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China Undermines Universal Periodic Review

China's rejection in its UPR session in February of a large number of recommendations covering a broad range of human rights has undermined the meaningfulness of its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Amnesty International said today.

The UPR process was meant to be an opportunity for states to provide frank assessments on how they are promoting and achieving international human rights standards, as well as an opportunity for other states to make recommendations on how best to work towards fulfilment of these standards.

By rejecting so many recommendations China threatens the effectiveness and credibility of the process. Rejected recommendations were not politically motivated as alleged but based on international human rights obligations that China has accepted.

The UPR process also needs the frank participation of other states. Amnesty International urges states to contribute their "well-intentioned criticism" which Ambassador, Li Baodong, stated today would be carefully considered by China.

China's manipulation of civil society's contributions to the process seriously undermines the UPR and the credibility of the outcome for China. The genuine contribution of civil society is crucial to the success of the UPR and the goal of improving protection of human rights.

Below is the text of Amnesty International's oral intervention presented today in Geneva.

"Oral intervention on China - 11 June 2009

Mr. President,

If the Universal Period Review (UPR) is to lead to improved respect for human rights, governments must frankly address their own records and be responsive to other states' recommendations. By rejecting a large number of recommendations covering a broad range of human rights, China has effectively undermined the value of the UPR for China.

The success of the UPR also depends on a frank discussion within each State reviewed, including with civil society. This puts an important responsibility on representatives of civil society to vigorously address human rights shortcomings. They must not be accomplices in government efforts to present a sanitized picture of their national situation. China's manipulation of civil society's contributions to the process seriously undermines the UPR and the credibility of the outcome for China.

Recommendations that did not enjoy the support of China, but which Amnesty International would urge the government to re-consider, include:

- To regularly publish figures on the use of the death penalty and to establish a moratorium on executions and eventually abolish the death penalty.
- To end the use of punitive administrative detention.
- To end the persecution of individuals who exercise their rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly.
- To end the on-going repression of national ethnic minorities, including Tibetans and Uighurs, and the persecution of other religious practitioners.
- To implement the recommendations of November 2008 of the Committee against Torture and to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture.

Amnesty International is concerned that no state raised the issue of Macao's National Security Law during the dialogue in the UPR Working Group. The vague and broad provisions in the law could be used to imprison individuals merely for exercising their rights to freedom of expression and association in that special administrative region.

Finally, as recommended by eight states during the review, Amnesty International reiterates its call on the Chinese authorities to ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Thank you, Mr. President."

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