

# AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE

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## **China: Reform of abusive detention law vital to Beijing Olympics human rights commitments**

Amnesty International today published an open letter to the Standing Committee of China's legislature, the National People's Congress, calling for an end to 'Re-education Through Labour' (RTL), a form of detention imposed without charge, trial or judicial review for up to four years.

According to official Chinese media, the Standing Committee is due to discuss a new law, the 'Illegal Behaviour Correction Law', to replace RTL this month. The reform of RTL, and the discussion on the new law, has been stalled for more than two years.

Meanwhile, in the lead-up to the 2008 Olympic Games, Beijing police have used China's hosting of the Games as a pretext to extend abusive detention practices such as RTL and 'Enforced Drug Rehabilitation', in the name of 'cleaning up' the city.

"Efforts to 'clean up' the city ahead of the Games through extending detention without trial raise serious questions about the commitment Chinese officials have made to improve their human rights record at the awarding of the Games to China," said Catherine Baber, Head of the Asia-Pacific Programme at Amnesty International.

Hundreds of thousands of people are believed to be held in RTL facilities, many in harsh conditions. RTL is used against people considered by the Chinese police to have committed offences not serious enough to be punished under the Criminal Law. These include petty criminals, critics of the government and followers of banned beliefs.

The proposed reform of RTL has been on China's legislative agenda for more than two years. Amnesty International has long raised concerns about the use of RTL, and urges the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress in the lead-up to the Olympics to ensure that any legislation adopted to replace RTL complies fully with international human rights standards, including the right to fair trial.

"A positive Olympic legacy would mean fair trials according to international standards and an end to arbitrary police detention," said Catherine Baber. "We are less than one year from the start of the Beijing Games, and if the Chinese authorities are serious about the commitment they have made to improve their human rights record, they now have a unique opportunity to move one step closer to this, by ending these abusive detention practices."

### **Note to editors:**

The National People's Congress (NPC) is distinct from the Chinese Communist Party which is holding its

17th Congress this week. The NPC is China's legislature and highest state body. It comprises around 3,000 delegates and meets every year for two weeks in March. The Standing Committee of the NPC exercises power between these sessions and meets every two months.

To download a copy of the open letter to the National People's Congress, please visit:  
<http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGASA170202007>

To download a copy of the media kit listing Amnesty International's concerns in the lead-up to the Beijing Olympic Games, please visit:  
<http://web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGASA170432007>

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