrested, apparently on charges related to his activities during the 1989 protests, although he was detained previously for similar reasons and released without charge;
- urging the authorities to disclose information about his whereabouts and

the charges against him, as well as details of the accusations on which these charges may be based;

- expressing concern that Bao Tong may be detained for the peaceful exercise of fundamental human rights and if this is the case, urging the authorities to release him immediately and unconditionally.

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APPEALS TO:

1) Prime Minister Li Peng:

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Salutation: Your Excellency

2) Minister of Public Security:

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Salutation: Your Excellency

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and to diplomatic representatives of the People's Republic of China in your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 6 March 1992.