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PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Detention and harassment of dissidents before 4 June anniversary

“We cannot forget our past. If we forget our past, it would be tantamount to betrayal... We only want our voices to be heard...in a peaceful, rational and non-violent way.”¹

31 May 1996

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Authorities in China have detained and questioned several political activists after they sent a petition to the Chinese Parliament in commemoration of the events of May and June 1989.

This is the second petition known to have been issued by dissidents this year and was received by the press on Wednesday 29 May 1996. The petition calls for the release of Wei Jingsheng and all political and religious prisoners and an official re-evaluation of the events in Beijing in June 1989.

The prominent dissident, Wang Xizhe was also detained on 31 May 1996 while eating a family meal at a restaurant in southern Guangdong province. It is reported that he has been detained for 15 days on charges of breaking his parole agreement by travelling 40km out of Guangzhou city to the restaurant. Wang Xizhe was released on parole in February 1995 after serving 12 years of a 14 year sentence for ‘counter revolutionary’ crimes.

The seven dissident signatories were summoned for questioning after they sent a petition to the National People’s Congress (NPC) in commemoration of the seventh anniversary of the crackdown of the pro-democracy movement in Tiananmen square, Beijing.

The petition was issued by a group of people in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province and was signed by **Wang Donghai, Chen Longde, Zhao Wanmin, Mao Guoliang, Ye Wenxiang, Fu Quan and Wu Gaoxing.**

Two of those detained, **Wang Donghai** and **Chen Longde**, are believed to be still in detention after being taken for questioning on Tuesday 28 May 1996. Wang Donghai’s family have been informed that Wang is being held for “Shelter and Investigation... for taking part in illegal activities”. No more details are known. Reportedly Chen Longde’s family have been informed of that he is being held for questioning, but they have not been given any formal reason for the questioning.

¹Mao Guoliang quoted in AFP 30 May 1996

Wang Donghai, 49 years old, is a former shop manager from Hangzhou who spent two years in prison after 1989 for protesting at the Tiananmen crackdown. Wang Donghai was an editor of a community based publication; 'Zhejiang Wave'.

Chen Longde, 36 years old, served three years after 1989 for allegedly distributing leaflets during the pro democracy movement.

Two other signatories, **Mao Guoliang** and **Fu Quan**, both from Hangzhou city in Zhejiang province were also detained for questioning on Tuesday, but were later released. According to press reports, Mao Guoliang reported that he was summoned every year for questioning around the anniversary of 4 June events and that "its a disaster every year".²

Wu Gaoxing and **Zhao Wanmin**, two other signatories, were detained for 24 hours and released on Wednesday 29 May 1996. It was reported that the two were placed in a cell with other prisoners and that Zhao Wanmin had been beaten by the police.³

Wu Gaoxing, who was also detained last year for signing a petition, is reported to have said that the police "have become edgier this year and I don't think Wang Donghai and Chen Longed will be freed soon"⁴

There has been no news of **Ye Wenxiang**, the seventh signatory. It is presumed that he has been questioned by the police as well. It is unknown if he is currently still detained.

One of those detained and now released, Mao Guoliang is reported as saying that "We cannot forget our past. If we forget our past, it would be tantamount to betrayal...We only want our voices to be heard...in a peaceful, rational and non-violent way."⁵

The petition entitled an "Open letter to Parliament commemorating the Seventh anniversary of 'June 4th'" called for the release of political and religious prisoners, including **Wang Dan** and **Liu Nianchun** who were both detained in a similar crackdown on dissidents prior to last years anniversary of 4 June events.⁶

Most of the seven currently being questioned or still in detention were all involved in the series of petitions to the NPC issued by dissidents that began in March and April 1995 and which called for political and democratic reforms and guarantees for basic human rights.

Many petitions, addressed to the authorities, were distributed in the run up to last years anniversary of 4 June events. Academics and activists who signed last years petitions were questioned, harassed, placed under house arrest, moved to rural areas or imprisoned for writing or signing petitions.

