

Human Rights Watch
22 April 2008

(...) We write to urge the government of the People's Republic of China to immediately recall the shipment of weapons aboard the An Yue Jiang, currently off the coast of southern Africa. We also urge you to ensure that no further arms and ammunition deliveries are sent to Zimbabwe while the very high risk exists of such weapons being used against the civilian population.

(...) Human Rights Watch has extensively documented a deteriorating human rights situation in Zimbabwe. Our news release on April 19, 2008 documents the establishment of torture camps by members of Zimbabwe's armed forces and ZANU-PF. These camps are aimed specifically at members of Zimbabwe's opposition Movement for Democratic Change and Zimbabwean civilians who did not vote for President Robert Mugabe in the March elections. In addition, Human Rights Watch has reported that over the past year, police and military forces in Zimbabwe have often opened fire on unarmed demonstrators in violation of international law. In our view, any state sending arms into this highly repressive environment could make them complicit in human rights abuses by the Zimbabwean government.

(...) The shipment not only violates your government's arms exports policy, in particular the principle on not selling arms in a situation where regional peace and stability will be undermined, but also its international **responsibility to protect** civilian populations at risk of mass human rights violations. (...)

(...) The Chinese government cannot hide behind a fiction of non-interference in other countries' affairs and reject responsibility for the use of these weapons once they have been transferred to Zimbabwe. It is widely acknowledged that China's and other countries' arms regardless of the legality of the sale in terms of arms embargoes are likely to be used by the Mugabe government against its political opponents and ordinary civilians. Responsibility for these abuses falls in part to those who sell the weapons. This reality has led other countries to impose an arms embargo on Zimbabwe.

There is only one appropriate course of action for a responsible power that cares about its relationships with Africa and its international profile: recall all shipments immediately. (...)

To read HRW letter in full length, please refer to:

<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2008/04/22/china18618.htm>

For HRW 19 April 2008 news release 'ZANU-PF Sets up 'Torture Camps'', go to:

<http://www.hrw.org/english/docs/2008/04/19/zimbab18604.htm>

More information on international response to arms shipment to Zimbabwe can be found at:

<http://www.thestar.com/News/World/article/417772>