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AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL CALLS ON APEC LEADERS TO UNDERPIN ECONOMIC  
GROWTH WITH RESPECT FOR ALL HUMAN RIGHTS

As heads of state and governments meet tomorrow for the third Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit in Osaka, Japan, Amnesty International calls on them to match rhetoric on the region's shared values with action to fully promote and protect human rights.

"Human rights violations are rife in too many APEC countries," Amnesty International said today. "What sort of 'Asia-Pacific community' are APEC leaders hoping to achieve, if it fails to offer protection for the basic rights and freedoms of people in the region?"

At their first summit in Seattle in 1993, APEC leaders outlined their vision for an "Asia-Pacific community". Since then, they have outlined ambitious plans for economic liberalization and integration in the region. However, Amnesty International urges APEC to recognize that the protection of civil and political rights is complementary to sustained economic growth and development.

The development of closer links within the Asia-Pacific region is not solely the province of governments. For the first time this year, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from all over the region have gathered at a conference parallel to the APEC summit.

Amnesty International urges APEC to recognize the crucial role played by NGOs in promoting closer co-operation and ties among countries in the region, including in relation to social, political and environmental rights. In APEC today, many of the people and organizations working to promote and protect these rights are targets of state repression.

The organization is calling on APEC leaders to ensure that NGOs working to defend and protect human rights are able to carry out their activities in APEC members states without intimidation or interference and with adequate protection wherever necessary.

Governments in APEC's largest economies are responsible for human rights violations. In the USA, political activists involved in distributing free food and information to the homeless have faced repeated arrests, and reportedly ill-treatment. In Japan, foreign workers -- including illegal immigrants -- have suffered ill-treatment at the hands of police or immigration authorities. Many of the alleged victims have been unable to seek redress for complaints of human rights violations. In China, prominent dissidents have been detained without charges or trial, for attempting to form an independent labour rights group.

In Mexico, scores of political and civil rights activists have been arrested in the last two years. Human rights and environmental activists involved in land disputes and demonstrations have been threatened or beaten by people acting in connivance with the authorities. In Indonesia, labour and development activists continue to be at risk of arbitrary detention and torture. In Irian

Jaya, villagers "disappeared" or have been extra-judicially executed for protesting against the presence of a mine.

Amnesty International calls on all APEC member states to ratify all United Nations human rights standards, including International Labour Organization conventions.

"If APEC can set itself the ambitious goal of free trade by the year 2020, it should agree similarly ambitious targets in the area of human rights," the organization said.

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