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£TAIWAN

@Army Conscript Tortured To Death

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Amnesty International is calling for an independent and impartial investigation into the death of army conscript Chen Shih-wei who died in army custody on 16 July 1993. Compelling evidence indicates that he was imprisoned and tortured to death by officers of a disciplinary army unit based on Green Island, off Taiwan.

29-year-old Chen Shih-wei is said to have reported to his army unit in Ilan on 8 July 1993, about 36 hours later than permitted. As a punishment, he was immediately assigned to the Li-Teh Training Unit where officers were apparently ordered to single him out for severe punishment. Chen Shih-wei appears to have been imprisoned within the Li-Teh Training Unit, handcuffed while imprisoned and tortured for more than two days.

At about 9am on 12 July 1993, Chen Shih-wei was admitted to the Li-Teh unit's infirmary and was then transferred to two successive hospitals. He died on 16 July of intracerebral bleeding and severe brain injury. Photographs of Chen Shih-wei's body taken before his death show signs of bruising consistent with severe beatings. According to doctors, the intracerebral bleeding and injuries suffered by Chen Shih-wei may have resulted from beatings with a flexible plastic hose of a kind used to inflict corporal punishment in disciplinary army units. They also reported that Chen Shih-wei was still wearing handcuffs when he was admitted to the hospital.

Officers at the Li-Teh unit have refused to provide a satisfactory account of the circumstances of Chen Shih-wei's death to his family. Indeed, they have denied on several occasions that anything illegal had occurred before his death. While Chen Shih-wei was being treated in hospital, Li-Teh unit officers gave his father several successive and inconsistent explanations of the events which led up to his hospitalization.

Amnesty International understands that the commanding officer of the Li-Teh unit was relieved of his duties as a result of Chen Shih-wei's death. It also understands that officers of the Li-Teh unit have been suspended pending completion of an investigation by a Military District Attorney of the Military Police Command. Amnesty International welcomes these preliminary steps. However, it regrets that no report of the investigation the military authorities into the matter has yet been published, and that no one has yet been charged in connection with the death.

In 1985, Chen Shih-wei had been sentenced to seven years' imprisonment, after completing one year of military service, for refusing to serve his full two-year term, apparently because of his conscientiously-held beliefs. He was released in December 1988 in an amnesty, after serving three years and nine months of his sentence. Had he served four full years of his sentence, he would have been discharged from his military obligations. However, having been released in the amnesty three months earlier, he was compelled to complete his remaining year of service by serving a series of short spells in the military. He died during one of these periods of service.

Amnesty International believes that every country which practices conscription should allow those who refuse to perform armed service because of their conscientiously-held beliefs to perform an alternative, civilian form of service. It is calling on the Taiwan authorities to establish a civilian form of service which will be made available to conscientious objectors to armed military service.

Amnesty International's Recommendations to the government

Amnesty International has called on President Lee Teng-hui and his government to take the following steps as a matter of urgency:

- ◆ There should be an independent and impartial investigation into the circumstances of Chen Shih-wei's death;
- ◆ The investigation should examine all rules and practices governing the imposition of disciplinary sanctions, including corporal punishment. It should also establish whether any sanction is permitted, or has been applied in practice, which amounts to torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

- ◆ The results of the investigation should be made public;
- ◆ Those responsible for the death of Chen Shih-wei should be brought to justice and given a fair and open trial in accordance with international standards.
- ◆ The government should recognise the right to conscientious objection to military service and should provide an alternative civilian form of service.

PROTEST ABOUT THE DEATH OF CHEN SHIH-WEI AND HELP PREVENT TORTURE IN TAIWAN

What you can do:

- ◆ Write to the Taiwan authorities urging them to ensure that an independent and impartial inquiry is carried out into the death of Chen Shih-wei, that its findings are made public and that those responsible for his death are brought to justice;
- ◆ Urge the authorities to ensure that army conscripts are not subjected to torture and other cruel inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

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