

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

MEDIA BRIEFING

EMBARGO: Monday 28 July at 21:00 GMT (Tuesday 29 July 05:00am Hong Kong)

China: the Olympic countdown –broken promises Olympic values and Olympic realities

Olympic Charter

http://multimedia.olympic.org/pdf/en_report_122.pdf

Olympic Fundamental Principle 1

Respect for universal fundamental ethical principles.

Olympic Fundamental Principle 2

Preservation of human dignity

Beijing Promise

“We will give the media complete freedom to report when they come to China. (...) We are confident that the Games coming to China not only promotes our economy but also enhances all social conditions, including education, health and human rights.” Wang Wei, Secretary General of the Beijing Olympic Bid Committee, 13 July 2001 (when Beijing was granted the hosting of the Olympics), China Daily.

Olympics Realities

Olympic reality

People continue to be punished for defending human rights.

- Many Chinese human rights activists have been targeted by the authorities in their efforts to “silence dissent” ahead of the Games. Some have been imprisoned, while others have been harassed and kept under tight police surveillance as prisoners in their own homes.
- Chinese authorities are using Beijing’s hosting of the Olympics as a pretext for extending the use of detention without trial, notably “Re-education through Labour” and “Enforced Drug Rehabilitation.”
- Thousands of people, including petitioners who have gone to Beijing seeking justice from the government, have been swept up in efforts to “clean up” the city before the Games.
- Authorities in Shanghai have barred activists from speaking to foreigners or leaving the city without permission, including travelling to Beijing before the end of the Olympics. A public notice stated that those violating the rules “may be warned, detained or face criminal punishment.”
- In the aftermath of the Sichuan earthquake, local authorities in the provincial capital, Chengdu, urged schools to “set up effective plans to ensure stability” and called for 24-hour surveillance to “absolutely prevent petitioners from going to Beijing.”
- Parents of children who died when schools collapsed during the earthquake and who are demanding investigations into alleged shoddy building practices, have been particularly targeted to prevent them from bringing their demands to Beijing.

Olympic reality

China does not allow “complete media freedom” as promised.

- The Chinese authorities barred media access to Tibet and Tibetan-populated areas of surrounding provinces following the protests there in March.
- Despite new media regulations that were supposed to allow for freer reporting, foreign journalists continue to be prevented from covering “sensitive issues”, including talking to those who suffer human rights violations. The Foreign Correspondents Club of China (FCCC) documented approximately 180 incidents of reporting disruptions in 2007. This has now increased to 260.
- Chinese journalists operate in a climate of censorship, unable to report on issues deemed sensitive by the authorities, and with many still languishing in jail for reporting on such issues.
- Internet control and censorship is increasing as the Olympics approach. Many sites, including several reporting on HIV/AIDS issues in Beijing, have been targeted.

Olympic reality

China is the world's top executioner

- The Supreme People's Court (SPC) initiated a review of the death penalty that is believed to have resulted in a significant drop in executions –a senior official said that in the first half of 2008, 15 per cent of death sentences were rejected by the SPC.
- However, the authorities continue to refuse to disclose the full number of those sentenced to death and executed -- the total figure remains a state secret. Estimates put the number of those executed every year in the thousands.
- Around 68 offences –including non-violent crimes such as drug-related offences –are punishable by death in China.
- Those facing capital charges do not receive fair trials even after the introduction of the SPC review: they do not get prompt access to lawyers; there is no presumption of innocence; courts continue to be subjected to political interference; and the law does not prevent courts from taking into account evidence extracted through torture.

THE CHINA DEBATE

Through The China Debate website (www.thechinadebate.org), Amnesty International hopes to raise awareness of human rights violations in China and promote a balanced debate on how improvements can be achieved. In both English and Chinese, the site focuses on four human rights issues (detention without trial, censorship, death penalty, repression of activists), will promote activism on human rights in China on Amnesty International's global website (www.amnesty.org) as well as initiatives within its national offices.

HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHINA

At the time of bidding for the Olympics the Chinese authorities said that the Games would contribute to improving human rights in China. The International Olympic Committee [IOC] agreed. Amnesty International has been monitoring four key areas where human rights improvements are needed. Find out more on www.amnesty.org/en/china-olympics .

END/