

Statement on the 20th Anniversary of June Fourth Crackdown

2 June 2009

On 3-4 June 1989, the Chinese Government answered the peaceful pro-democracy movement, started by the students and widely supported by workers and ordinary people nationwide, with a brutal military crackdown. Hundreds, if not thousands were killed and injured that night¹, prosecutions went on for years and oppression of the people who commemorate the victims continues.

China has made many outstanding improvements over the past two decades, on poverty elimination, legal reform, promoting economic, social and cultural rights, for examples. However, it has not addressed the human rights violations committed in 1989, and ongoing persecutions and harassments on human rights defenders make China far from fulfilling its international human rights obligations.

We, as civil society organizations, would like to call on the Chinese government to review this part of the history and address the calls for justice. An independent and open investigation into the events is the first step to be taken. Persecutions, surveillance, intimidation, harassment of human rights defenders and the Tiananmen Mothers must stop immediately and return their rights to mourn, commemorate peacefully, freely and publicly. China should release those who remain in prison due to the Tiananmen Crackdown, as many are serving charges of "Counter-revolutionary", a crime has been removed from the PRC's Criminal Code in 1997, and many did not receive open and fair trials in 1989.

Only when a country can honestly face its own history, readdress its wrongdoings, and bring justice to the victims, can a country become a responsible global player and create a harmonious and sustainable society. China's repeated calls to Japan to acknowledge the war history, South Africans demanding reparations for victims of apartheid, documentation of crimes committed by the Khmer Rouge and reconciliation for Cambodians, Germany's efforts to preserve its history after the Second War World, all illustrate that people, no matter in the East or West, do recognize the importance of understanding the history and it serves as an important step for them to move on.

Signed by (in alphabetical order):

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¹ The exact death toll of Tiananmen Crackdown was unknown, as until now, the Government refused to initiate any investigation. The official death toll from Tiananmen Square was reported by the Chinese government to be around 241, including soldiers, and 7,000 injured. Medical staff in Beijing at the time said above 2,000, based on their discussions with ambulance drivers and colleagues who had been on Tiananmen Square. The Chinese Red Cross initially reported 2,600, then quickly retracted that figure under intense pressure from the government. Chinese student associations reported the figure to be between 2,000 and 3,000. Some independent groups even placed the figure as high as 7,000.