²Reuters 30 may 1996

³AFP 31 May 1996

⁴AFP 31 may 1996

⁵AFP 30 May 1996

⁶For more details see *Update on Dissidents detained around 4 June 1995* (ASA 17/69/95)

For example, Wang Donghai and three others were arrested by the police two days after the sentencing of Wei Jingsheng to 14 years imprisonment in December 1995. They had been vocal in calling for his release. They were released on 12 January 1996 after being detained for four weeks in December 1995.

Liu Nianchun, one of the political prisoners mentioned in this latest petition was detained after co-signing with **Wang Donghai** and the others a petition issued in April 1995, which called for respect for basic human rights.

Wang Donghai and Chen Longde also signed a petition issued in April 1995 which suggested the abolition of the administrative punishment of re-education through Labour. Re-education through labour is an administrative sanction which is often used against political dissidents and allows for the long term detention of people without recourse to the legal process.⁷

All seven currently being questioned were also signatories with others to a petition released on 18 October 1995. The petition called for the release of political prisoners and requested that the Chinese Government adhere to articles in the Chinese Constitution guaranteeing freedom of personal freedom. It also called upon the authorities to respect Section Nine of the United nation's International Declaration of Human Rights which states that "No person to be wrongfully arrested, detained or exiled".

The authorities usually step up the surveillance and harrassment of dissidents and potential 'trouble makers' each year in the run up to the anniversary of events in Tiananme Square 1989. Amnesty International recorded at least 50 arrests of dissidents around China in the four weeks surrounding 4 June 1995.

It has been reported that in addition to these current detentions there has been an increase in police surveillance of other dissidents such as **Ding Zilin** and **Xu Liangying**. Ding Zilin is a professor at a Beijing university who has been active in calls for an official reevaluation of the events surrounding the events in Tiananmen Square 1989 since her 17 year old son was killed on 4 June 1989.

Included among those arrested in 1995 and still in detention one year later are **Wang Dan.**, **Liu Nianchun**, **Chen Ziming**.

Chen Ziming, a prisoner of conscience and veteran pro-democracy activist was re-imprisoned on Sunday 25 June 1995 after signing one of the petitions asking for an investigation into government corruption. Chen Ziming had previously been released on medical parole in May 1993, 5 years into his 13 year sentence for allegedly masterminding the 1989 protests. Chen Ziming is suffering from cancer and skin, liver and heart ailments. Amnesty International remains concerned about his poor health and continues to call for his release and proper medical care.

Liu Nianchun, aged 48, is a labour activist who has been in detention several times. He was arrested on 21 May 1995 by several police officers after signing one of last years petitions and initiating another. He is not known to have been formally charged with any offence.

⁷For more information on the practice of Re-education through Labour see Amnesty International's report; *China: Dissidents Detained Since 1992: Political Trials and Administrative Sentences* (ASA 17/05/94), January 1995

Wang Dan, aged 26, who was imprisoned for 4 years after the 1989 crackdown, was detained from his home on 21 May 1995 after several months of close surveillance of his movements.

He is still being detained without charge.

Another related detention is that of **Bao Tong**. A prominent prisoner of conscience, Bao Tong, was released on 27 May only to be kept under house arrest until after the anniversary of 4 June. Bao Tong, aged 63, was a former secretary to Zhao Ziyang, the ex- Communist party Chief who was disgraced after the crackdown in Tiananmen in 1989 and now remains under virtual house arrest. Bao Tong was arrested on 29 May 1989 and sentenced to seven years imprisonment for allegedly 'supporting' the pro democracy protests of May and June 1989.

Please send telegrams/telexes/express and airmail letters in English, Chinese or in your own language,

, urging the Chinese authorities to release immediately and unconditionally all those who have been detained recently for signing petitions in advance of the anniversary of events on 4 June 1989

, and expressing concern that Wang Dan, Liu Nianchun and others are still being detained without charges after one year in detention. Urging the authorities to release them immediately and unconditionally.

, expressing concern that Bao Tong is still under house arrest, after being released from his prison sentence and urging the authorities to lift all restrictions against him and

, expressing concern that Chen Ziming is still being detained and urging that he be re-released on medical parole and given adequate access to medical care.

Please send appeals to:

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Beijingshi
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Chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee

QIAO Shi, Weiyuanzhang
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